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Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Implementation of a Promise Academy

Nicole A. Harris
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

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Nicole Harris

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Dr. Elsie Szecsy, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

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Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Nicole A. Harris

MEd, Temple University, 1997

BS, Florida A&M University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

This case study addressed the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of one

Promise Academy at an elementary school in the northeastern United States. A large

number of schools in an urban district have continuously failed to make adequate yearly

progress (AYP). The study school implemented the Promise Academy model in

September 2010, to dramatically improve and transform the learning environment in this

underperforming school. Promise Academies, the district turnaround model, was

implemented in 11 schools, all of which have failed to produce increases in student

outcomes. The theoretical framework supporting this study was Michael Fullan's theory

of educational change. Using a qualitative goals based program evaluation, the research

questions explored the stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of one Promise

Academy. For this qualitative study, interview data were collected and analyzed by using

open coding and analytical coding. The common themes identified helped to examine

and understand the factors that participants' reported as having constrained and enhanced

the implementation of the Promise Academy model and student achievement. The key

stakeholders in this case study included 10 teachers, 3 parents and 2 administrators. The

results included in the evaluation report reflected that the implementation of the Promise

Academy had a positive impact on student learning during the first 2 years of the model,

however, this was followed by a decline in student achievement during the third year and

beyond. The recommendations included a continued plan of action throughout the

intended duration of the reform model. Positive school turnaround can lead to higher

graduation rates which can positively affect the quality of the community, which will

ultimately lead to positive social change.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my father who gave me constant support throughout this journey. At times, when I thought I wanted to give up, my father would always give me words of encouragement. To my mother (deceased) and father, it was you who taught me that all things were possible through hard work and dedication. Thank you to my parents who loved me unconditionally and who saw my fullest potential. Thank you to my parents for helping me realize that there can be sweat and tears when striving for your goal. Again, thank you for being exceptional parents and human beings.

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Special thanks to my chair, Dr. Donna Graham, who has guided me through this doctoral journey. Without your patience and continuous guidance, I would not have come this far. Thank you to all of my colleagues who have been a listening ear when I needed one. Thanks to my closest friend Tonya Mizelle, for being a true friend. Thanks to my father, James Harris, for supporting me to completing my doctorate degree. A special thank you to my late mother, Gwendolyn Harris for instilling the proper morals and values to be a decent person.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Over the past 10 years, many urban school districts in the state of Pennsylvania have failed to meet adequate yearly progress as defined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001). Adequate yearly progress (AYP) holds schools, educators, and community members accountable for student growth as measured by state mandated tests. Federal law required that all students must be proficient in reading and math by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). There are four performance levels of the state assessments: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. AYP determines if a school has made progress by showing a 3% increase in students scoring in the proficient range (U.S Department of Education, 2010). In addition to federal and state test scores, students' daily attendance, academic performance at the local school, and the percentage of student test participation are also components of a school meeting AYP. A large number of the schools that receive Title I funds are included in those failing schools. Title I schools are schools where the majority of students receive free and reduced lunch. Title I schools are funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.

In 2010, after many of its schools continuously did not meeting AYP, the School District of Philadelphia, a low-performing district where I conducted my study implemented the Renaissance Initiative. The purpose of the Renaissance Initiative was to

dramatically improve and transform the learning environment in these underperforming schools. The initiative included in-district restructuring (through innovation schools/Promise Academies) and external partnerships (through Contract Schools and Charter Schools). The charter schools were considered a restart model, whereas the restructured schools were part of the turnaround model. The Promise Academy schools are district run schools with autonomy over school operations, policies, instructional programs, and staffing. Innovation schools are expected to set high standards for staff and students, including a positive school culture and a rigorous academic program. As part of the accountability of these schools, the standards are outlined in the performance agreement that is established in the inception of the innovation school. In this study, my local site of interest was a Promise Academy school.

The second type of Renaissance Initiative school is a contract school, which is a district-run school that is managed by an external organization. This organization is charged with managing the entire school operation including hiring staff under the newly established design model. The school district and the organization enter a contract outlining the responsibilities of both parties. The fourth type of Renaissance Initiative school is a charter school. Charter schools are independent local education agencies in which a charter school board of trustees operates all school curriculum and operations. The charter school and the school district's relationship include agreements pertaining to student enrollment, student achievement, data reporting, facilities, and a school annual report. The provisions require very high academic standards for school success, which sometimes exceeds its traditional public school counterparts. At the end of the term of

the charter school, the provisions that were set in place may be used to renew or revoke a new charter. Although the school is under reform, it will still keep its public school status and will continue to be operated by the school district.

Prior to this urban school district deciding to reform and restructure some of its schools, the schools that were chosen had to be identified as failing schools. To reform and restructure a school, the majority of the staff is replaced, including the principal and 50% of the teaching staff. The schools under reform may use a different curriculum from the other schools still operating as traditionally district-run schools. Failing schools in this district did not meet AYP for 2 or more consecutive years. In order to meet AYP, at least 67% of the students must score in the proficient or advanced range on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in reading, and 72% must score in the proficient or advanced range in math in order to achieve AYP status. The scores need to continue to rise until all students have tested in the proficient or advanced range. There are seven AYP status levels: Made AYP, Making Progress, Warning, School Improvement I, School Improvement 2, Corrective Action 1, and Corrective Action 2. Other indicators of success are the number of serious incidents and student attendance. If a school does not meet AYP status, the school will then be placed in the next status level below its current designation.

As part of this Renaissance Initiative, there were initially six schools in the 2010-2011 school year where educators implemented the Promise Academy model. In the 2011-2012 school year, the Promise Academy was implemented in three more high schools, and in the 2013-2014 school year, 2 additional schools became Promise

Academies. At this time, the three high schools have been closed. Each school was identified as one of the lowest-performing schools in the city. The Promise Academies hired new teachers and new administrators. A number of the teachers who decided to stay and interview for their positions had to understand that the school would be completely different from the previous years. According to Nussbaumer (2010), people need to understand why they are being asked to change in order for transformation to be successful. New school policies were implemented under this model including: longer school days and school years, the wearing of uniforms for both staff and students, collaborations with universities, and parent agreements and contracts.

According to recent evaluation studies, the 15 schools that had become charter schools have produced significant changes in student achievement over the past 3 years. However, those using the Promise Academy model have failed to produce consistent increases in student outcomes over the same period of time (Wolford, Stratos, & Reitano, 2013). In this case study, the perceptions of how the teachers, parents, and principals perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy model.

Definition of the Problem

In response to some local inner city public schools in the School District of Philadelphia not making AYP using a traditional instructional program, this school district decided to restructure six schools using the Promise Academy model. This model has been implemented in six elementary and middle schools, all of which have failed to consistently improve student achievement. While all Promise Academies showed increased student achievement in english language arts and mathematics after the first

year of implementation this trend was reversed in the second and third years of implementation. In fact, the local Promise Academy of interest had math scores in the third year that were lower than that of the year prior to implementation. Promise Academy schools had student achievement scores lower than the district average by the end of the third year of implementation (Wolford et al, 2013). Based on evidence and relevant literature, successful turnaround initiatives should increase student achievement within 3 to 5 years (Strunk et al. 2012, Meyers, 2013; Herman et al. 2008; Mass Insight, 2010; Brownstein, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers, parents, and principals perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy model.

Rationale

Many students in the lower income areas of the School District of Philadelphia were not passing the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). According to the federal NCLB, all students must be proficient in both reading and math within four years. The PSSA is divided into four categories: An advanced score means that students have exceeded the state standards; a proficient score means that students have met state standards; a score of basic or below basic means that the student did not pass the state requirements. Approximately 40% of the students scored proficient in the PSSA in the identified lowest-performing schools in the district, while the remaining students scored in the basic or below basic range. The School District of Philadelphia identified six of the lowest-performing schools to implement the Promise Academy reform model.

Increased student achievement in low-performing schools is the primary goal of the Philadelphia Promise Academies. The reform efforts in the School District of

Philadelphia focus on three critical factors that can lead to positive change: creating a

positive school climate, community involvement, and establishing effective leaders and

staff (School District of Philadelphia, 2011). When these components operate effectively,

the outcome will result in dramatic improvement in student achievement (School District

of Philadelphia, 2011). The PSSA results indicated that it was necessary for new

instructional practices and methods to be implemented to increase student outcomes.

The Promise Academy was implemented to bring transformative changes to the

school district's lowest-performing schools. In order to bring about dramatic

improvement in student achievement, the Promise Academy schools provided additional

resources, made changes in staff, and implemented strategies designed to improve

persistently low-performing schools. Under the Renaissance initiative, the Promise

Academy model was implemented in district-run traditional public schools. The

practices and strategies that had been in place had not been improving student outcomes.

In order for these underperforming schools to experience success on various levels,

change needed to occur.

Definition of Terms

AYP: Adequate yearly progress happens when a subgroup meets or exceeds the

school years annual measurable achievement objectives as defined by the past criteria for

each state (Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013).

School Reform: Various approaches geared towards improving schools, which result in a

change in education. School reform efforts include implementing standards, improving

teacher and principal effectiveness, and turning around low-performing schools (Weiss, 2015).

 Failing schools: Schools where subgroups do not meet the passing criteria of their state's assessment. (Robinson & Werblow, 2012).

 No Child Left Behind Act: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is the revision and continuation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This Act provides funding to schools and school districts, and sets forth a federal education policy (Husband & Hunt, 2015). When NCLB was passed in 2001, the federal government held states, school districts, and schools, accountable for student gains and achievement in reading and mathematics (Husband & Hunt, 2015). However, in 2007, NCLB was not granted reauthorization. Under the Obama administration, those states that did not meet the original criteria set forth in 2001were granted waivers or exceptions (Husband & Hunt, 2015).

Title I: A part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that provides extra money and resources to schools and school districts that are highly populated with students in poverty (Menken, 2008). Title I schools can be defined as low-income or underserved schools (Shaha, Glassett, Copas & Ellsworth, 2015).

Reconstituting: A process that happens when a school or school district fail to meet or exceed state expectations on standardized tests. When this consistently occurs, the primary focus is to improve teaching, learning, and the quality of the educational system (Grinceviciene, V, 2012). Schools that do not make AYP for 5 consecutive years are required to implement a new plan of action for restructuring interventions. Some of the

interventions include reopening as a charter school, replacing most or all of the staff, turning the school over to the state, or contracting with a private organization to operate the school (Stevenson, Z., Schertzer, S. & Harn, D., 2008).

Significance of the Study

In the past two decades, school reform in the United States—particularly in urban areas—has been a major concern. Although school reforms have been implemented to increase student achievement, some of these reform attempts have not been successful. At times, school reform can have a reverse effect on student outcomes (Nicoll, 2014). School reform programs such as the Promise Academy model have been developed in response to increasing student achievement and other critical student outcome indicators (Nicoll, 2014). The local school where I conducted my study, a turnaround school directed under the Promise Academy model, has failed to make these positive changes in student achievement. Therefore, there was a need to examine what might have contributed to the failure of the Promise Academy model (and other reform models), and what might have contributed to some of the successes. By addressing these issues, school leaders and school stakeholders will be able to navigate through the strengths and the weaknesses of the Promise Academy model in order to achieve the highest level of success for our students.

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers, parents, and principals perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy model in Philadelphia public schools. These schools were identified as the lowest-performing schools in the city. Of the six Promise Academies, one failed to make continuous progress in reading and math

scores during the first 3 years of the initiative. This case study research included

interviews with teachers, principals, and parents pertaining to the implementation of the

Promise Academy model in the 2010-2011 school year. Prior to the implementation of

the Promise Academy model, the school had failed to meet AYP for 2 consecutive years.

Schools that do not meet AYP for 2 years enter improvement status. According to

NCLB, the key priority of this act is to provide educational options to students who have

been enrolled in a Title I school that has been targeted for improvement, corrective

action, or restructuring because the school has not met AYP for 2 or more years (Zimmer,

Gill, Booker & Lockwood, 2007). The demographics of the students in this study were

primarily African-American, with 2% being Latino. Although this school housed

Kindergarten through sixth grade in the 2010-2011 school year, grades seven and eight

were added in the following years. For the purposes of meeting AYP, only grades three

through eight are administered the statewide assessment.

By identifying what supported and what constrained the implementation of the

Promise Academy model at this school, this study provide insight to closing the

achievement gap in inner city schools. In this study, I identify the key components of the

Promise Academy model that are effective and ineffective to guide future research on

school reform and social change. Failure to address these deficits may lead to the death of

the traditional public schools in Philadelphia.

Guiding/Research Question

The following over-arching research questions were designed to guide this study:

Research Question 1: How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Research Question 2: How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Research Question 3: What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Review of the Literature

To frame this study, I reviewed the literature in order to understand the relationship between school reform and student achievement. I reviewed the school district documents and studies related to school reform, low-achieving schools, and fidelity of implementation. The databases I used to gather information included Ebhost, ERIC, Google Scholar, and Proquest. The specific search terms used were: *school reform, low-achieving schools, intervention programs, low-performing students, school improvement, education reform, school climate, turnaround schools, school reform models, successful school reform, fidelity of implementation, renaissance schools, restart model, effective school reform, ineffective school reform,* and *educational change theory.*

Conceptual Framework

Fullan (2006) developed a framework identifying several components needed for successful school reform initiatives both at the district-wide and individual school level. Fullan argued that many change theories are flawed and only focus on the surface of standards-based district-wide initiatives, professional learning communities, and the development and retention of quality educators. While these systems are flawed, Fullan

stated that educators and stakeholders need to learn to implement and execute new

strategies that work to change the entire educational setting to promote successful reform

efforts. According to Fullan (1982), the purpose of educational change is to effectively

aid schools in achieving goals by replacing practices with improved research-based

practices, which is the first fundamental point. The second fundamental point in the

theory of change is that individuals must find the meaning behind the change to have a

positive outcome (Fullan, 1982). The entire team of stakeholders including teachers,

administrators, and policy makers needs to understand the meaning of acceptance,

rejection, and modification (Fullan, 1982). The third component of educational change is

that the history and the climate of the setting can determine the outcome of the reform

efforts (Fullan, 1982). Fullan (1982) contended that as these three fundamental points are

addressed and taken into consideration, the reform efforts are more likely to be

successful.

Researchers have shown that change theory can drive and inform educational

reform strategies (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2006) argued that the following three strategies

can be more effective if implemented correctly: standards-based district-wide initiatives,

professional learning communities, and qualification frameworks that focus on the

development and retention of strong leaders. However, an unprecedented budget

shortfall in Philadelphia led to Promise Academies receiving less funding and support

than anticipated, and reforms such as Saturday school, summer academy, and summer

orientation for teachers were eliminated. Fullan (2014) stressed that standards-based

district-wide initiatives can work if educators learn to implement new ideas and strategies

based on the setting in which they work. Without the staff development during the summer months, Philadelphia teachers were less prepared and may not have been equipped to successfully implement the new program. Standards-based district-wide initiatives should focus more on how to be more effective in classrooms and cultures (Fullan, 2006). Nevertheless, budget cuts in this district have been a major barrier to the proper implementation of the program.

Another aspect of change theory is the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs), which involves teachers and school leaders working in collaboration to produce better student outcomes (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). The focus of the PLC should be to transform the culture of the school in addition to being used a program innovation (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). The third aspect of change theory involves retaining and recruiting highly qualified staff including teachers and other school leaders. Fullan (2006) argued that retaining and recruiting highly qualified teachers and leaders is only a small part of the solution. For positive change to occur, changing the individuals and changing the culture in which they work must happen simultaneously (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Fullan (2014) argued that educational change is becoming more complex than it was during earlier iterations of educational reform. Educational change and reform requires intensive action over a period of several years to be successful physically and attitudinally for educators to collaboratively work with observations, planning, and instructional practices (Fullan, 2014). The Renaissance Initiative and the Promise Academy model had only been in practice for 2 years when the program was not

implemented in the way it was intended; consequently, there may not have been fidelity to the program's model. Harn, Parisi, and Stoolmiller (2013) noted that every school or educational setting is unique, and the school should be matched with the appropriate intervention to ensure success and sustainability of the program. Fullan (2007) stated that if implemented properly, the change process can result in success, new commitments, and the excitement of accomplishing a major task.

Fullan (1993) also noted that the new problem of change in an educational setting is to build a learning organization as a way of life, and not just to implement the latest innovation. Fullan argued that the needs of a learning organization is very complex and changes will bring about many surprises; educators should have an open mindset to manage the new concept or idea of reform. Realistically, the implementation of programs and initiatives in schools and classrooms are not always consistent from week to week, and at times are not even consistent from day to day (Harn, Parisi & Stoolmiller, 2013). Hence, when measuring the fidelity of implementation, it is imperative that schools and researchers consider the changes within the school such as monetary constraints, and teacher and principal changes (Harn et al., 2013).

Change capacity is important for many reasons, one being education has a moral purpose to educate and develop students from all walks of life regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. In order for reform or educational change to be successful, educators should see themselves at change agents who continuously change with the times and keep themselves abreast with changes in society and how students learn (Fullan, 1993). Although educators play a major part in educational change, they

cannot accomplish this task alone. In addition to the teachers and administrators, businesses and corporation involved and embedded in the educational systems must focus on change along with building better partnerships with the local agencies to build more effective learning societies (Fullan, 1993). All stakeholders should be equally invested in educational change to build a society of lifelong learners equipped with the knowledge and skills to be successful as they continue their education at the postsecondary level and/or enter the workforce.

School Reform Strategies

School reform can be defined as a response to the call to improve student achievement for students enrolled in low-performing schools (Patterson, et al. 2013). Comprehensive school reform (CSR) came to the forefront of education during the 1990s to add to the existing initiatives that had not been successful (Patterson, et al. 2013). When the school districts were allowed to use Title I funds for the purpose of school-wide reform, the number of CSR models grew dramatically. To implement CSR models as school-wide reform efforts, the U.S. Department of Education distributed $1.8 billion in grants to more than 6,700 schools (Patterson et al, 2013). According to Patterson (2013), reforming the entire school, along with raising achievement through restructuring district and local level leadership, changing the climate of the school and implementing new instructional programs are the major goals of CSR. Although reform efforts begin with full funding and extreme measures are taken to ensure success, implementation with fidelity of the newly designed models rarely meet the desired goal (Patterson et al., 2013).

In 2010, President Obama announced that the American educational system should no longer be considered mediocre or marginal, hence, to the need to reorganize and restructure the current state of status quo (Mette, 2012). To be successful in these efforts, the Obama administration stated the need to turnaround the lowest-performing schools through school reform. The Obama administration provided approximately $3.5 billion to increase student achievement in these low-performing schools. Included in the funding are turnaround grants, specifically, Race to the Top grants which improve education standards, provides a college prep track for students, track student growth and instructional accountability, and attract highly qualified educators for the lowest-performing schools (Mette, 2012). Mette (2012) stated that in addition to meeting state and national requirements, reform efforts also have to satisfy the needs of all the stakeholders involved along with satisfying the needs of the school community. Additionally, Fullan (2006) stated the turnaround model does more harm than good in that is does not promote change in the community and the morale of the stakeholders is low, therefore.

Renaissance Schools

As defined by the School District of Philadelphia (2010), the Renaissance Schools initiative provides an opportunity for the schools, communities, and other stakeholders to develop a relationship with the goal of bringing about a dramatic transformation and improvement in the lowest-performing schools. This initiative centered on the core belief that students in these chronically low-performing schools have not been awarded a basic or successful educational experience that have provided the necessities needed to strive

and sore. According to research conducted by the School District of Philadelphia (2010), these schools need a change that facilitates a transformation of the entire learning environment. As a result of these consistently low-performing schools, the School District of Philadelphia sought to incorporate new research-based educational approaches to increase student achievement within its schools. Given greater autonomy, Renaissance schools have direct authority in school management providing more accountability for performance. The lowest performing schools are matched with turnaround teams that will be held accountable for the challenges faced with turning around schools and improving student outcomes.

There are three major components of the Renaissance Schools Initiative:

1. Identifying chronically low-performing district schools that are not likely to achieve dramatic improvements without transformative change (School District of Philadelphia, 2010).

2. Identifying individuals and organizations that have a proven track record in demonstrating student achievement and are prepared to turn around failing schools in Philadelphia (School District of Philadelphia, 2010).

3. Empowering school communities to play an active role in the turnaround and ongoing support of their school (School District of Philadelphia, 2010).

In order to be effective, the School District of Philadelphia (2010) stated that these three components must be incorporated with rigor and relevance to have a long-term positive effect. Two types of reform models were used in this initiative, the turnaround

and the restart models. The restart schools have been successful at improving student outcomes, whereas the turnaround schools have not. Although there was an increase after the first year of the Promise Academies, the local school of interest decreased 8 percentage points in reading and math proficiency after the second year (Wolford, Stratos, & Reitano, 2013). In this literature review, I address both the turnaround and restart model, though the turnaround model will be my primary focus in the remainder of this case study.

Turnaround Schools

Turnaround schools can be defined as changing extremely low performing schools into higher performing schools in a short period of time, more specifically, within three to five years (School District of Philadelphia, 2010). Schools that are considered for a turnaround model have been categorized "as the integrated, comprehensive combination of fundamental changes in program, people conditions, and (sometimes, but not necessarily) management and governance required to interrupt the status quo and put a school on a new track towards high performance" (Thielman, 2012). In order to turn around a school, the school principal must be replaced along with 50% of the instructional staff. The principal must have a proven track record to implement the prescribed improvement strategies set forth by the school district.   According to research (Wolford, Stratos, & Reitano, 2013) turnaround schools are more successful at the elementary level as opposed to the high school level. The data collected by the U.S. Department of Education point out that there has not been a proven successful turnaround

school, each school must be tailored to meet the needs of the schools' and districts' specific situation and needs.

Under the Title I School Improvement Grant program, school turnaround requires that schools need to show improvement quickly and dramatically (Corry & Carlson-Bancroft, 2014). The results presented in the 2008 Institute of Education Sciences showed that over 2,302 schools where identified and needed to be restructured or needed to follow the turnaround school model (Corry & Carlson-Bancroft, 2014). These schools that were designated to undergo restructuring had not met the requirement of AYP. According to Corry and Carlson (2014), some low performing schools have shown growth under within three years after following the guidelines of the turnaround model, however, 35% of the schools showed little to no improvement with increasing student achievement. Consequently, schools that were classified as true turnaround schools were able to sustain students scoring in the proficient range along with increasing math and reading scores by at least five percentile points (Corry & Carlson-Bancroft, 2014).

In comparison to the traditional school improvement or school reform efforts, which allow schools to make improvement over a longer period of time, the main objective for the School Improvement Grant is to achieve the same goal, turning around the nation's lowest performing schools, within a shorter period of time. Some observers, according to Corry and Carlson-Bancroft (2013) believed that turnaround schools are as a "distinct professional discipline that requires specialized experience, training, and support". According to research (Corry & Carlson-Bancroft, 2014), school turnaround is

necessary to improve the quality of education in low performing schools and is critical to the success of future students, parents, educators, and stakeholders.

Many organizations support the turnaround reform model, including the National Association of Elementary School Principals (Adelman & Taylor, 2013). After identifying the lowest performing schools, it is important to establish programs and interventions with rigor and relevance, give these schools adequate resources over a number of years to implement the interventions, then finally hold the schools accountable for increasing student achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 2011). However, some skeptics do not support the turnaround model, especially the component that requires the principal to be replaced. Researchers (Adelman & Taylor, 2011) indicated these skeptics or the non-supporters of the turnaround reform model believe the necessary resources should be allocated to the existing principal, allowing them to take part in the possible success of the identified low performing school. As stated earlier, the turnaround reform model requires that the current principal to be replaced. One critic, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, argued that the turnaround approach "places 100% of the responsibility on teachers and gives them zero percent of the authority" (Adelman & Taylor, 2011). Another critic, Dennis Van Rockel, president of the National Education Association, points out that there is an expectation that the turnaround model efforts be researched-based, yet the teachers are put in a position to take the blame if the model fails. The Promise Academy model, falls under the same category as the turnaround model.

Restart Model

The restart model under school reform, a traditional public school is converted to a charter school. A charter management organization (CMO), or an education management (EMO) competes to takeover the selected traditional public school. After careful consideration, and a rigorous review process, the district authorizes an organization that is best match to meet the needs of the school community. The school's new management team and organization is taken through an intensive interview process in which the applicant's team, instructional practices, proven track record and model's theory of action are all taken into account (Godt, 2010). As the school reopens under the restart model, all former students are allowed to enroll.

The primary goal of the restart model is to give the school a new start in hopes of making a positive change in culture of the school, without putting too much emphasis of what may have lead to the failure of other reform efforts the schools tried to implement (Godt, 2010). Operating as a charter school, the schools in the restart model, are given the freedom and autonomy to do things differently. Godt (2010) stated these charter schools are expected to set measurable goals and objectives for student achievement as well as collecting and reporting data on student outcomes. Additionally, consequences are set in place if the charter school fails to meet the requirements and targets set forth by the initial contract between the school district and the CMO or EMO. The consequences can be severe such as being denied to renew the contract with the school or revocation of the contract for the restart model (Godt, 2010).

Fidelity of Implementation

The Promise Academies under the Renaissance Initiative required the school district to implement several changes to bring about change and improvement in the schools. In order for this initiative to be successful, the prescribed intervention must be carried out in the way it was intended to be implemented. After the first year of the implementation of the Renaissance Initiative, all of the Promise Academies made student gains. However, after the second year of the turnaround, the school of interest decreased 8 percentage points in reading and math scores (Wolford, Stratos, & Reitano, 2013). There were changes to the program that could have possibly lead to the decline in scores and lack of success. Harn, Parisi and Stoolmiller (2013) described fidelity of implementation as the degree to which an intervention or treatment plan is implemented as intended. According to et al. (2013), treatment fidelity, or the application of an intervention as it is designed, is essential for the success of any research based practices. Consequently, some researchers agree that if the research based practices are implemented with high fidelity, improved outcome will be the end result, however, low fidelity will result in poor outcomes. The primary goal of measuring fidelity is to determine and record the internal validity of the evaluation study while providing evidence taken from the study to prove or disprove that the intervention was not subjected to other outside variables (Missett & Foster, 2015). For instance, if there is a major change, but the intervention was not implemented as it had been prescribed, then the end results can be attributed to typical maturation, general education instructional

practices, another variation of the intervention, or other causes or issues (Harn et al., 2013).

Kutash, et al. (2013) explained there are four reasons that are used for measuring the fidelity of an implemented program; (1) determination if the program is producing the desired effect, (2) prevention of program implementation error, (3) the identification of contributing factors that lead to successful implementation, and (4) examining the effects of any adaptation made to the program. According to Kutash, et al., in order for the research-based program to be successful, it is imperative for the fidelity to be closely measured. At times, it is necessary to alter the intervention and to deviate from the original blueprint to adapt to its current educational setting. These deviations need to be identified and measured along with prescribed program components. When the fidelity of a program or intervention is measured, along with providing specific information as to which components are being implemented with fidelity and which are not, it also serves as a guide to future programs (Kutash, et al., 2013).

Swain, Finney and Gerstner (2014) described the above components further, calling them: program differentiation, exposure, adherence, quality of delivery and responsiveness. Program differentiation consists of defining various components of the program. Exposure is used to compare the time frame of the program being implemented, how much exposure the participants actually got to the intended intervention. Swain et al. pointed out, if the planned amount of time and the actual amount of time are not aligned properly, then the leaders of the program may need to spend more time to completely implement the program correctly. Next, adherence refers to the leaders'

opinion and approach in relation to the program, which is directly related to how the aspects may or may not be implemented, and can also have an impact on the students' success in the program (Swain et al., 2014). Lastly, they define responsiveness as "a measure of participant response to program sessions, which may include indicators such as levels of participation and enthusiasm (p. 7). Swain et al. suggested that program evaluators who adhere to the checklist of the five components have an increased level of program fidelity.

Interventions for Low Achieving Students

In the past decades, school reform in the United States, particularly in urban areas, has been implemented and explored through various programs. School reform has been a major pathway into changing the outcome of student achievement, however, little has actually changed (Lunenburg, 2013). Some believe that educational reform efforts need to be based on a foundation of core principles that have been identified to reform the entire organization, not just individual students, or one classroom, school or community (Lunenburg, 2013). The Coalition of Essential Schools is a recent initiative program that implemented and addressed these core beliefs which include personalized instruction while maintaining an intellectually challenging program. This is one of many reform efforts in the hopes of changing student outcomes.

Although school reform has been organized and created to increase student achievement, some programs have failed in their attempts. One particular program, in one school has failed to increase student achievement consecutively over the past four years. The Promise Academy at the local school of interest has shown an increase in

student achievement after the first year of implementation followed by a decrease in student scores after the third year. According to Fleischman and Heppen (2009) effective school reform and interventions can be difficult to integrate because of the many challenges that underperforming schools face, such as low reading and math achievement scores, lack of safety at school, the inability to retain effective teachers in the neediest schools, and the intensity of efforts to restructure low performing schools. With the local school of interest, the new model was started with more resources, initiatives to retain some of the best and dedicated teachers, and longer school hours. One year after the new model and new teacher incentives were started, they abruptly came to an end as the school district was in a major financial deficit. Although there were some gains in the first year of the Promise Academy models, there was still a great need for the program to maintain the strategies that helped to improve student achievement.

Murnane, Sawhill and Snow (2012) stated that if these planned school reforms are well-structured and embrace the new curriculum that has been set in place, the new model or program can effectively implement the components of the standards. In order for school reform to be effective, there is a need to have the teachers buy in to the new structure, the new model, including the entire educational infrastructure. For example, a comprehensive school reform would include programs that attract, promote, and reward high quality teachers (Murnane et al., 2012). Ravitch (2011) addressed creating and implementing new reforms can lead to decreased enrollment for the highly motivated students in low performing schools. Also, school reforms can lead to the firing of good teachers based on unreliable test schools, having teachers teach to the test, and setting

lower standards for students. Ravitch believed parents and students should have a choice in receiving a quality public education without having to travel far from home. Challenges can arise when implementing and developing new standards and a new curriculum in reforming a school or a school district (Murnane et al., 2012). However, Ravitch recommended that school reform be implemented through an outstanding national curriculum, with clearly defined standards guided by student assessment that is evidently aligned with the standards.

Unsuccessful Reform Efforts

According to Rose (2015) school reform changes with the times in relation to social change or economic transformation. Rose stated the nation's educational system is flawed by unequal funding and school politics. Rose argued that the NCLB Act was incorporated into our educational system due to the low expectations of stakeholders including teachers and administrators. According Rose another assumption, school reform efforts under the NCLB Act encourages educators to teach to the test, in which other areas of the educational program were neglected. Reducing time in other areas of students' educational program or elective classes fails to enhance the whole student. The information in this article suggests the interventions that have been implemented to increase student achievement often fail to meet the needs for the educational crisis in school reform (Rose, 2015).

Another contributing factor for the lack of success in school reform is the funding of philanthropist and other corporate sectors that have no scholarly or practical expertise in the area of education (Kumashiro, 2012). According to Kumashiro (2012), the

information suggests by allowing these corporations to fund individual schools and school districts also allows them to have an unparalleled influence over educational policies and the communities in which they are making these financial contributions. Consequently, educational decisions are being made by people who have little to no experience in education or urban educational reform (Kumashiro, 2012). Although public education has always been linked to the business sector, the current corporate and business sectors have a major influence in the experimental educational reforms that are not proven research-based practices in which have not shown to produce effective results.

According to Ramberg (2014), teachers work in a culture of isolation which does little to improve the quality of education or to implement positive educational reform. Ramberg (2014) also argued that while teachers teach in isolation, their practices often do not change as the movement of reform or educational change has been initiated as a school wide practice. Teachers attitudes toward educational change can contribute to the failure of school reform (Rambert, 2014). Many teachers do not have any input or influence on the changes that take place, whether it be the school culture, school curriculum, or the overall school environment. In addition, because of the extreme pressures of education reform in the local schools, teachers have ignored these high demands of implemented the new practices (Rambert, 2014). Again, lack of teacher input and decreased teacher morale leads to unsuccessful reform efforts.

Successful School Reform Efforts

According to Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith and Albritton (2013), successful schools are those led by administrators who assume ownership, responsibility,

competency, and a connection with the school community that he or she serves. The

leaders who are responsible for transforming low performing schools are able to

articulate their vision and mission to all who are involved including the community,

educators, stakeholders and students (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013).   Leaders and

administrators create an environment that motivates others to buy into the shared vision

and mission of the school community. To ensure a school climate that is conducive to

learning, the culture is embedded in such a way that it becomes a part of the everyday life

of the students and staff (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013). Throughout this educational process,

the community needs to actively participant in the efforts to improve the learning

outcomes of the students. Kohler-Evans et al. stated in order for school reform to be

successful, a challenging curriculum with instructional strategies and real world

applications that addresses the differences in learning styles among the students and the

adults has to be implemented. In essence, school reform builds the foundation for lifelong

learners. It has been said that great schools make great communities, in the same way,

great communities make great schools. School reform efforts in a total community

educational partnership including students, parents, educators, community members and

area business are moving in the right direction for success.

Bartell (2012) further asserted that success happens when reform efforts is

connected with the daily realities of urban schools and neighborhoods. According to

Bartell, success is not achieved in isolation of specific factors, success cannot be based on

leaderships programs, success cannot be based on specific educational programs, nor can

it be based on improved pedagogy. Research suggests that successful school reform

efforts need to be measured beyond high school, and needs to be measured and documented through post high school graduation into the workforce (Bartell, 2012). In addition, Bartell stated higher levels of student expectations, and a school climate that fosters and supports student learning and development can produce positive and effective reform efforts with increased student success. With the partnerships, an environment conducive to learning is formed, fostering an entire community sharing the same vision and mission of building a world-class school.

Current theories and research on effective schools serving low achieving students indicate that strong leadership, an educational environment conducive to learning, high staff morale, research and evidence based decision making, and a high level of efficacy are the major characteristics of successful school reform (Wang, Walters & Thum, 2013). An environment that has set standards and high expectations that are clearly defined to students, teachers, and parents produce students that are academically motivated. Wang, Walters, and Thum (2013) explained that this type of environment is indicative of a culture that promotes life long learners in both the students and staff.   Wang et al. also pointed out that there is a strong correlation between schools with strong leaders and students' educational success. Principals who communicate the school's vision and mission, along with the purpose and standards tend to have greater outcomes in turning around a low performing school. According to research (Wang et al., 2013), schools with high staff morale, staff stability along with collaboration, and teacher satisfaction is also associated with student achievement. Research (Want et al., 2013) also suggests schools that are effective in reform efforts, use data to drive instruction and to monitor student

progress throughout the school year. Wang et al. pointed out that teacher efficacy has a positive effect on student success. More importantly, the teachers' openness to reform leads to well prepared lessons, which contributes to increased student achievement.

As with the Renaissance Initiative, the school administrators were replaced. According to Nedelcu (2013), successful school reform is attached to effective educational leadership including instructional school leadership, transformational school leadership and distributed school leadership. Instructional school leadership mainly focuses on teaching and learning. Leaders or principals under this type of leadership articulates the school's mission, manages the instructional program and builds a positive learning environment (Nedelcu, 2013). Nedelcu described the transformative leader as one who innovates the organization from a top down approach in which the principal. The transformative leader motivates and inspires teachers and students to be cognoscente of the significance of educational changes while being an active participant by playing their role. Nedelcu explained that the distributed leader primarily delegates responsibilities to other designated educational leaders in the organization as opposed to managing the organization independently. Based on research conducted by Nedelcu, the three leadership models all focuses on creating a shared vision, setting high expectations for both teachers and students, and improving teaching and learning. According to current Nedelco, successful school reform efforts can be attributed to strong leadership, a positive school environment and climate, high teacher morale. When implementing these attributes in conjunction with one another, the ultimate outcome is an increase in student achievement.

Summary of Literature Review

Increasing student growth and turning around low performing schools has been the focus of educational research for a number of years (Corry & Carlson-Bancroft, 2014). Educational stakeholders including public and private sectors have responded to improve student outcomes by implementing and developing initiatives that provide additional support and resources as part of reform efforts. These programs, particularly the Renaissance Initiative was effective the first year of implementation, however, failed to continue on an upward trajectory. There has not been much research on the effectiveness of the Renaissance Initiative and the Promise Academy model, but without high fidelity of implementation, any program runs the risk of low student outcomes (Harn et al., 2013). According to Harn et al., the main reason to examine the fidelity of implementation is to help to explain why programs or interventions succeed or fail. School reform efforts such as the Promise Academy Model Renaissance Initiative can be successful if implemented correctly and monitored on a consistent basis. Student success or failure rates can then be attributed to the success or failure of the program itself. The intent of this case study was to explore how teachers, parents, and principals perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy model.

Implications

The analysis of the perceptions of teachers, parents, and the administrators through qualitative interviews provided insights into what supports were needed to implement a school reform model that consistently improve student outcomes in this setting. The results indicated what schools and school districts need to focus on to

continue on the path of student success. The analysis of the interview data provided indications that the teachers and administrators working in turnaround schools implementing reform initiatives could benefit from additional and continuous professional development to increase student performance. The outcome included that the program initiative designed specifically for school improvement should be carried out as it was intended. This study is limited to one elementary school, therefore, future research could be conducted at other elementary schools and high schools.

It is my assessment that improvements in fidelity of implementation, and continuous professional development can lead to increased student outcomes at the local, state and national levels. More specifically, the PSSA scores at the state level could result in increased student achievement. Misset and Foster (2015) stated the fidelity of implementation can constrain or enhance the effectiveness of a program, hence, determining whether the research-based practices have been successful. The continuous professional development for both teachers and principals would help to increase fidelity of implementation of the program ensuring all elements are constantly executed. At various times, the intended direction of the Promise Academy model was not implemented as it was intended. The on-going professional development would assist in maintaining the core components of the Promise Academy model while ensuring the students, teachers, and principals are making steady progression towards success. Utilizing a case study will help the researcher to better gain a deeper understanding the stakeholders' perceptions of the implementation of this specific reform model. As a

result, the research suggested, professional development may lead to higher rate of program fidelity and increased student outcomes.

Summary

Previous research studies (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013). have presented school reform efforts and how various program initiatives were implemented in which most have improved student outcomes, however, the research site school had not produced student achievement as it was predicted. The first section of this project study discussed the identification of low performing schools in the local district of interest, and then the implementation of the Renaissance School Initiative in these identified schools. More specifically, the local research site school did not make study progress in the time frame given for the implementation of the initiative. This section included a review of literature discussing the types of school reforms, the definition of school reform and more specifically, the Renaissance School Initiative, restart model, turnaround model, and the Promise Academies. Additionally, this section included examples of successful and unsuccessful reform efforts, and fidelity of implementation. The literature noted that if the program is implemented with high fidelity, there will be an improvement with student outcomes, however, if there is low fidelity in the implementation of the program, and the treatment plan was not implemented as intended, resulting in poor student outcomes. Fullan's educational change theory was used as the theoretical framework for the study. Since the Promise Academies have started, there has been no research to determine the effectiveness of this specific model. The main elements of the Promise Academies were

academic, behavioral, parental involvement, and school district supports in hopes to increase student achievement or to make AYP.

In the second section of this study, the research design and methodology, along with the sample and setting are discussed. The instruments used to collect data to address the local problem are described in the next section of this study. The results were be used to identify the contributing factors that lead to the failure of the local school of interest and will be used to facilitate successful implementation and positive outcomes for future program initiatives. Section 2 consists of the following segments: the research design and approach, sample and setting, instruments and materials, data collection and analysis, and assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

To determine the specific method of research to conduct, first the research was narrowed to focus on the research questions, research problem, and goal. The School District of Philadelphia (2013) has recognized that there is a serious problem with students failing to achieve at or above grade level in underserved areas and schools in the city. More specifically, six schools have been identified as the lowest-performing schools in the district, which are now called Promise Academies. The local school of interest had shown an increase in reading and math scores after the first year of the implementation of the Promise Academy model, followed by an 8 percentage point decrease during the third year. Given this decrease in academic achievement, this study was designed to address the following questions: How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy?

The goal of this study was to explore how teachers, parents, and principals perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy model. Research studies on school reform generally examine school reform as a whole with emphasis on NCLB. Some researchers have examined how the students who are considered to be at-risk or lower-performing are not succeeding under the NCLB Act. However, the purpose of this case study was to explore and examine a specific program that was put into operation under the direct supervision of the school district's superintendent. This program was

implemented in response to failing schools and underachieving students in low-income

areas, but fell short of making the predicted gains in student success.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative research design was used to examine teachers', parents', and

administrators' perceptions of the Promise Academy. This methodology allows the

research problem to be explored and to be better understood during the time period of the

study (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research focuses on how people interpret their

experiences in a particular situation and how these experiences contribute to the meaning

of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative approach was a suitable choice for

this study in that the teachers and administrators that were selected to participate were

able to share perceptions regarding the Promise Academy model at the local school of

interest. Because of lack of research in this area, little is known on how educational

stakeholders perceive this model. Employing a qualitative design approach allowed the

teachers, administrators, and parents to openly express their feelings and attitudes

towards implementing this program.

A qualitative case study design was chosen because it enabled me to conduct an

investigation of the research problem within its real life environment (see Merriam,

2009). Case study allows the researcher to study a specific case while incorporating real

world perspectives performances (Yin, 2014). I used this qualitative case study approach

to understand participants' interpretations of the implementation process of the Promise

Academy model. Prior to deciding on the case study, program evaluation was

considered, but rejected. Researchers use evaluations to collect data on the value or the

worth of a program, and then establish a foundation for future decisions based on the outcome of the study (Merriam, 2009). Program evaluation was not used because the purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of the educational stakeholders involved in the Promise Academy, rather than judge, evaluate, or assess the value of the program. Because my intent was to develop a deeper understanding of educational stakeholders' perceptions of the Promise Academy, a qualitative case study was the appropriate methodological choice.

After determining that a qualitative case study would be used for this study, then it had to be decided on which type of case study to use. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), the three terms used to describe case studies are collective, instrumental, and intrinsic. A collective case study was not used because it would have entailed more than one case, and only one case was used. Using an instrumental case study was considered, but decided against it because instrumental studies are best used to help to refine a theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Intrinsic case studies do not designed to prove or support a theory; rather, researchers use them to explore the uniqueness of a specific situation or case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The primary intent was to better understand a specific case, the Promise Academy, therefore, an intrinsic case study was implemented.

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Participants

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Criteria for Selecting Participants

Fifteen participants were selected using a purposive sample selected from the population site. The sample included 10 teachers, three parents, and two school administrators. The administrators were asked to identify the teachers who have

experience in both traditional public school settings and in the Promise Academy setting. There are 41 teachers at the local school of interest, from which 10 were selected to participate in the study. After the administrators identified these teachers who met the specific criteria, the administrator was asked for the email address of the teachers and then sent emails to the identified teachers asking if they would be willing to participate in the study. The first 10 teachers who agreed to participate were selected to be included in the study. Also the administrators who were selected were approached to participate in the study because they had experience working at two schools under the Promise Academy model and in several traditional schools over the past 20 years. The three parent participants who were asked to participate had volunteered at the local school of interest for over 5 years, and had observed the challenges and changes that have occurred since the implementation of the Promise Academy model. The remaining 12 participants, including the teachers and the administrators, represented 27% of the staff at the local school of interest.

Justification for the number of participants. Fifteen participants were chosen for in-depth interviews specific to one particular site in order to gain a detailed, knowledgeable, and thorough responses and real-world insight. The main objective in this project study was to provide information about one site and one case in which only a few participants would be sufficient. If a larger number of participants had been selected, the responses to the open-ended interview questions could result in superficial or unsubstantiated perspectives (see Creswell, 2009). Additionally, Creswell (2009) stated

that gathering and analyzing qualitative data takes a great deal of time, and adding a

larger number of participants could unnecessarily lengthen this process.

Access to Participants

Permission was obtained to conduct this project study with the teachers and

parents at the local school of interest from the administrators. For the purpose of this

study, these teachers were selected for their knowledge and experience working at the

local school of interest for over 3 consecutive years, including the first year of the

implementation of the Promise Academy model. After obtaining permission from

Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval # 03-14-16-0156237),

and the principal at my study site, the researcher sent a notification stating the purpose of

the study via school district email, along with a letter of invitation and an informed

consent form.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

A large part of qualitative research entails collecting and analyzing data from

research participants. Because of the nature of the questions and information obtained,

confidentiality was stressed before and during the data collection phase. Given (2008)

stated that the quality of information and the kind of information disclosed during this

phase largely depends on the type of relationship the researcher and the participant have

with each other. Researcher-participant relationships vary, and can be described as a

close working relationship or a more distant impersonal relationship (Given, 2008). I

have worked in the capacity of a fellow teacher and peer to the participants for at least 3

consecutive years; therefore, I considered our relationship to be a close working

relationship. For the past year, I have worked with the participants in the same setting as an intervention specialist. In my current role, I have supported the participants in their discipline needs and classroom management strategies. In the invitation letter, I included the goal of the study and the exact role of the participants. To gain a richly detailed description of the participants' feelings and opinions regarding the topic of study, the interviews were conducted in a less formal setting. At times, conducting interviews or having conversations at work about issues within the system may create anxiety. For the participants to feel more comfortable, they were asked if their preference was to conduct the interview outside of the workplace. The overall goal was to allow the participants to be able to freely share their thoughts and ideas, and to capture the full complexity and uniqueness of the information that was provided.

Ethical Protection for Participants

Prior to conducting the interviews for the study, the participants were informed that approval was granted from the IRB at Walden University to ensure and protect certain rights of all participants. It was explained to the participants that signing the informed consent form would guarantee them certain rights, and that by signing, they were agreeing to participate in the study (see Creswell, 2009). In the form, participants were reassured that their confidentiality and privacy would be protected, and they would also be protected from harm. In addition, approval was obtained to conduct this study from the principal who is responsible for instructional well-being and maintaining a positive school climate. It was made clear to the participants in the letter of interest that involvement in this study was on a volunteer basis and the participants could withdraw at

any time. The letter of interest explained the goal of the study and the roles and responsibilities of each person participating. Participants were informed that their names would not be used in the study. The participants were informed they would be identified by numbers in the data analysis section of the study. Participants were encouraged to have any concerns explained or clarified at any time during the interviews.

Data Collection

Interviews

Interview data were used as the data collection tool. Qualitative interviews were chosen to gain a better insight on the participants' perceptions the Promise Academy model. Ten teachers, two administrators, and three parents were interviewed after school hours, according to the participants' availability. The teachers, administrators, and parents were given a choice as to where they would like to conduct the interview, at school after school hours, or at a local bookstore after school hours. Each interview consisted of nine questions, and lasted approximately 20 minutes. The interview data was recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Conducting interviews was chosen because they have proven to be valid and reliable data collection method, and was determined that they would provide valuable information to guide this project study in an effort to improve student outcomes when implementing new initiatives in traditional public schools. In case study research, the goal is not to simplify what cannot be simplified, but rather understand the meaning of an experience based on the perspective of the participant (Merriam, 2009). To check for validity and reliability, Creswell (2009) suggested that researchers use member checking,

conducting a follow-up interview allowing the participants to determine whether the recorded response was accurate and the interpretation of the response was valid. Triangulation was another method that was used to check for validity and reliability; gathering information from different sets of people about the same concept offers different views on the experience or situation (Glesne, 2011). To ensure data triangulation, the different sets of participants included teachers, administrators, and parents. Having this range of participants allowed me to gather various viewpoints, perspectives, and feelings about one particular topic.

One-on-one Interviews

Although one-on-one interviews are considered to be the most time consuming, this was the most appropriate method in collecting data for this qualitative case study. During one-on-one interviews, the researcher's role is to ask a specific set of questions and records the responses from only one participant at a time (Creswell, 2009). Conducting one-on-one interviews allows the participants to express their thoughts using their own words without the influence of other opinions as in focus group interviews (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Focus group interviews were also considered to use as a data collection tool, but the responses would have been shared with an entire group at the same time, and could interfere or influence the responses of others in the group, therefore, this data collection tool was not chosen.

Interview Protocol. One semi-structured interview was conducted with each teacher, the administrators and the parents participating in this study. The open-ended questions included on the interview protocol were the guiding questions that lead to the issue

explored in this study (Merriam, 2009). Included in the interview protocol was the

purpose for the study, which was to examine the factors that have constrained the

implementation of the promise academies at one school site from the stakeholders

perspectives (parents, teachers and two administrators). The interview protocol explained

that the data collected and information obtained was used to guide the successful

implementation of future school initiatives and other school reform efforts. The

participants were reminded that by signing the Informed Consent form will ensure

confidentiality of the interview, protect them from harm during and after the interview,

and each participant will remain anonymous. The participants were informed that the

interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed. Copies of the interview questions

were shared with the participants prior to the actual interview. During the interviews,

notes were taken to keep an accurate account of the participants' personal reflections and

opinions regarding what lead to the failure of one Promise Academy. Prior to the

interview, a document from the School District of Philadelphia was shared with each

participant. This document included data outlining the school's performance for the first

four years of the implementation of the Promise Academy model. Although the

participants were asked to share their experiences, knowledge and expertise, the

document provided useful information to assist in making educated responses. The

research questions are: 1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise

Academy? 2) How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 3)

What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy? The

questions asked pertained to the participants' knowledge of the Promise Academy model

and the traditional public school practices. The participants were able to compare, contrast, and reflect on the practices in both the traditional and Promise Academy setting. Therefore, conducting interviews with the selected participants brought a meaningful insight to the research and guiding questions.

Source for Data Collection Instrument. The main source for data collection in this qualitative case study were the participants' interviews. The interview protocol data collection sheet was developed by the researcher using the research questions along with the guiding questions. Key components of the program were addressed, collected and analyzed.

Timeline. Data was collected over a ten-week period. This time frame allowed approximately one week conducting the interviews with each of the fifteen participants. One week for two participants allowed time to record and transcribe the data derived from the interviews. Ten weeks allowed information to be gathered, which was needed to support this project study.

Tracking and Sorting Data. As the interviews were conducted interviews and data were collected, notes were taken using a reflective journal along with audio-recording the session with each participant. At the end of each interview, my handwritten notes were transcribed onto the computer creating a database. By transcribing the interview notes from the reflective journal to computer files or databases, and writing other small notes or memos to yourself, assists in organizing and keeping up with data (Glesne, 2011). Interviewing one participant each week allowed the data to be organized, and then stored in a secured database. Yin (2014) stated that utilizing a database improves the reliability

of a case study allowing the researcher to sort, organize and track data sources including field notes, documents, photographs and audio files. This method allowed me to easily access the data collected, and to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

Gaining access to participants. Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the principal for the teachers participating at the local school of interest. Ten teachers, two administrators and three parent participants were located at the same site where I am currently work as an Intervention Specialist/Dean of Students. The participants were selected on a voluntary basis and were reminded that they will remain anonymous and all responses are confidential. After the permission from the Walden University Research Ethics Board and the principal of the study site were both obtained, an email was sent to the ten participants containing the purpose of the study along with two attachments: an invitation letter and the Informed consent. Each of these documents explained the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, privacy and anonymity information, and the role of the participants. The teachers, the administrators, and the parents were required to sign and return the Informed Consent before the study can be conducted.

Role of the Researcher. I have been employed with the School District of Philadelphia at Dr. Ethel Allen Promise Academy for four years first as a teacher, and now as an Intervention Specialist. I have a professional relationship with all of the participants including the ten teachers, the administrator and the parent participants. The relationship I had with the participants is that of a supporter in the capacity of managing disciplinary issues or concerns of the students. I did not serve as a direct supervisor with the teachers,

therefore, our relationship did not influence the interviews or data collection. My

relationship was similar with the administrator in that I work in conjunction with the

principal as a support to manage behavioral concerns or situations. Again, the

relationship with the administrator and myself did not have any baring or bias on the data

collection process.

Data Collection

Once the data had been collected, it was then analyzed. Although throughout the

research process the data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, there was a

continued search for a deeper meaning and understanding of the research questions and

interview responses. Lodico et al. stated that data in qualitative research are analyzed as

the researcher reads and reviews interview transcripts to develop themes and patterns that

occur while conducting research. The coding, timeline, trustworthiness, and other data

analysis techniques are described below.

Timeline. When conducting qualitative research, data collection and analysis occur

concurrently (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The data were analyzed as the interviews were

conducted, which beginning after the first week of interviewing the participants. Data

collection continued to occur after each interview had been completed and then

transcribed. Each week, one to two interviews were conducted then transcribe the data at

the end of each week. Since there are fifteen participants, the data collection and analysis

occurred over ten-week time frame. After the ten weeks of the interviews and data

collection, the data were analyzed and coded for an additional three weeks. All relative

themes and patterns within the data were explored and then coded.

Coding and categories. Open coding and analytical coding was used to analyze the interview data collected. Although specific questions were asked during the interview, using the open coding during the beginning of my research allowed for any type of response from the participants. As the interviews were conducted, analytical coding was employed based on the interpretation and meaning derived from the interview responses (Merriam, 2009). After the interview transcripts and notes were compared, sorted and analyzed, the data was then categorized into themes or categories. Merriam (2009) described these categories as separating them into "buckets or baskets into which each segments of texts are placed" (p 182). The data was coded into three separate groups; parent responses, administrator responses, and teacher responses. The codes used were short phrases used consistently throughout the data collection process. After coding and sorting the data, similarities and themes were noted and separated. Files were created labeling each category, then each unit of data coded according to each theme was put into that particular folder. The data placed in the files contained the participants name and original identifying codes.

Trustworthiness. To establish a more trustworthy, valid and reliable research, triangulation of sources was used in this qualitative case study. The participants for this study were chosen using purposeful sampling, which allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding for the failure of one Promise Academy. The teacher participants in the study were able to add rich details answering the research questions from a teacher's perspective, adding information relating to instructional practices, school climate and teacher expectations. The parent participants were able to provide information focusing

on what was "promised" to parents under the Promise Academy model and providing an opinion about the successful and unsuccessful practices that were implemented during this school reform effort. The administrators were able to provide information regarding the educational practices, administrators and teacher expectations, and support given through the school district. All of the responses were compared and contrasted to substantiate themes and categories used in the research. This triangulation method included interview data collected from staff members with different perspectives that has strengthened the internal validity of the study (Creswell 2009). Utilizing triangulation from different data sources within the same method provided information by examining evidence from different sources to build justification for themes and categories, which added to the validity of the study (Creswell, 2009).

Peer review. All researchers have the peer review process built into the project study research in that the project study committee reads, comments, and provide feedback on the findings (Merriam, 2009). In addition to having the committee review my research and findings, I also had a colleague review my research. The colleague was asked to scan the data and to check for any validity or reliability issues.

Member checking. After each interview was transcribed and summarized, members or participants involved in the study and the researcher utilized member checking. This validity strategy assisted in determining if the findings taken in the final report are accurate (Creswell, 2009). In this research study, a follow-up interview or member checks with the participants allowed them to comment for any discrepancies. By

utilizing member checks, the participant had an opportunity to correct any errors in the data collected and to add any additional information to the study (Creswell, 2009).

Audit trail. In addition to triangulation, peer review and member checks, an audit trail was also used to ensure reliability and validity. An audit trail gives an account of how data were collected, describes how categories were formed, and how decisions were made during the qualitative research process (Merriam, 2009). A research journal was kept to record detailed notes, along with the process of the how the data were analyzed. The notes reflected my thoughts, reflections of interviews, and any problems that had occurred while collecting data. During the data collection process, notes were taken of the ongoing process of each stage. Utilizing an audit trail has built creditability, dependability and confirmability.

Discrepant cases. After the interviews had been conducted, there were no issues with coding and analyzing the data collected that might have contradicted the overall theme of the study. When dealing with discrepant cases, findings that are disconfirming data will be compared and contrasted to confirming data to better understand the complexities of the research study. These repeated investigations or review of information allows the researcher to accurately reflect and record the participants responses and experiences (Morrow, 2005).

Data Analysis Results

This qualitative study gave insight the factors that enhanced and constrained the success of one Promise Academy. The study allowed the stakeholders to share their

insight from their experiences working and/or volunteering at the Promise Academy for over five years. The following research questions guided this study:

1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

2) How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

3) What are the principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy?

This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of ten teachers, two administrators, and three parent volunteers from an urban school district in southeastern Pennsylvania. The participants were required to have been in the same school or Promise Academy for five years. The teachers and administrators were required to have been at the Promise Academy during the first two years of implementation and having the experience of working at a traditional public school prior to working at the Promise Academy. The interviews were conducted from the end of March 2016 and concluded in June 2016. Data analysis began in May 2016 and ended in July 2016.

Collection and Treatment of Data

Initially, all qualifying participants were contacted by email and sent the Letter of Invitation describing the terms and procedures of the study. The email address of each of the participants were provided by the administrator. The administrator was informed that the names and email addresses were needed of all the teachers who had worked at the Promise Academy and who also had experience in working at traditional public schools. Next, the first ten teacher participants that responded to the email were selected to participate, and were then emailed the Informed Consent. The two administrators were

also emailed a Letter of Invitation, and after their response, another email containing the

Informed Consent was sent. Due to the low number of parent participants with the

requirements to participate in the study, only four were asked to participate. Three of the

four parent volunteers, agreed to participate and were also sent a Letter of Invitation,

followed by the Informed Consent. After receiving consent from each of the participants,

the interviews were scheduled. Each participant selected the date, time, and the location

for the interviews to be conducted. Although the participants were given a choice to

participate in the interview at school or at the local coffee shop, all of the participants

opted to remain at the school for the interview. The interview was conducted and guided

using the Interview Protocol included in Appendix B. The interviews were conducted in

person. The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. One week

following the interview, a brief meeting was conducted with each participant to review

the transcribed interviews for member checking. All participants reviewed their

responses and no changes were required for the transcribed notes.

One-on-one semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted using the

Interview Protocol that consisted of nine open-ended questions. After the interviews

were completed, common themes were identified within the participant responses. The

themes used to analyze the data was directly linked to the theoretical framework. Fullan

(2006) argued that the following three strategies relating to school reform could be more

effective if implemented correctly; standards-based district-wide initiatives, professional

learning communities, and qualification frameworks that focus on the development and

retention of strong leaders. The codes and themes were developed after the interview

data was reread and analyzed. The codes used were numbers that corresponded with each participant.

The themes identified were:

1. The Promise Academy was successful the first two years of implementation.

2. The extended school day and Saturday school made a positive impact on student success.

3. The smaller class sizes during years one and two of the Promise Academy helped to increase student achievement.

4. The principal during years one and two assisted in the increase in student achievement.

5. The consistent teacher staff during years one and two helped to increase achievement.

6. After the second year of the Promise Academy, student achievement declined due to change in leadership and change in teachers.

7. After funds were decreased, the components of the program were diminished which lead to a decrease in student achievement.

Participant Narratives

Three research questions guided this study: 1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 2) How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 3) What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Participant 1

Participant 1 is an Administrator in her third year at the Promise Academy in the School District of Philadelphia. At the time of the study, the Promise Academy served 540 students ranging in grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. During her time as an administrator at the Promise Academy, the school has added on two additional grades. When participant 1 started as an administrator at the Promise Academy, the school served grades Kindergarten through sixth grades. Additionally, participant 1 also has experience working at a traditional public school as a teacher and an administrator.

Fidelity of Implementation of Initiatives. When Participant 1 began working as an administrator three years ago, the Promise Academy implemented several initiatives to increase student achievement. First, the developers of the Promise Academies had developed specific guidelines, regulations, and practices to be followed by the staff and the students. The Promise Academy required for the teachers and students to be in school for an extended hour each day. The students and staff were also required to attend Saturday school each Saturday. Participant 1 stated "during the first two years of the implementation of the Promise Academy, specific regulations and stipulations were in place to enhance student achievement." She also discussed during the first two years of the program, the Promise Academy implemented standard procedures into the school day, such as designated intervention programs, a longer school day, town hall meetings, and weekly professional development for the teachers. During the first two years of the Promise Academy model, these initiatives were met with fidelity which lead to an increase in student success.

As participant 1 assessed the failures and successes of the program, she recognized the Promise Academy program was not implemented with fidelity. Participant 1 stated during years one and two, "teacher leaders were trained each week and were then able to do a turn around training with the teachers". However, when the money allocated for these specific programs were no longer available, the programs were no longer implemented. Other programs that were once operational; Saturday school, longer school days and family field trips "were tied to dollars, and when the money went away, the programs went away." Because of the lack of funds, participant 1 stated " this strained the trajectory to greater performance." The Promise Academy model was not implemented as it was designed.

School Culture. When participant 1 described the school culture, she stated "It felt like you were at a private school, the hallways were quiet and clean, the halls were monitored and there were just as many parent volunteers in the building as there were teachers." In addition, participant 1 described the school culture as an "academic culture of going to college." This culture created a sense of family and setting a new standard of historically low performing students will strive and achieve higher levels of success. Students and staff both felt better about school and their behavior and academics improved during the first year of the program. Along with the other incentives that promoted school morale and improved school culture, "when the money left, people were less motivated". Teachers and other staff members that had once bought into the Promise Academy way, "no longer felt a connection." After the second year of the initiative, funding was drastically reduced which affected the overall culture of the school.

Sustainability. Participant 1 and the faculty who began working at the Promise Academy during the first year of the model were in the early stages of implementation. The school district set a four-year plan to turn around low performing schools. Part of the plan included that teacher leaders would model lessons and train the classroom teachers. With the unprecedented budget cuts in the third year, the teacher leaders were forced to perform other duties, "Teacher leaders were torn in two directions, helping out with administrative tasks and someone's specific job became the job of the teacher leaders." Operating with less staff due to layoffs hindered the performance of the Promise Academy.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is the principal of an elementary school in an urban, underperforming school in southeastern Pennsylvania. This Kindergarten through eighth grade elementary school has been operating as a Promise Academy for over five years. Participant 2 is the second principal at this Promise Academy since its initial stages of implementation. She has been the principal for the past four years. Prior to becoming an administrator, participant 2 had experience working at a traditional public school as both a teacher and an administrator.

Fidelity of Implementation. There is a high correlation between student success and fidelity of implementation, argued participant 2. In the beginning of the Promise Academy initiative, "there were plenty of resources, there was additional time for the instructional day, the instructional week and the instructional year." In addition to the extended instructional time, summer school and Saturday School was integrated into the

model. Participant 2 implied that the "walk through team" helped the teachers, administration, students, staff and other stakeholders to stay on target in implementing the components of the program with fidelity. The walk through team was associated with the superintendent who started this Renaissance Initiative. Another essential role of the walk through team was to provide feedback to the staff and to the principal, "whether it was positive or negative, it was used to strengthen and support the school", stated participant 2.   This team of educational stakeholders observed the entire functionality of the school and ensured that the Promise Academy model was implemented as it was intended. Subsequently, the Promise Academy was successful during its first year, claimed participant 2.

In the years to follow, the Promise Academy did not have as much success as it did in the beginning of the initiative. Participant 2 stated, "things started to dwindle down since that superintendent is no longer with the school district." Resources were removed after the first year of the initiative; there was no longer the extended school day, no Saturday school, no summer school, the weekly professional development for teachers no longer existed. Participant 2 argued, that the Promise Academy model was "not as structured as it once was." Participant 2 concluded the lack of fidelity of implementation was one of the reasons the Promise Academy was not as successful as it could have been.

School climate.   The school climate was built around a community. Participant 2 noted that both the students and staff were required to wear the same uniform, which identified us as "a community and we bought into the initiative." Also, having the co-teacher model in place "supported those teachers that might have needed the classroom

management piece," helped to strengthen the school climate, implied participant 2. Participant 2 maintained "there was always additional support staff throughout the school and in the classroom." According to participant 2, these factors helped to strengthen the school climate at the Promise Academy. Over time, these things were no longer visible in the Promise Academy, which may have constrained the success of the school climate and the Promise Academy as a whole, disputed participant 2.

Sustainability. Prior to the Promise Academy mission, the superintendent at the time, had a goal, vision, and mission to promise students and families of low performing schools to receive a better education by providing more resources than other traditional public schools in the area. The superintendent developed by Promise Academy model, which was also entitled "Imagine 2014". However, components of the model began to diminish with the departure of the superintendent at the time. In addition to losing the creator of the Promise Academy movement, the school district also lost vital staff members. Participant 2 stated, "Teachers started to leave because income was lost for teachers and not being able to continue with the extended day and Saturday school and summer school, so people had to restructure their lives." As a result, there was a high teacher turnover, with newer teachers that had no knowledge of the Promise Academy way. Unfortunately, the Promise Academy model was no longer implemented the way it was intended after the original superintendent left the school district. Along with the new superintendent and new teachers coming into the Promise Academy, "caused the whole structure of the program to dwindle, " stated participant 2.

Participant 3

Participant three is a veteran teacher with over fifteen years of experience. She has taught fifth grade at the Promise Academy for the past five years. Prior to teaching at the Promise Academy, participant 3 taught at a traditional public school for over ten years.

Fidelity of Implementation. Participant 3 began working at the Promise Academy five years ago. This participant has had the experience of working under two different administrators at this Promise Academy. As the years has passed, participant 3 recognized two things about the fidelity of implementation of the Promise Academy model that could affect student achievement. The initial implementation of the Promise Academy began with the following components; extended hours four days a week "to focus on academics", and Saturday school "to help with performance of our students. Participant 3 stated "The person that came up with the Promise Academy model was no longer in the district, and no one felt that the Promise Academy model was a good one, so the Promise Academy went by the waste side because there weren't people who was able to keep it going." After the second year of the Promise Academy, "things weren't implemented the same." Additionally, participant 3 felt as if the Promise Academy began to "lack promise."

School culture. Participant 3 described the school culture as a culture "where everyone was invested" in student achievement. Part of the early success was due to the leader embedding of culture of ownership. The teachers and the students bought into the concept of the goals of the Promise Academy, each knowing their role and "knowing

what needed to be done." With more focus on the Promise Academy way, students and teachers were neatly "dressed in their uniform, khaki pants and a white shirt." The leader or principal during the first two years of the model, knew the type of culture that needed to be embedded in a low-performing school in an urban area to be successful. During years one and two, everyone followed the Promise Academy way which created a culture of pride. Students were to walk in a single line while transitioning throughout the building, students were taken to the restroom by the classroom teacher, and no student was to be in the hall without a hall pass. The rules and regulations set forth in the Promise Academy model were strictly enforced and followed during the first two years which in her opinion, contributed to the success. Participant 3 stated "Teachers were made to feel strongly about the model, and the students were also made to feel strongly." According to Participant 3, when the leadership changed and other aspects of the Promise Academy had changed, "no one felt as strongly about the Promise Academy model."

Sustainability. In the beginning the Promise Academy model, principals hired teachers who agreed to the greater commitment involved in working in this unique school setting. Teachers who were hired received training for two weeks in the summer and an additional hour during the week during the school year. Again, after the first two years of implementation, "we had a lot of turnaround as far as the teachers and leadership." According to participant 3, the principal during years one and two undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Promise Academy. The additional staff that was hired to maintain and guide the Promise Academy model "were trying to make it work." Participant 3 stated, "That model was solely being followed and everyone was going

along with that piece of what the Promise Academy was supposed to look like at that time." These are some factors that lead to the success of the model.

Prior to the third year of the model, the school district was forced to make unprecedented budget cuts that eliminated teachers, counselors, nurses, assistant principals, and other support staff. Furthermore, the superintendent who once initiated the Promise Academy, was no longer employed by this school district. Due to the layoffs and district personnel to enforce the Promise Academy model, participant 3 argues that these factors constrained the success of the Promise Academy.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a fourth grade teacher at the Kindergarten through eighth grade Promise Academy in southeastern Pennsylvania. She has been teaching at the local school of interest for four years. In total, she has fifteen years of teaching experience in both traditional public school and the Promise Academy model school.

Fidelity of Implementation. During the first year of the Promise Academy, participant 4 agreed that the administration and staff held a high standard of learning. In addition, the administrator also held a high standard of properly implementing the Promise Academy model as defined by the school district. Participant 4 argued that the model started to disintegrate after the first two years of the initial implementation. In the beginning of the model, participant 4 stated "It was a little more structure I believe in implementing the model. It was enforced, the policies were more enforced." Although some of the aspects of the model were still in tact, "I think they were a little lackadaisical in enforcing the Promise Academy model." Prior to the decrease in student achievement,

participant 4 felt that the extra funding poured into the Promise Academies provided students and staff opportunities to be exposed to more technology in comparison to their traditional public school counterparts. Participant 4 described the access to more technology, such as Smart Boards and laptop carts, assisted in the increase of student achievement. However, after the first 2 years, professional development for teachers was diminished, leaving them with little to no training in the use of technology.

The Promise Academy was also required to use a prescribed set of curricula and interventions for the four-year incentive, including Corrective Reading and Corrective Math. In spite of the materials that were to be used, participant 4 stated "one of the problems may have been the changing of the curriculum materials." The students and staff were familiar with a "certain math curriculum and they changed to a different math curriculum." Participant 4 argues that the change in curriculum may have contributed to the decrease in student achievement. She argues that the new curriculum may not have been as effective as the one that was being used. In the same way, participant 4 "noticed that we use a lot of different math books and we don't really evaluate them for effectiveness before we switch to something else."

School Culture. The initial Promise Academy initiative required that Promise Academies follow and implement climate and culture protocols. These protocols and regulations were outlined in the "Promise Academy" handbook and were to be implemented by the staff. Participant 4 noticed that in the beginning or during the first two years of the model, the administrator at the time, set the tone for "academic and discipline policies" that were directly linked to the school culture. The staff and the

students were all on the same accord and the rules were strictly enforced to maintain a

positive school culture. In participant's 4 opinion, this factor has contributed to some of

the early success of the Promise Academy. When the Promise Academy received a new

administrator, participant 4 stated that "it had gotten a little lackadaisical enforcing the

Promise Academy model". Along with the change in administration, "the students

attitude towards learning" had changed. Participant 4 stated "we have to really boost the

morale of the students and they just don't buy into it."   Participant 4 describes this to be

one of the factors that constrained the success of the model.

Sustainability. Prior to the implementation of the Promise Academy, a new principal

was hired. To be considered as a principal at the Promise Academy, the school district

identified specific candidates. One of the prerequisites for the newly hired principal was

that they could have not worked as a principal at the Promise Academy for more than two

years. The principal that was hired to implement the components of the model had not

been at the school in the past. To date, there has been two principals that lead the

Promise Academy. Participant 4 argues that the change in administration has

significantly contributed to the failure of the Promise Academy.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a second grade teacher the Promise Academy located in

southwestern Pennsylvania. She has been teaching at the Promise Academy since the

model was initiated in 2010. Although teaching in this low-income, underperforming

school, participant 4 agrees that it has been challenging, and it has also been rewarding.

Throughout her tenure at the Promise Academy, participant 5 has learned "whatever the

population is, if you have certain procedures in place, you can see growth and achievement in just about every child."

Fidelity in Implementation. According to participant 5, there has been a dramatic change in several areas including; student achievement, staff turnover, and curricula. At the start of the Promise Academy, the teachers had to implemented interventions such as Corrective Reading and Corrective Math. Participant 5 also noted "we had to attend more professional development sessions, and we had to teach summer school." As participant 5 began to elaborate more on the changes at the Promise Academy, she pointed out that the model reached the students at all levels; academics, social, and behavioral. When the promise academy model was implemented as it was intended, the model showed some success. Participant 5 discussed some of the factors that lead to a decrease in student achievement which mainly was the lack of consistency including staff, administration, promise academy policies and procedures, lack of funding, changes in professional development, change in the school day and school year, and the change in curriculum. Throughout the change process, "we got a new principal, we went down to one hour less a day, we got rid of Saturday school. We basically weren't truly a Promise Academy any more." Also, participant 5 stated "we didn't get a very long period to be the Promise Academy that we started out as."

School culture. When participant 5 began working at the Promise Academy over six years ago, she recognized that the school culture had been mainly cultivated by the principal at that time. Participant 5 described the culture and climate was embedded in everything that was done throughout the day. She emphasized, "it was everything started

with when the kids lined up in the morning,, the principal would make the kids line up in a straight line and he would say encouraging words to them." Not only did the students line up in the morning, they followed the same procedures at the end of the day. There was an overall expectation of both students and staff, the Promise Academy motto was to be "On time, on task and on a mission." Participant 5 agreed that "every little thing mattered…. we were held accountable for everything, we provided a very solid education for the children, there wasn't leeway or wiggle room." In the opinion of participant 5, the faculty, students, parents and community collaborated to create a private school setting free of charge. Participant 5 identified these factors as contributing to the success of the Promise Academy.

In the beginning of the third year of the Promise Academy, it was a struggle to maintain the climate and culture that had been established by the first principal. In September, 2013, a new principal was brought into the Promise Academy. The culture and the climate of the school became different in a way that adversely affected the students. Participant 5 pointed out that the new principal did not follow the same rules, policies, and procedures as the first principal had in the past. Participant 5 stated, "Right way, she let go of the procedure of dismissing after school in the schoolyard and immediately all kinds of fighting start happening out there." Participant 5 described the transitioning of leadership as, "there is no one, it's not like a village keeping the kids in line, it maybe a few people trying to say something to kids." She described the Promise Academy culture as "teachers kind of gave up trying to say anything, they kind of just stick to their own classroom and do their own thing." In the initial phase of the Promise

Academy, the handbook outlined the policies and procedures for the Promise Academy way and the principal at the time enforced these rules. However, when that principal left, and a new principal was in place, she did not instruct or model to the new teachers how the Promise Academy model was to be implemented. According to participant 5, these are some of the school culture factors that constrained the success of this Promise Academy.

Sustainability.   Prior to the start of the Promise Academy model, the superintendent at the time was responsible for the four-year implementation, expecting a great increase in student success. However, the model began to lose intactness, partially due to changes in district leadership. The superintendent that initiated the Promise Academy model was no longer employed by the school district. Participant 5 believed that it was the superintendent's vision was in part, a contributing factor to the success of the Promise Academy. She described the superintendent at that time to be personable and approachable which in turn had a positive effect with the buy-in of the teachers, students and the community. When the original superintendent of the Promise Academies left the district, the new superintendent did not seem as personal and approachable, which in turn caused less buy in from the stakeholders according to participant 5. After the third year of the model, "new teachers were hired", but none of those newly hired teachers were trained in accordance with the Promise Academy handbook. In addition to the new teachers, and new superintendent, we had a new principal. Participant 5 argues that failure to retain the staff hired to build and maintain the Promise Academy was indeed a contributing factor.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a second grade teacher and has also taught fifth and sixth grades throughout her tenure. She has been a teacher at the Promise Academy since its implementation in 2010. Prior to her teaching at the Promise Academy, she has also taught in another low performing school in southwestern Pennsylvania. Participant 6 describes her experiences as "a lot of work and preparation" at the Promise Academy.

Fidelity of Implementation. When the Promise Academy model was initiated, participant 6 stated there were many "supports" in place. Participant 6 describes the supports as a full-time nurse, two counselors, Saturday school, family field trips, extended school days and additional instructional support staff. Participant 6 discussed how the supports were instrumental in student achievement, "they were helpful because students were given basically a prescription…..this is what you need, this is what we are going to give you." Originally, the extended school day included two days of additional math instruction and two days of extra reading instruction. Participant 6 argues that one key aspect with increasing student achievement was the additional support staff that were utilized for small group instruction. Reading coaches, Math coaches, and other staff were available to pull students from the classrooms to provide small group instruction. According to participant 6, during the first two years of implementation, the additional supports helped to improve student achievement.

After two years of the Promise Academy model, "supports started to dwindle, they kind of started to go away." Participant 6 stated, " As the years started to go by, the small group supports weren't there as much, the coaching wasn't as constant."

Participant 6 argues that due to the supplemental staff and the prime components of the

Promise Academy being reduced, has constrained the success of the Promise Academy.

School culture. When participant 6 started working at the Promise Academy, the school

culture was more like a family. The school culture was cultivated through family field

trips and extended school days. Students and teachers were required to wear the

"Promise Academy" blazers in addition to the uniform. Participant 6 stated, " when the

students wore the blazers with the name of the school, they had to dress the part to be the

part…..they took pride in that." When the Promise Academy was first initiated,

participant 6 stated, "I feel like the students were more conscious of how they behaved in

school. They kind of made an effort to be in class, paying attention in class, and focused

on what was going on." Participant 6 concluded that the extra supports including

supplemental staff, made a remarkable difference in the school climate. In year three

these supports were reduced and negatively affected the success of the Promise

Academy.

Sustainability. When the Promise Academy first started, teachers had to site select to

teach at the school. Site selection in this particular school district simply means that one

has to interview at each school in which they gain to seek employment. Participant 6

stated, "they wanted to be here, they knew they would have to give up their Saturdays,

they knew they would have to give up an extra hour after school and maybe stay and do

professional development… they wanted to do that." Having consistent teachers and

other staff members helped to improve student achievement. Participant 6 argued,

"teachers started to leave because it wasn't following the same procedures, with all the

support of the first year." Additionally, along with teacher support declining, there was also a reduction of different services that were provided. Based on the opinion of participant 6, this reduction of services and inconsistent staff, contributed to the decrease in student success.

Participant 7

Participant 7 has been teaching at various southeastern Pennsylvania schools for over a decade. She has been teaching at the Promise Academy for over three years as school based teacher leader for math instruction. Her other experiences have been at other traditional elementary and high school public schools. Participant 7 enjoys working at her current location, and describes her experiences as "very educational and very interesting to say the least."

Fidelity of Implementation. Between 2010-2012, the Promise Academy was functioning as it was initially intended. As explained by participant 7, "the concept of the Promise Academy initially was a good organizational structure in terms of the goals and the mission." In the beginning stages of the Promise Academy, the extended school day and the professional development for teachers were two of the key components to the success of the model, asserted participant 7. Additionally, participant 7 stated, " the extended time on task for instruction and extended time for professional development I think is important….that was beneficial for the success of the Promise Academy."

By the end of year 2, change in staff began to occur mainly due to staff reshuffling. There were new teachers at the Promise Academy that were not trained in using the specific model. Not using the same curriculum could also be an instructional

factor from the first two years of implementation could be a factor, mentioned participant 7. Participant 7 stated, "losing the extra hour each day…and professional development, change in staff, and the change in daily routines was a big constraint for the success of the Promise Academy." According to participant 7, failure to continue to implement these key components as they were intended, constrained the success of the Promise Academy.

School Climate. Over the past four years, participant 7 noted that the school climate has changed due to several factors. To begin, the initial stages of the Promise Academy model had specific daily routines in place in which "both staff and students bought into the Promise Academy philosophy and the mission." Participant 7 agreed that these were the key factors in the success of the school climate of the Promise Academy. Participant 7 argued that when the staff changed, the behaviors of the students also changed. The philosophy that the students and staff once bought into, no longer existed with the instructional and internal changes. Participant 7 concluded the students and staff "spent less time on task", which constrained the success of the Promise Academy model.

Sustainability. Year one of the Promise Academy consisted of a strong staff including teachers and the principal that bought into the Promise Academy philosophy and mission, and were eager to implement all of its components to the highest level. Participant 7 stated, "the principal was different at the time, the teachers at the time are different than the teachers we have now." During the first two years, the staff and the teachers were consistent, participant 7 believes this enhanced the success of the Promise Academy.

However, there was a "change in the instructional leader and change in the staff," after year two. Participant 7 argues that this may have constrained the success of the model.

Participant 8

Participant 8 has had the experience working in both public and private schools for over thirty years. For the past ten years, she has been teaching Kindergarten. She describes her experience at working at the Promise Academy as enjoyable and rewarding. Her goal is to retire after completing the next school year.

Fidelity of Implementation. Participant 8 describes the beginning stages of the Promise Academy as having an extra hour added on to the regular school day, Promise Academy rules, Saturday school and additional support staff. Participant 8 stated, "it really was a good program….and it worked out." The "Promise Academy Way" was outlined in a handbook that contained specific guidelines on how the school day should be conducted and carried out. This Promise Academy handbook was followed by the teachers, assistants, principal and other support staff members. Both the students and the teachers followed the rules and took pride in doing so, implied participant 8. These factors contributed to the success of the Promise Academy.

However, as the Promise Academy model started to fade, so did the enthusiasm of the staff members. Participant 8 describes the school and the rules that were established in the beginning phase of the Promise Academy became "lax" in its implementation. There was no longer Saturday school, and the extra hour had diminished. Additionally, the additional support staff had also decreased. Participant 8 argued that the Promise Academy program was not implemented with fidelity.

School Climate. Participant 8 points out that the school climate has changed since the beginning of the Promise Academy. Participant 8 describes the first year of the Promise Academy as, " the children were more into school, everybody was dressed in their uniforms, everybody came to school….it was just a big difference and they wanted to achieve." The sense of community, including everyone involved, was working together to achieve the same goal with an established set of norms helped to increase student achievement.

Participant 8 concluded that the change in climate began to occur when the school district closed some of the neighboring public school and our school received some of those students. Participant 8 stated, "It seemed like we got a lot of children that were coming into the school that were not here before, had behavioral problems." Participant 8 goes on to suggest, "the good ones (students) changed because it's just an overall problem with behavior." In addition, classroom size increased in comparison to the first year of implementation. As a result, the increase in classroom size contributed to issues with student behavior, implied participant 8. Furthermore, the problem of teacher lateness and frequent absences during year 3, are directly related to the overall climate of the school. In order for the school to run efficiently and effectively, all components must be in place and everyone is accountable for their role, suggested participant 8. According to participant 8, these changes in school climate ultimately constrained the success of the Promise Academy.

Sustainability. Participant 8 noted that the change in leadership lead to the decrease in test scores and the change in school climate. Under the supervision of the first principal

of the Promise Academy, the students and staff bought into being the "model" school for

the Promise Academy movement. Under the tutelage of the first principal, the students

followed the rules and the staff was organized. Participant 8 stated, "they really did

follow the rules and it seemed like the kids were really more in tuned with the school".

In the same way, pointed out participant 8, "they wanted to push forward that first year".

When the leadership changed, "children were doing things they wouldn't dare do

with the first principal was there". The students and staff took pride in being a Promise

Academy and wanted to prove we could be successful under the supervision of the

principal during the first two years. However, when the new principal started,

"everything became lax", asserted participant 8. Participant 8 argued that if there was

consistency in leadership throughout the duration of the implementation of the Promise

Academy, there could have been greater success.

Participant 9

Participant 9 is currently a first grade teacher at the Promise Academy. She has

worked at the Promise Academy since the beginning of model. At first, participant 9

described her experiences at the Promise Academy as "an adjustment on my part with the

amount of hours and the amount of preparation involved". However, participant felt the

high expectations and hard work resulted in higher student success.

Fidelity of Implementation. In the beginning of the Promise Academy, participant 9

noted that the school was a Kindergarten through sixth grade school. The initial phase of

the Promise Academy model was designed for those grades, explained participant 9. The

principal at that time had high expectations for the students and the staff to strictly follow

the model as outlined by the school district. Participant 9 stated, "it was clear that everybody had to work really hard to make things happen". Also noted by participant 9, the Promise Academy implemented a specific reading and math curriculum for the first two years. The teachers became very familiar and knowledgeable with teaching the reading and math curriculum which resulted in increased student achievement.

By the third year, two additional grades had been added to this Kindergarten through sixth grade school. Participant 9 stated, "When I first got here, the school was K to 6 and every year they added a higher grade and I just felt that middle school should definitely not be mixed with elementary school." As a result, participant 9 argued that "now it feels like a regular school… there's nothing here to tell me when I walk in the building other than the name that it's a Promise Academy." When the math and the reading curriculum changed, student achievement drastically decreased, emphasized participant 9. Since all of the components of the Promise Academy model were not implemented as intended, there was a general lack of fidelity.

School Climate. Participant 9 describes the first two years of the Promise Academy as a "very strict" environment. Participant 9 explained "the expectations were very high. I think that the administrator let the staff, students and the parents what the expectations were…it was clear that everybody had to work really hard to make things happen." Subsequently, participant 9 feels the school climate was productive and positive during years one and two of the Promise Academy. Participant 9 also stated, " The first and second years I felt like this school is what you would expect a school to be like when you walk in…..the kids, everybody was engaged." In addition, the class sizes were smaller

during the first two years which resulted in increased student achievement. The result of strong leadership was a disciplined school climate for the first two years of the implementation.

Sustainability. According to participant 9, the change and school leadership and the reduction of support staff constrained the success of the Promise Academy. Participant 9 stated, "I think administration certainly did support the staff that we had and the high expectations that we had." In addition, there was also a great deal support from the supplemental staff that was a part of the Promise Academy. Participant 9 implied there was an increase in student success in relation to the principal and the additional support staff. However, when the first principal left the school and was replaced by another principal with a different leadership style, the overall success of the school was negatively affected. Another factor that constrained the success of the Promise Academy was the reduction of the support staff. Participant 9 concluded the change of the principal and the elimination of support staff resulted in a greater challenge to reach higher levels of success for the Promise Academy.

Participant 10

Participant 10 has been teaching in the local school district for over seven years. Her experiences include teaching first grade and Kindergarten. Participant 10 has been teaching at the Promise Academy since its implementation in 2010. Prior to teaching at the Promise Academy, participant 10 was teaching at a traditional public school.

Fidelity of Implementation. In the beginning of the implementation of the Promise Academy, teachers, staff and students were expected to follow the rules and guidelines

outlined as the "Promise Academy Way". This specific set of rules established routines
and procedures to be carried out by every person at the Promise Academy. In the event
the Promise Academy rules were not followed, there were consequences. Participant 10
described her first two years of the Promise Academy "I feel like there was more
consequences then….you would get written up even if it was your first time, the principal
was no joke". In her description, participant 10 emphasizes the strict and strategic
manner in which the Promise Academy Way was implemented.   However, after the first
two years of the implementation of the Promise Academy, the detailed "Promise
Academy Way" was not implemented as it was intended. Participant 10 emphasized in
the recent years, "there is no order".   Lack of fidelity with the implementation of
Promise Academy Way lead to a decrease in student achievement, argued participant 10.

School Climate. Participant 10 described the first two years of the Promise Academy as
"There was more morale, like teachers cared more. There was more like a community I
feel." During years one and two "you were scared not to do your job, and so were the
kids". Participant 10 described the strict consequences for both the staff and the students
for failure to adhere to the rules. However, after that particular principal left the Promise
Academy, "I feel like it's going downhill since then….there's no consequences that
stand, so the kids don't care , they do what they want because nothing happens to them".
After the third year, participant 10 implies that there has been "lack of administrative
control….meaning the kids are running around the hallway, they're destroying the school
and they're throwing trash". According to participant 10, the school climate has changed
since and has adversely affected the success of the Promise Academy.

Sustainability. Participant 10 suggested that much of the success of the first two years is largely due to the principal at that time. Participant 10 stated the first principal "is the one that really changed the school and helped boost the climate and the scores". In addition to the original principal of the Promise Academy, additional support staff also had an impact on student achievement. Although the Reading Coach and Math Coach remained at the Promise Academy after the third year, the capacity of their responsibilities had changed. Hence, the impact of their absence in the classrooms during the third and fourth year seemed as if the support was lost. The lack of consistent teachers, support staff and the administrator heavily impacted the success of the Promise Academy argued participant 10.

Participant 11

Participant 11 has taught at the Promise Academy since its initial implementation in 2010. She has had the experience of teaching third grade and has also served on the leadership team. In her role on the leadership team, participant 11 was able to provide professional development to teachers in need of support. Participant 11 has been an excellent teacher and leader at the Promise Academy for the past six years.

Fidelity of Implementation. The first year of the Promise Academy entailed many components. Those components were an extended school day, mandatory Saturday School and weekly professional development. Participant 11 stated that "the Promise Academy initiative was excellent during the first couple of years". In addition, participant 11 mentioned, " I think the first two years the Promise Academy was implemented there was just a lot of resources and a lot of buzz words going around about

the Promise Academy." According to participant 11, the Promise Academy principals also had to attend professional development to help to properly implement the components of the Promise Academy initiative. The principal would then observe and provide immediate feedback to teachers to help them develop better instructional strategies. Participant 11 stated, " I think the key was he produced great teachers and with that he also gave observations. He gave good feedback after the observation, it was timely and it was specific and it helped teachers improve because of it." Many of the Promise Academy successes can be contributed to the correct implementation of the initiative.

However, after the first two years, there was a major deficit with the budget of the school district. Participant 11 implied, "with the district budget, a lot of resources had to go and I think with the lack of resources, some students suffered". Once the resources had been reduced, participant 11 argued there was a "disconnect" in instruction, which ultimately affected student achievement. Additionally, after year 2, there were less classroom observations which essentially improved student achievement. Lack of consistency among the implementation of the Promise Academy initiative lead to less productivity with the model.

School Climate. Participant 11 described the climate of the school during years one and two as "great". The school climate was solid, "the instructional time was pretty efficient, there were less disruptions, there was a great working system in place for students who were disruptive." Another essential point that participant 11 mentioned, "I think that during years 1 and 2 the children really had pride they were going to a Promise Academy

school. Even though they may have had that extra hour, they were treated like scholars….they acted differently."

The school climate changed drastically during year three of the initiative. Participant 11 argued the removal of resources constrained the upward trajectory of the Promise Academy. Participant 11 stated, "they took the hour away, the Saturday school went away. I think as the resources went away, so did the high expectations unfortunately". Ultimately, the untimely removal of the resources lead to lower teacher and student morale, which affected the climate and success of the Promise Academy.

Sustainability. Prior to the beginning of the Promise Academy initiative, participant 11 asserted that "the principals had to go through a rigorous process to land a position at a Promise Academy and in addition they had more hands on in selecting their teachers". Having a rigorous process for both teachers and administrators, participant 11 implied that "it allowed for a more professional community". The strong sense of the professional community created an environment conducive to a successful Promise Academy model.

According to participant 11, lose of the rigorous selection process of both teachers and principals has lead to a decrease in student success. Overall, the change in leadership brought change in the teaching staff, which resulted in an unsuccessful Promise Academy model, argued participant 11.

Participant 12

Participant 12 has been in education for over twenty years. She has been employed in North Carolina and Pennsylvania as a teacher and a teacher leader.

Participant 12 has worked in the Promise Academy since the initial phases in 2010. She describes her experience at working at the Promise Academy as rewarding, and "it took a lot of hard work and dedication".

Fidelity of Implementation. During the initial stages of the Promise Academy, the stakeholders shared the same vision and mission. Everyone involved including the principal, teachers, and parents believed "we could make a difference". The principal during the first two years of the Promise Academy held all teachers and staff accountable which resulted in everyone "performing to a high standard and we met his expectations". One of the components that enhanced the success of the Promise Academy was the smaller class size, emphasized participant 12. In addition to smaller class sizes, the Promise Academy was equipped with "adequate material and we had a fully staffed library which was very important….we had counselors, we had everyone that we needed to be successful". Participant 12 also pointed out that "We had an extra hour a day which we used as remediation or an intervention period…also we worked on Saturdays which is important."

After year one and two, participant 12 asserted "there was a lot of red tape, the Promise Academy was no longer being fully funded". Participant 12 maintained that "Finances always play a big part on a successful program…after years one and two we had less staff and we no longer had smaller class sizes". Participant 12 concluded "achievement decreased over time" which was a direct result of lack of fidelity with the components of the Promise Academy.

School Climate. During the first two years of the implementation of the Promise

Academy, there were high expectations for both the staff and the students. In the

beginning stages of the program, participant 12 explained, "we enforced the uniform

policy, we didn't really make any excuses". Participant 12 described the students and

staff as being "very proud of themselves and they really bought into the idea of what's

important". However, by the third year, participant 12 stated "the vision was no longer in

tact and we were no longer holding children accountable…we began to make excuses".

Additionally, "teachers no longer valued the program like they did initially", stated

participant 12. Due to lack of accountability with both students and staff, participant 12

describes the school climate as "a ship that has sunk".

Sustainability.   In order to be employed at the Promise Academy during years one and

two, both teachers and principals had to go through a rigorous interview process. The

staff was carefully selected or "handpicked" stated participant 12. The Promise Academy

office was "able to pick teachers who understood the students backgrounds, because in

order to be successful, you have to know where the students come from and you have to

be able to relate to them and their background", emphasized participant 12. Selecting

highly qualified teachers and administrators was a priority with the Promise Academy to

ensure a successful program. Unfortunately, after year three, the strategic process to hire

new staff was eliminated. The teachers who initially started in the beginning stages of

the Promise Academy began to leave. Along with the loss of the vision and mission of

the Promise Academy, the administrator also left. According to participant 12, without

the strategic selection process, the teachers that were hired after year three "weren't

selected to be there, and they didn't really want to be there as opposed to before when everyone wanted to be there", participant 12 concluded.

Participant 13

Participant 13 began working as a parent volunteer prior to the local school of interest became a Promise Academy. She began working at the school when it was a traditional public school. Under her tenure, participant 13 described how she and other parent volunteers worked closely with the superintendent and other stakeholders to transform the traditional public school into a Promise Academy. Participant 13 described the process of selecting highly qualified teachers and administrators as rigorous yet rewarding.

Fidelity of Implementation. Within the first two years of the Promise Academy, participant 13 stated, " this Promise Academy has achieved what we believed to be the Promise Academy Way and we followed that here at our school…..we were able to train under the leadership from personnel from the main office on how to establish and develop a comprehensive school plan". Participant 13 inferred the Promise Academy rules and guidelines that were established specifically for the school were implemented and followed with fidelity for the first two years. At the start of the third year of the Promise Academy, "everything changed", implied participant 13. According to participant 13, after the original principal left, "the students and the parents were looking to follow one path and now all of a sudden it's changed". The Promise Academy Way was not being followed as it was intended, which as a result, affected the students. Participant 13 also mentioned during the first two years, the extended school day and

mandated Saturday school had a positive impact on student learning. However, after the second year, funds were reduced which lead to the dismissal of Saturday school and the extended school day. The three factors, Saturday school, the extended school day and the implementation of the Promise Academy Way were not implemented with fidelity, according to participant 13.

School Climate. According to participant 13, "there was a unity among the students, the parents and the teachers". During the first two years, the students and the staff were required to wear the same uniform, khaki bottoms and a white top. Participant 13 stated, "I believe when the students and the teachers were dressed alike, they felt like it was a higher level of unity and togetherness and I think our students grew from within to the next level that carried the Promise Academy way".   Participant 13 also quoted the school motto, " on time, on task and on a mission", had a positive impact on the school climate. After the second year, participant 13 noted, the Promise Academy started to receive students from other schools that had closed in the neighborhood. As these students entered the Promise Academy, participant 13 concluded the new students had not been exposed to the "Promise Academy way". Similarly, participant 13 also pointed out, as newer teachers had started after the second year, they had not been exposed to the Promise Academy way. As a result, "the students don't behave or they don't follow it and you can see it in the change from the beginning". Participant 13 concluded that lack of consistency in implementing very specific rules and procedures caused the school climate of the Promise Academy to plummet.

Sustainability. During the initial phase of the Promise Academy, participant 13 explained, "At that time we were able to achieve a better performance and our students were able to perform better because our teachers had smaller classes and they were more dedicated to the advancement of our students. I also believe that at the time was fully experienced in working with students from poverty backgrounds." Having consistent teachers and an experienced administrator were some of the factors that helped to improve the Promise Academy, implied participant 13.

By the third year, funds were greatly reduced. Participant 13 pointed out, the Promise Academy received a new administrator, which resulted in a change in the school environment. Additionally, when the funds were reduced, the original teachers that started with the beginning phase of the Promise Academy started to seek employment elsewhere. Participant 13 stated, "they were disgruntled and they wanted to move on to other places and I believe in the third year we began to have more teachers leaving than staying". Participant 13 argued this internal change in staff lead to a "disruptive atmosphere and our children began to act out". Ultimately, participant 13 concluded that the change of staff affected our student achievement, which had a negative impact on the Promise Academy movement.

Participant 14

Participant 14 has been a volunteer at the Promise Academy for over six years. As a volunteer, he feels that his presence is vital to the essence of the school. In his opinion, participant 14 stated regarding his position as a volunteer, "It's extremely important that we're in the building and our input is appreciated, and it's good to feel

needed and a part of something." Participant 14 also mentioned he enjoyed working at the Promise Academy and felt excited about witnessing the progression of the program.

Fidelity of Implementation. Participant 14 described the initial stages of the Promise Academy implementation as "new and shiny". Participant 14 explained that most of the teachers, staff and the administrators during the first two years of the Promise Academy were eager to implement the new rules and the "Promise Academy way" as part of their daily routine. When the Promise Academy was "new", as participant 14 emphasized, staff members received bonuses to their regular pay, there was new equipment, and new resources. However, during the third year of implementation, participant 14 stated, "The new didn't last too long, it needs consistency". Participant 14 implied that the idea of implementing a new program "lost is zeal", along with the financial resources needed to maintain its consistency. Participant 14 argued that without the necessary funding, it would be nearly impossible to maintain a successful program. Subsequently, the reduction of resources lead to lack of fidelity. In conclusion, participant 14 made a profound statement, "It's not what works right now, it's what keeps it working."

School Climate. During years one and two of the Promise Academy, the administrator at the time set the tone for the climate of the school. Participant 14 stated, "there was stronger leadership and stronger principal….he held everyone accountable for everything they were supposed to do". As explained by participant 14, the principal at that time made sure that the teachers, students, and staff were performing at an exemplary level in order to achieve student success.

When the third year approached, the school climate began to change. There was a new principal, and the staff became "more comfortable and more relaxed". In addition, there were more students coming from other schools. Participant 14 argued " it was easier to keep a handle on a lesser amount of kids". Participant 14 also mentioned when the school received new students, "it was hard for them to get accustomed to our rules". According to participant 14, the two factors that affected the school climate was the change in administration and the addition of more students.

Sustainability. In years one and two, the class sizes were smaller than they were in years three and beyond. The school district poured in additional funds into the Promise Academies, and the teacher-student ratio was smaller. The administrator was a "stickler for the rules", explained participant 14. Supportive staff was also a contributing factor to the success of the Promise Academy. However, after the second year, funds were reduced, hence, the staff was also reduced. Participant 14 stated, "I think that we had too many students and not enough teachers….it was no regularity". The Promise Academy way "lost some of it's umph" described participant 14. Along with a new principal, and little staff, the promise academy lost its sustainability.

Participant 15

Participant 15 has been a parent volunteer for the past six years at the Promise Academy. She describes her experiences working at the Promise Academy as being in a "different atmosphere and a different environment". Participant 15 describes her relationship with the staff as "friendly and nurturing". In addition, participant 15

highlighted the staff, including the teachers and administrators are "willing to listen". Overall, participant 15 enjoys working at the Promise Academy.

Fidelity of Implementation. During years one and two of the Promise Academy, parents signed a contract agreeing to volunteer a certain amount of hours during the school year. The agreement between the parents and the school increased parental involvement, which in turn, increased overall student success. Because of this contract, parents bought in to the Promise Academy way and were a major factor in developing the positive school culture. In addition, teachers also signed a contract agreeing to adhere to the Promise Academy procedures and protocols as outlined in the Promise Academy handbook. Participant 15 stated, "the teachers were more into it". At that time, the teachers were implementing and enforcing the Promise Academy way.

During the third year of the Promise Academy, "parents weren't involved at they were when it first started", explained participant 15. The parents were no longer asked to sign a contract agreeing to volunteer, therefore, there was less parental involvement. The teachers that were hired after the second year were no longer required to sign a contract agreeing to implement the Promise Academy procedures. Along with the high teacher turn over, "teachers were not dealing with discipline" as outlined in the Promise Academy handbook. Participant 15 emphasized, "Everybody was overwhelmed with so many different things", partially due to lack of consistency with policy and procedures. These factors were not implemented with fidelity, which affected the success of the Promise Academy.

School Climate. In the beginning stages of the Promise Academy, school climate was driven by the school culture. Participant 15 pointed out that the staff "stressed the positive behavior and positive dress and the outer appearance can affect the mental….if I dress for success, I should try to be successful". As noted by participant 15, students bought into the philosophy of exhibiting positive behavior into their daily routine. In addition to positive dress, the principal during years one and two was "more stern and supportive". Participant 15 found that the principal's presence made an impact on school climate, "the principal walked around and interacted with each class and the students throughout the day, it was more hands on with the administration". The culture and climate that was embedded into the students and the staff required everyone to be on time each day, be on task each day, and to be on a mission each day.

As year three approached, there was a significant cut in the school district budget, which caused a reduction in staff and less funding for the implementation of the Promise Academy. Participant 15 argued, "there was not enough staff to deal with behavioral issues". Students were "being disruptive in the classroom", the environment was becoming more lenient with less focus on the Promise Academy way. Participant 15 also pointed out, "students' felt as though it was not a mandated thing to wear their uniforms", the school climate began to change without the Promise Academy practices and procedures in place. The factors that impacted school climate was the change in staff and the lack of consistency in implementing the procedures of the Promise Academy way.

Sustainability. In years one and two of the Promise Academy, the staff and the administration were consistent, we had the same teachers and the same principal. Each

staff member, whether it was the principal, the teachers, or support staff, understood their job specific role in the Promise Academy. The teachers were responsible for providing rigorous instruction, while implementing specific classroom rules and procedures. The principal was responsible for ensuring that effective instructional techniques and best practices were implemented each day from bell to bell. Professional development was provided to all staff members on a weekly basis to ensure continuous professional growth and development. In addition to providing support for the teachers, the principal also was engaged in every facet of the school including teaching small groups of students to student discipline. Participant 15 stated, "the principal helped out with anything, he was more hands on….he pulled out students during his lunch". In addition, "the principal called parents, had meetings, handled suspensions and counseled students", pointed out participant 15. The principal at that time produced great teachers which resulted in great students. In the third year, due to budget constraints, the Promise Academy could no longer attract teachers and administrators with a supplemental salary, therefore the original staff began to seek employment at other schools.   The school district was not able to sustain the Promise Academy rigor with limited funds, thus, resulting in an influx of teachers and administrators unable to continue to implement the components of the Promise Academy way.

Conclusion

Through this qualitative case study, I explored and examined participant perspectives on the implementation of the Promise Academy at the local school of interest. The questions that were addressed were: 1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 2) How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 3) What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy? As the teachers, administrators, and parents shared their perspectives, attitudes and opinions about the implementation of the Promise Academy model, the researcher can formulate explanations about the topic and use the data collected to implement strategies that could lead to success of school reform efforts. The data collected through the interviews determined what is needed by stakeholders to form and operate a more cohesive instructional program.

The participants were chosen because of their uniqueness in working in a traditional public school and the newly developed Promise Academy. The local site of interest was chosen because of the lack of academic success in reading, math and other factors at this particular Promise Academy. The focus of this study was to collect data, analyze the data, and explore how teachers, parents, and principals perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy model. After the data were analyzed, it will be used to create the necessary strategies needed to implement a successful school reform model.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this section, the evaluation report that was developed will be discussed, which was the project of this study. At the study site, student test scores were declining after the second year of implementation of the new initiative. Teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders noticed the Promise Academy was not thriving as it once was during the first year of implementation. The original components of the program were no longer being put into practice. There was a need to examine the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of the Promise Academy through a program evaluation. Pearson and McKoy (2015) suggested that school reform efforts needs to meet educational needs and management standards to increase student performance.

A summative program evaluation was executed. In Section 2, supporting literature and the goals, the rationale, and implications for social change of this study were discussed. Basic themes were coded and identified from the data collected during the interviews, which was used to identify the underlying factors that enhanced or constrained the success of the Promise Academy. The school administrators, the reform team, and the district officials can use the results of this study to make decisions regarding future school initiative programs to increase student achievement.

Description of Goals

A program evaluation is defined as "a process used to determine whether the design and delivery of a program were effective and whether the proposed outcomes were met" (Usun, 2016, p. 33). My goal in this project study was to conduct a program

evaluation and to examine the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of the

Promise Academy I studied from the perspectives of the stakeholders. I have presented

the report in form of an executive summary, as described by Lodico et al. (2010).

Included in this evaluation report is the introduction with the details of the local problem,

a review of the participant interviews, recommendations for the program, and a

conclusion. The audience for the summary and presentation of the results are the

participants of the study: the administrators, teachers, and parent volunteers.

One-on-one interviews with teachers, administrators, and parent volunteers were

conducted in order to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that enhanced or

constrained the success of the Promise Academy. The perceptions of the teachers,

administrators, and parent volunteers were used to gain information on how the Promise

Academy model impacted student growth. After recording and collecting the data from

the interviews, it was transcribed, analyzed, and coded them into themes. The primary

goal for this summative report was to use the findings to provide recommendations to the

administrators and the assistant superintendent that they could use in decision making for

future school improvement initiatives. The results of a program evaluation can help

determine if the students benefited from the program or received little to no benefits from

the model (Posavac, 2016).

Rationale

A high percentage of students in grades 3 through 8 were consistently scoring in

the Basic and Below Basic range on the statewide assessment in one school located in the

School District of Philadelphia. Students scoring the Basic and Below Basic range in

reading and math are considered to be performing below grade level. The Promise

Academy model was implemented in the city's lowest-performing schools with the

expectation of drastically increasing student achievement in a 4-year timeframe.

According the school district, three components were required for a successful reform

effort: identifying the lowest performing schools, identifying the organizations that would

best meet the needs of the schools, and empowering the school communities to be

essential partners in the drastic transformation (School district of Philadelphia, 2011).

After the first 2 years of little progress with the Promise Academy, there was a need to

examine the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of the model. According to

Nielson (2016), program evaluation provides information to determine whether the

intervention or program brought about the desired outcome of improved student

achievement. To facilitate this program evaluation, it was that determined stakeholders'

perspectives on the implementation of the Promise Academy via interviews. The data

analysis formed the basis for the evaluation report, which I used as deliverable research

findings and recommendations to bring about positive social change.

Review of Literature

In the literature review, a program evaluation was examined, which is the genre

for this project. Data for a summative program evaluation are collected to measure if the

desired outcome of the intervention was met and to provide recommendations for

improvement in the future (Posavac, 2016). Willits (2015) noted that summative data

determines whether the program should continue or to be discontinued, or if a change is

needed for the program to be successful. The evaluation report was comprised of the findings and recommendations of the study.

    After presenting the data analysis and the findings of the study, specific information was reviewed for the literature review. The terms used to guide the literature review were: *program evaluation, school intervention, change in leadership, change in principal, principal turnover, high principal turnover, teacher turnover* and *high teacher turnover*. The databases used to support and guide my study included Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete. The Walden University Library was also used to review completed project studies related to program evaluation. References were used in the appropriate genre published in the last 5 years to provide insightful information for the program evaluation.

Program Evaluation and School Intervention

    In this study, the results showed school intervention in elementary school years set the foundation for a successful school career. According to Hart et al. (2016), the early school years play a major role in the development of knowledge, skills, and behavior for student success. Often times, schools in low-income areas are not equipped with the materials or the staff to produce high achievement levels. Hart et al. reported that students in low-income environments are often at risk for low student achievement. Further, they argued the need to address these issues during the formative stages of a student's career, as opposed to waiting in the upper grades. In relation to program evaluation, parents play an integral role in determining measures of program satisfaction (Hart et al., 2016).

Shaw, Cross, and Zubrick (2016) argued that some intervention programs are effective, while others have resulted in negative effects. The specific reasons for the disparity of the results is unknown; however, program evaluation can be used to examine the implementation and to compare program components and the difference approach methods (Shaw et al., 2016). Fundamental reasoning for the findings can provide rich data about the intervention program. According to Shaw et al. (2016), program evaluation can impact student success.

Yoonkyung, Osgood, and Smith (2015) suggested that younger students are at a developmental period that is conducive to promoting positive self-development. During this stage of the educational phase, preventative interventions are essential to the students' long-term developmental trajectories (Yoonkyung, Osgood, & Smith, 2015). Intervention programs that intertwine the family, school, and community often achieve a higher level of success. Researchers have shown (Yoonkyung et al., 2015) that intervention program involving family, school, and community are directly linked to a reduction in delinquency, positive peer interactions, and increased student achievement. Program evaluation could provide information on specific strategies for successful implementation of an intervention program.

According to Owczarzak, Broaduss, and Pinkerton (2016), program evaluation is essential to accessing and improving the effectiveness of school intervention programs and school reform efforts. Owczarzak et al. maintained that program evaluation is necessary for accountability, quality assessment, and program planning. Freeman and Simonsen (2015) stated that the largest percentage of schools in need of an intervention

include students who are low performing and have low attendance. School interventions

and program evaluations can have a positive impact on individual and family risk factors

in the future (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015).

Gaudreault, Shiver, Kinder and Guseman (2015) discussed that intervention

programs implemented during the early years can reduce the number of low performing

students who would normally be described as at-risk. In addition, implementing school

intervention programs in elementary schools can also decrease behavior and academic-

related issues (Gaudreault et al., 2015). According to Gaudreault et al. (2015), these

issues should be addressed in order to change the outcome of the students' lives to a more

positive life experience and to have the students become a productive citizens in the

future. School intervention programs can foster a positive attitude to enhance the success

of each student (Gaudreault et al., 2015). Program evaluation can be used to identify the

necessary skills needed to enhance any school reform efforts.

As Jenkinson, Naughton, and Benson (2012) have shown, school-based

interventions can be effective if there is a continuity of contact with students in the

primary years of development. In the past, school reform or intervention efforts have

lacked funding, materials, teacher training, adequate staffing, and organizational

procedures or routines (Jenkinson et al., 2012). According to Jenkinson et al., in order to

have an effective intervention program, emphasis needs to be placed on careful planning

to incorporate the entire school community. Successful school intervention plans need to

continuously meet the needs of the students including existing content and the

implementation of the new initiatives (Jenkinson et al., 2012). The program evaluation

can be a true reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of an intervention, and can provide valuable information for future school reform efforts (Jenkinson et al., 2012).

Effects of School Factors on Student Achievement

This study was based on factors that enhanced and constrained the success of one Promise Academy. This coincides with Madaus, Grigal and Hughes (2014) study which stated that students attending schools in high-poverty areas are less likely to receive an education that encompasses rigor, teacher preparedness, safety, and parent involvement. Studies (Madaus, Grigal & Hughes, 2014) indicate that students that live in low-income areas are more likely to attend schools that lack resources, funding and are often low-performing. To elaborate, at least 60% of high school drop outs are from low-performing schools in low-income neighborhoods in comparison to only a five percent drop out rate to students in affluent neighborhoods (Madaus et al., 2014). Research (Madaus et al., 2014) indicates the high performing schools are in more affluent neighborhoods, in which segregating becomes an issue. For that reason, poverty can negatively affect student achievement.

Frazier, Dinzulu, Rusch, Boustani and Mehta (2015) stated that poverty worsens the risks and outcome for students in low-income, urban areas. Poverty affects blacks and Hispanics at a higher rate than white students, and are more likely to be raised in a single family household (Frazier et al., 2015). Studies suggest (Frazier et al., 2015) the longer the student is living in poverty, it is less likely that conditions will worsen. When public schools are located in a low-income, high-poverty area, the conditions of the schools are characterized by poor heating, underfunded, lack of materials and are often overcrowded

(Frazier et al., 2015). In addition, schools in low-income areas often have teachers with less experience, and have lower expectations for student achievement (Frazier et al., 2015). These factors negatively affect student outcomes over a period of time.

As explained by Welton and Williams (2015), there is an overwhelming percentage of African-American students in poverty in the lowest-performing schools who are also subjected to various school reform efforts and new school initiatives introduced with the No Child Left Behind Act. One initiative that was implemented was high-stakes testing which was developed to ensure that students were ready to enter college or to enter the workforce with the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful (Welton & Williams, 2015). Despite this, studies (Welton &Williams, 2015) have shown that the pressure associated with high stakes testing negatively affects minority students, as a result, increasing the high school drop out rate for minority students in urban schools. Welton and Williams also pointed out that many urban schools have implemented new school initiatives, which are designed to drastically increase student achievement. However, these new school initiatives only give an illusion of student achievement, the overall goals are lowered to meet the new standards of success, which negatively undermines increased student growth (Welton & Williams, 2015).

Teacher Turnover

The findings of my study indicates that high teacher turnover negatively student achievement. Complementary to this, Tshabalala and Ncube (2014) argue that the quality of a school is determined by the quality of its teachers. High quality teachers develop and maintain measurable goals for student achievement which positively affects student

outcomes (Tshabalala & Ncube, 2014). On the other hand, teacher turn over causes a disruption with administration, academic and professional standards (Tshabalala & Ncube, 2014). In hard to staff schools, the lost of highly qualified teachers is often replaced by inexperienced recent college graduates or teachers on temporary assignment, as a result, negatively affects student achievement (Tshabalala & Ncube, 2014). Students in low-income areas are often subject to high teacher turnover resulting in decreased student achievement.

According to Torres (2016), recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers for urban schools educating low-income students continues to be problematic. Unfortunately, schools that serve students in poverty stricken neighborhoods, are staffed with inexperienced and ineffective teachers (Torres, 2016). Studies (Torres, 2016) indicates over the past ten years, teacher turnover has increased by 41% in schools in poor urban neighborhoods. Factors contributing to the high teacher turnover are; a school's working conditions, school climate, principal support and perceptions of leadership (Torres, 2016). Additionally, evidence concluded that teacher burnout contribute to high teacher turnover (Torres, 2016).

Hannan, Russell, Takahashi and Park (2015) stated that teacher turnover, particularly the novice teacher, is rapidly growing at an alarming rate. Hannan et al. point out about 41% of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years. The teacher turnover rate is higher in low-income urban schools in comparison to schools in affluent neighborhoods (Hannan et al., 2015). As a result, the teachers that leave the profession argue that school-level support was not consistent and the working conditions

were less than desirable (Hannan et al., 2015). Considering the high teacher turnover rates in low-income urban neighborhoods, it can be concluded that student achievement is greatly affected (Hannan et al., 2015).

Based on the ideas of Shernoff et al. (2016) teacher turnover has been a major issue with approximately 29% of new teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first five years. One of the contributing factors to teachers leaving is managing disruptive student behaviors (Shernoff et al., 2016). Many new teachers struggle with managing student behavior in urban low-income neighborhoods (Shernoff et al., 2016). Consequently, those teachers leave their jobs in the urban community to migrate to suburban schools (Shernoff et al., 2016). Unfortunately, this troubling trend of teacher attrition has been an issue for many years.

Change in School Administrators

In ever-changing school structures, principals need to be able to balance the emotional needs of teachers while implementing mandated instructional policies. Current theories (Wieczorek & Theoharis, 2015) argue that principals working in urban high needs schools experience a great deal of stress and role conflict due to the demands of reform efforts enforced by policy makers at the state level. In low performing schools, reform efforts are implemented to increase student achievement, resulting in enormous stress and emotional strain on both the teachers and administrators (Wieczorek & Theoharis, 2015). Ultimately, the increased stress and anxiety can lead to a high turnover rate with the instructional staff. According to Wieczorek and Theoharis (2015), principals need to develop specific coping strategies in order to become effective leaders

in their schools. However, when principals are unable to meet the demands of new

school initiatives, they often leave the underperforming school before significant change

occurs.

Khalifa, Gooden and Davis (2015) explained that effective and consistent

principals are a vital factor to school reform and new initiative efforts. Khalifa et al.

(2015) maintained that principals are often responsible for transforming all aspects of the

school when attempting to establish new initiatives. Based on the research of Khalifa et

al., the principal has the most impact on student learning and the delivery of instructional

practices and is the primary leader of the school reform or new school initiative.

However, school administrators in urban, low performing schools have not been able to

transform or reform with consistency (Khalifa et al., 2015). Since the principals are held

most accountable for student growth or lack of growth, the stress and scrutiny can result

in the principal leaving the school (Khalifa et al., 2015). Good principals will often leave

schools when they feel that they have not met success, in turn, good teachers also leave.

Based on the findings of Klocko and Wells (2015), principals' responsibilities

have evolved into leadership that need constant attention. The new challenges of

principals have added an increasingly larger responsibility in addition to the normal

directives in which principals must adhere (Klocko & Wells, 2015). Klocko and Wells

(2015) explained that the stress levels of educational leaders has been documented and

recognized. In relation to stress, the emotional challenges can lead to many health

problems including high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, and low productivity

(Klocko & Wells, 2015). As a result, many principals leave the profession or move to another school where there are not as many demands.

Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, and Goddard (2015) suggest there is direct link to effective leadership and student achievement. Although research has shown this evidence, there is little to no information on how to develop good leaders to produce higher student success (Jacob, et al. 2015). Jacob et al. argued there are no educational leadership programs or professional development that effectively trains principals on how to implement a rigorous educational program. Professional development and other training programs do not always provide adequate or suitable training. According to research (Jacob et al., 2015) principals who leave their current position oftentimes lack the knowledge and skills required to be an effective leader.

As explained by Kershner and McQuillan (2016), urban schools in low-performing neighborhoods have difficulties overcoming challenges created by socioeconomic divide. The inequities are present in these urban schools and were caused by a high turnover rate among teachers, principals and superintendents which has prevented many schools from achieving higher rates of student achievement (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). According to Kersher and McQuillan, principals in urban settings can have a positive impact on student achievement despite the many challenges that exist. School reform efforts attempt to drastically increase student achievement in high needs schools. Many researchers argue that principals are the major factor in creating and maintaining an educational environment that is conducive to greater levels of student success (Kershner & McQuillan, 2016). However, efforts in school reform efforts in

urban, low-performing areas have been proven to be unproductive (Kershner &

McQuillan, 2016). Principals are often under extreme scrutiny and often leave the

profession or move to a different school without as many challenges.

Lee (2015) stated that principals are the "symbolic and functional" leader of the

school. Educational research suggests principals strongly influence the trajectory of the

school, including the quality of instruction and student achievement (Lee, 2015). When

principals leave a school, a new principal whether experienced or inexperienced takes

over the responsibility of maintaining student achievement. According to Lee, principal

or leadership succession creates instability within the school. Lee argued when

leadership in a school changes, it can be disruptive to the school community in regards to

effective communication of the vision and mission. Unfortunately, many districts or

schools do not have a contingency plan to address the issue of principal succession

(Cantu, Rocha & Martinez, 2016).

Strickland-Cohen, McIntosh, and Horner (2014) agreed that principals play a

pivotal role in implementing effective and successful school interventions and practices.

When principals leave a school or change locations to another school, the teachers and

other staff members often lose the drive to continue to efficiently make progress

(Strickland-Cohen, McIntosh & Horner, 2014). Strickland-Cohen et al. point out on of

the reasons principals leave schools would be to rotate among a number of schools. As a

result, less experienced principals are left to continue to monitor and guide the new

practices (Strickland-Cohen et al., 2014). The new principals are expected to implement

the pre-existing programs. However, these new initiatives or programs are often

neglected because the new principals want to develop and maintain their own credibility (Strickland-Cohen, 2014). This type of turnaround can lead to unsuccessful school reform attempts.

According to Sciarappa and Mason (2014), the retention of qualified and skilled principals is a major problem in urban areas. The U.S. Department of Educational National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported 12% of the nation's principals leave the profession, and 6% change to other schools (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014). Subsequently, new principals or inexperienced principals fill the positions, often leaving newly implemented programs to be neglected (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014). Some new principals are unprepared to fulfill the expectation of improving schools when they have little or no control situation (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014). Research suggests (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014) successful schools are run by success is related to highly effective leaders. Consequently, the newer principals often leave the difficult to run schools for other schools that are easier to manage.

Farley-Ripple, Raffel, and Welch (2012) stated schools experience having a new principal every three to four years. Studies indicate (Farley-Ripple, Raffel & Welch, 2012) that the high level of principal turnover is prevalent in the states of Illinois, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Unfortunately, this change in leadership can have a negative affect on student achievement. Farley-Ripple et al. explained the negative outcomes could be a decrease in student achievement, lower staff morale, interruption of a reform implementation, and a negative effect on school culture. These factors contribute to failing schools with low-performing students. Schools with lower

performing students and higher rates of poverty have the highest rate of principal turnover (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012).

Goodwin (2013) develops the claim that a high principal turnover rate has a negative effect on student performance. Goodwin found that when a new principal takes the place of an old principal, there is a dramatic decrease in student achievement. Complementary to this principal turnover rates were significantly higher at low-performing and economically disadvantaged schools. (Goodwin, 2013). Research suggests (Goodwin, 2013) that principals that transferred to other district schools with a lower percentage of minority, low-performing students. In cases like this, principal vacancies are often filled with inexperienced principals (Goodwin, 2013). The revolving door becomes an issue when the new inexperience principals have gained some experience, they too, leave the high needs schools for other schools (Goodwin, 2013).

Project Description

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

I served two roles, the researcher and the internal evaluator for the program evaluation. The participating teachers, parent volunteers and administrators affiliated with the Promise Academy participated in one-on-one interviews. The principal of the Promise Academy granted permission to conduct the study at the local school of interest. Prior to the research process, Walden University approved the evaluation report to be facilitated and presented to the stakeholders at the Promise Academy. Again, the stakeholders included teachers, parent volunteers and two administrators at one Promise Academy.

The existing supports are the teachers, parent volunteers and the administrators that provided their perceptions of the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of one Promise Academy. After approval of the program evaluation, a time frame was established to present the findings and recommendations of the project and to present the evaluation report. The stakeholders provided recommendations for future implementation of a new initiative. In addition, information was shared during the one-on-one interviews of strategies that were effective and others strategies that were ineffective. The data collected during the interviews were presented in the evaluation report to communicate information for program improvement and future decision making.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solution to Barriers

No potential barriers were identified for the presentation of the summative program evaluation report to be conducted at the Promise Academy. Prior to the study, all participants were informed of the consultation after the completion of the study. Almost all of the participants stated that principal and teacher attrition was a contributing factor that constrained the success of the Promise Academy, which may pose as a potential barrier. It is my recommendation that a four-year contract is required for potential administrators committing to fully implement a new school initiative. The initial stakeholders who develop the new school initiative may be able to require teachers to stay at the school of interest for three years instead of the current agreement of one year, which could be a potential solution of teacher attrition.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Upon completion and approval of this project study, inclusive of the evaluation

report, the stakeholders involved in the study were notified regarding the presentation of

the report. The presentation provided information collected and recommendations for

future implementation of new school initiatives. There was time allocated for questions

asked by the stakeholders. The presentation was be held at the local site for

approximately one hour. The summative report was sent to the administrators prior to the

presentation outlining points of discussion and recommendations. Approximately one

week after confirmation and consent for the venue, date and times have been arranged, all

other participants were informed.

Roles and Responsibilities

The researcher had the responsibility of providing copies of the summative

evaluation report to the stakeholders. Additionally, the researcher assumed the

responsibility of securing the venue, along the date and time of the presentation of the

findings and recommendations. The administrator will provide the location of the

meeting, along with monitoring the presentation of the report. The participants, including

the teachers, parent volunteers and the administrators will take responsibility for the

discussion of factors that enhanced or constrained the success of one Promise Academy.

Project Evaluation Plan

A program evaluation report was developed to identify the factors that contributed

to or limited the success of one Promise Academy. This plan highlighted an in-depth

understanding of stakeholders' perceptions of the factors that enhanced or constrained the

success of one Promise Academy. A goals based program evaluation was used in this

study to measure whether the predetermined goals or targets have been met and to

determine the effectiveness of the Promise Academy model. An outcome based program

evaluation was used in this study to access the extent to which the Promise Academy

program has achieved its intended results or outcomes of increased student achievement.

After data were collected and analyzed, the findings and recommendations gathered from

the stakeholders' perceptions outlined the effectiveness of the Promise Academy

program, resulting in an outcome based evaluation. Unlike formative evaluations,

summative evaluations examine the effects of a specific program and allows the

researcher to identify the strengths and areas in need of improvement for future

implementation (Ryan & Carey, 2014). When all the recommendations and findings

were highlighted, a summative evaluation report was created to present the

recommendations and outcome of the program. A summative evaluation allows the

researcher to better understand factors that helped to achieve a desired goal and factors

that hindered the desired goal. A summative evaluation allows the researcher to gather

rich information to improve future implementation of a program (Ryan & Carey, 2014).

The overall goal of the evaluation report determined the factors that enhanced or

constrained the success of one Promise Academy. In the School District of Philadelphia,

there were a number of schools that were performing significantly below local, state and

national levels. The Promise Academy model was initially implemented in six of the

lowest performing schools in the city with hopes to drastically improve student

achievement. The goal of this evaluation report study provided answers to the research

questions: 1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 2) How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 3) What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise Academy? The three overarching research questions provided an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the stakeholders who participated in the implementation at one Promise Academy. The stakeholders, including teachers, parent participants, administrators and school district officials may use the summative evaluation report to guide future decision-making for new school initiatives and consider highlighted recommendation for improvement.

Project Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

This project study provided an evaluation of one Promise Academy model that was being used in over ten schools in the district, including elementary schools and high schools. This district serves a large population of low-performing students in impoverished neighborhoods. The evaluation report will serve as a guide to school and district administrators in making recommendations for changes to the Promise Academy program or other reform incentives that may positively affect student outcomes. The recommendations include retention contracts for staff, maintaining consistent curriculum, and maintaining strategic goals of the program for the duration of the model.

The evaluation report for this project study gives strong evidence that the success of the Promise Academy can be enhanced by receiving continuous support of stakeholders including teachers, administrators and parents. By sharing the perceptions of the stakeholders and including the factors that constrained and enhanced the Promise

Academy, the schools and the district could provide continuous support to the program.

The school district's future reform efforts could increase student achievement and would

benefit the broader community. Higher achievement rates, and increased student success

could decrease high school drop out rates and could prepare our students for post

graduate opportunities including attending college or entering the workforce.

Far-reaching

In a larger context, school reform efforts face many challenges when

implementing a new school initiative. Teachers, administrators, parents and students can

be resistant to change. At times, the teachers can show resistance to new administrators

along with new policies and procedures. In the same way, administrators may struggle

with turning a school around, which includes turning the entire school community.

However, positive school turnaround can lead to higher graduation rates which can

positively affect the quality of the community. Once the Promise Academy model or a

new school initiative has been successfully implemented at one school, the program can

be adopted to promote success at other school districts.

<p align="center">**Conclusion**</p>

Many urban schools often implement new school initiatives or other reform

efforts with the intent to drastically improve student achievement. However, the

components of the programs are not implemented with fidelity which can lead to

unsuccessful reform efforts, with little student growth. However, through conducting an

evaluation of the program, including the perceptions of the stakeholders can lead to

increased success for the Promise Academy program and ultimately, increased success for our students.

In Section 3, the project goals and the rationale for developing the project were outlined. In addition, I also discussed the review of literature, the project description, the project evaluation plan and the implications of social change for the project. In Section 4 of this study, the final section, the strengths and limitations of the study are addressed, and recommendations are made for the future implementation of new school initiatives that will enhance the effectiveness of the program.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This section includes my reflections on and conclusions about my project study. Additionally, the strengths of the project were discussed and recommendations were provided for future school improvement efforts. An evaluation report was developed to discuss the program evaluation and findings. In the summative review of the project evaluation, the strengths and limitations of this project study were discussed. This section also includes recommendations to address the local school problem and limitations, and discussions of the study's impact on social change, project development, my ability as a practitioner, leadership, and social change. The conclusion of this section includes implications, applications, and recommendation for future research.

Project Strengths

This project study is significant because of the lack of fidelity to reform models in many school reform efforts in poverty-stricken urban schools. At the local school of interest, the Promise Academy model failed to drastically increase student achievement as outlined in the original plan (School District of Philadelphia, 2010). The most important aspect of this study was my identification of the factors that constrained and enhanced the success of the Promise Academy, which was implemented in this and other low-performing schools throughout the school district. Given the absence of any program evaluation of the Promise Academy, I conducted an in-depth evaluation to determine stakeholders' perspectives on the programs strengths and areas of

improvement at my study site. The data collected from the one-on-one interviews guided this study.

The data collected and analyzed from the one-on-one interviews were based on 9 semi-structured questions, allowed me to identify the strengths of the intervention program. The evaluation report was useful in that it outlined the findings and recommendations for future decision making, and marked implications for social change. The evaluation report is a strength, but was not circulated as a published document. All participants were reminded throughout the study that their identity would remain anonymous through the use of codes. In addition, the participants were reassured that all information shared in the interviews would remain confidential. Most of the participants indicated that the Promise Academy had a positive impact on student achievement for the first 2 years of the program, which was a strength of the project. The 10 teacher participants indicated that the Promise Academy model had a positive impact on overall student achievement, including the climate of the school. The 10 teacher participants and 3 parent participants agreed that retaining the same principal who followed the components of the program with fidelity was also a strength of the project. The students and teachers were motivated to improve through a set of outlined goals, policies, and procedures defined by the Promise Academy model. During the first 2 years, teachers were engaged in a weekly professional development which enhanced their professional qualities to continue to strive to be outstanding educators.   The Promise Academy model had a positive impact on student learning, and all the participants felt that the ongoing

professional learning was an effective tool for the school. The strengths of the projects were discussed in the findings section.

Project Limitations

After examining the project strengths, the limitations were also noted. The research was only conducted at one Promise Academy, thus preventing comparison of findings with other schools that have implemented the Promise Academy model. At the time, there were six schools operating under the Promise Academy model; therefore, the results may not be generalized for those other schools. The study included participants who had the experience of working at a Promise Academy and at a traditional public school, disregarding other teachers, parents, or administrators in the academic setting who may be familiar with the program. The sample size of 15 participants was relatively small give the number of schools implementing the Promise Academy program in the School District of Philadelphia. The project study only involved analysis of student testing data from grades three through eight. The program evaluation was limited to me as an internal evaluator. Furthermore, adequate time was not provided after year 3 to effectively deliver additional instruction to provide extra support to the students, in comparison to years 1 and 2. More importantly, financial constraints with the school district may limit the school district or administrators in providing additional hours to the school day as they did in the first 2 years of Promise Academy implementation. To summarize the limitations, there was no guarantee that the recommendations could be effective.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

In this research project, alternative approaches were discovered to improve student achievement through reform efforts. The purpose of this Promise Academy program was to drastically increase student achievement in a 4-year timeframe. The structure of the program implemented math and reading interventions and strict policies and procedures to increase student growth academically and behaviorally. An alternative approach would include a program evaluation of new school initiatives in order to make research-based decisions directly aligned to program goals and objectives. It may be beneficial to compare the findings from schools with similar populations that have implemented a successful new school initiative. Program evaluation should become a focus in the implementation of school reform efforts in low-income urban school districts, and should be monitored by a team of administrators at the district level. This alternative approach would address the issue of fidelity of implementation with the intervention program.

When implementing a new school initiative, schools and districts should be consistent and continue the plan of action throughout the intended duration of the program. New school initiatives should retain trained teaching staff throughout the duration of the initiative. Schools implementing a new program initiative should recruit and retain strong leaders to establish and maintain school policies and procedures. New school initiatives should maintain the outlined strategic goals of the program and maintain the identified curriculum to address the academic challenges of low-performing

students. Equally important, school reform efforts should maintain an extended school year and an extended school day to promote student success. As a means of remediating teacher attrition, teachers hired after the first year of implementation of the program should receive training to ensure all staff are working towards a common goal.

Scholarship

This study was implemented because of the interest in examining stakeholders' perspectives on the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of the Promise Academy. The information collected through the one-on-one interviews was used to answer the research questions. The key aspect discussed in the interviews were the strategies that were implemented and monitored to achieve a higher rate of student success. The data showed that participants wanted students to be successful and had a high level of interest in continued professional support to increase student achievement.

Prior to collecting and analyzing data, my view of scholarship was to develop research questions to be answered through the interview questions that were created. However, I have found that true scholarship not only involves reporting the data, but also providing credible research to support my findings. I have also learned the value and true meaning of becoming a life-long learner. Although I am an educator, this doctoral journey has me playing the role of a student again. Throughout this process, I have encountered many challenges, obstacles, and road blocks. I had to become more disciplined in completing this project study, as well as becoming disciplined in other facets of my life. As a result, I had to learn to plan, organize, and manage my time more efficiently in both my personal and professional life.

Becoming a scholar means accepting differences of opinions of others and determining what information is valid. Scholars do not learn in isolation and I could not have acquired the knowledge through research alone. During my research, I consulted dedicated professionals who were able to provide their perceptions regarding the implementation of school reform efforts. Collaborating and interacting with my peers and instructors afforded me opportunity to respectfully share and exchange ideas.

Finally, my view of learning has broadened as a result of my continuous process of becoming a life-long learner. Reflective thinking has allowed me to develop into a critical thinker, using the information obtained to support my research. In addition, in my role as an educator, scholarship is a commitment to represent a higher level of continuous growth and development.

Project Development and Evaluation

Developing a project for a school with low student performance and a low level of fidelity with a new school initiative were key factors in the design approach. The findings and recommendations were reflective of the one-on-one interviews with 10 teachers, two administrators, and three parent volunteers at the Promise Academy that served as my study site. When choosing a project for the Promise Academy, several areas of concern were considered as identified in the data analysis. Subsequently, the project was developed as an evaluation report. Information is constantly changing, and the data sources had to continuously be accessed.

While developing and implementing the project, many barriers were encountered. The common barriers of infrastructure, cost, and time were obvious; however, other

barriers became an issue. These other barriers included participants' bias towards me as project developer, resistance to openly discussing open-ended questions, and unexpected schedule changes. As the project developer, it was necessary to evaluate the project and then implement it. The project developer must constantly be aware of areas that need improvement and how to improve the identified areas. As the project developer, I was able to offer specific recommendations for a successful school reform effort in the future.

Leadership and Change

Leadership can be defined as being able to think critically, having a vision of your goal, and having a plan to achieve that goal. This doctoral process has inspired me in many ways to become a better leader in both my personal and professional life. Professionally, I have become more knowledgeable about school reform efforts and successful trends in education. Personally, I have become more enlightened on how to make time for the things that are important to me. During the development of this project evaluation, I found countless benefits of how summative evaluations can be critical in the process of social change. Evaluations can be used for decision-making and recommendations for future implementation of programs.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

My aspirations to further my educational career and knowledge as a scholar lead me to obtaining a doctoral degree. As I researched other programs and schools, Walden University appealed to my goals of the development of an educational leader as I enrolled in the Educational Administration doctoral program. My scholarly journey began many years ago when I decided on the topic of study and the created a proposal. With each

class I had taken, and different chair member and instructors, have all contributed in my role as a scholar and has strengthened my scholarly writing. With the guidance of my instructors, integrating reference materials and analyzing data have all contributed to becoming a scholar.

Becoming a critical thinker and being able to analyze and interpret data has become a practice. The doctoral process through instructors feedback, writing courses and constant interaction with my colleagues through the discussion board has given me more confidence in writing in a scholarly manner. At one point, the numerous revisions has made me question my ability in developing into a scholar. More importantly, I have learned to be a scholar, one has go beyond the current level of their comfort zone. The level of frustration after the numerous revisions had eventually broadened my openness to continue to learn and accept the guidance from other professionals in the field. I have learned that learning as a scholar does not take place in isolation, but is a collaborative effort. At times, I felt as if I had become resistant to learning and resistant to feedback, however, I have learned that both are essential in becoming a scholarly writer. I have since embraced becoming a life long learner and continue to seek knowledge through a systematic approach.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

My professional growth began many years ago as a classroom teacher. Throughout the years, I have had many roles in and out of the classroom. I have been the Language Arts model teacher, developed and implemented a Saturday school program, a mentor to novice teachers, and an Intervention Specialist, and have had other roles in the

educational setting. I have been a practitioner for many years, but over the past few years, my role as a practitioner has heightened. I have become more of a critical thinker and a decision maker as I have embarked this doctoral journey.

Through this process, I have chosen a topic that I sparked my interest when the Promise Academies were first implemented. My level of interest in the topic has driven me to become a hard and dedicated researcher, scholar and practitioner. For this project, I chose a quantitative study as opposed to mixed-methods design or qualitative design approach. I have concentrated on the best practices and the appropriate resources to improve school reform efforts and to successfully implement new school initiatives, which has helped to improve my role as a practitioner. Through the data collection and data analysis, I have gained the knowledge to make future recommendations for staff retention and new school initiatives.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

When creating this project, I had learned the importance of the development of program evaluation. The goal of a program evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of a program and if the program successfully met its objective. Program evaluation is also useful in identifying the strengths and areas of improvement in a program. In addition, program evaluation analysis can assist in future recommendations to improve a program or initiative. It was important to conduct an evaluation on stakeholders' perceptions of factors that enhanced or constrained the success of one Promise Academy. One Promise Academy was selected because of the mixed results of student performance and the overall climate of the school. To obtain credible and reliable data, information was

triangulated from three sources of data: teachers, administrators and parent volunteers.

Permission was sought and granted from the principal of the local school of interest.

After permission was granted, the principal was asked to identify teachers who had the

experience of working at a Promise Academy and a traditional public school. After the

letter of invitation was sent via email to all of the teachers that met the requirements, the

first ten teachers who agreed to participate were chosen. Subsequently, data collection

and data analysis began.

One-on-one interview were conducted with ten teachers, two administrators and

three parent volunteers. Initially, the plan was to only to only include eight teachers,

however, the IRB suggested to increase my number of participants to fifteen and to

include other stakeholders in the school. Once consent was given to participate in the

interviews, meeting times were scheduled with the participants. Unfortunately, the

scheduled meetings did not go as planned due to various reasons such as unplanned

family obligations and scheduling conflicts. Although I had to be patient and reschedule

meeting times, I often became frustrated. What I have learned as a project developer,

things do not always go as planned and one needs to be flexible when developing a

project.

The project was presented to the teachers and administrators and other

participating faculty in as a conference. Stakeholders from other Promise Academies

were invited to the presentation of the project evaluation. The faculty was given a copy

of the program evaluation to promote discussion and further examination. As the project

developer, I was able to provide program recommendations for future implementation of a new school initiative.

Reflection on the Importance of Work

This project study has the ability to have a positive impact on social change. During the development this study, my work as a researcher has allowed me to collect and analyze data, while applying research to practice in my local school community. As this project study was created, the current research has added to my knowledge gained in my twenty years as an educator. The research conducted in this study can ultimately increase student achievement in schools in urban areas implementing new school initiatives. This study initiated an evaluation of the Promise Academy model and student achievement. The one-on-one interviews reflection the perceptions of the teachers, administrators and parent volunteers, provided an abundance of data to add to the study.

Through this process, hopefully the participants and other stakeholders find value in this program evaluation. As a researcher, I was able to remain unbiased and conducted the interviews without judgment. Findings from this study outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the Promise Academy model, which will ultimately lead to future decision-making by the local schools and the school districts.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The key aspects discussed in this study were the factors that enhanced and constrained the success of one Promise Academy. Supported by research, I included references on teacher and principal retention, fidelity of implementation and other research to corroborate continue success with school reform efforts. The limitations of

this study provide directions for recommendations for future research. The theoretical framework that guided this project study is educational change theory will develop awareness about implementing new school initiatives and the change that will most likely occur. This program evaluation will provide teachers, administrators and other stakeholders the opportunity to attain a higher level of success with school reform efforts or new school initiatives. The local schools and school districts can benefit from continued data collection and data analysis of new school initiatives. Many failing urban school districts continuously attempt to reform their schools in hopes of a positive outcome. Future research could include suggestions for staff retention and fidelity of implementation to achieve a higher rate of student success.

Conclusion

To conclude this doctoral project study, this section serves as a reflection of my role as a practitioner, scholar and a project developer. In this project study and program evaluation, I have presented the strengths and weaknesses of the program. In addition, I have provided implications and recommendations to promote social change in the local school community and beyond. This project study can influence educational stakeholder by providing an insight of the successes and failures of the Promise Academy. The project that has been created can be useful to school and district level administrators to assist in future success of the Promise Academy or school reform initiative.

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Appendix A: Project Evaluation

Factors that Constrained or Enhanced the Success of A Promise Academy

A goals-based summative program evaluation was conducted to determine the factors that constrained or enhanced the success of one Promise Academy. The goal of the program evaluation was to analyze the perceptions of the stakeholders views on the newly implemented school reform effort within the Promise Academy model. This goal-based program evaluation was initiated because the Promise Academy failed to make the students gains as outlined by the goals of the Promise Academy. The goals-based program evaluation was chosen to determine if the goals of the Promise Academy model were successfully implemented. Additionally, goals-based evaluation was used to provide future suggestions for successful reform efforts.

The first two years of the program (2010-2012) were more successful in comparison to the third and fourth year of implementation (2013-2014). When the statewide assessment test scores (PSSA) were analyzed, the Math scores plummeted during the third year and the math scores continued to decrease. This Promise Academy has less than fifteen percent of the students scoring in the Advanced or Proficient range on the statewide assessment (PSSA). To develop a deeper understanding, a goal-based summative program evaluation was used to collect data from the stakeholders. The theoretical framework was centered around Michael Fullan's educational change theory. The qualitative data collected included one-on-one interviews consisting of fifteen stakeholders; two administrators, ten teachers, and three parent volunteers. Analyzing the perspectives from three groups of stakeholders with various perspectives triangulated the

data. The data collected from the interviews captured the perceptions of the effectiveness of the Promise Academy model.

The outcome-based project evaluation was presented as an executive summary. The evaluation reported the failure to make adequate yearly progress at one urban school that implemented a school reform initiative, the Promise Academy model. The findings were analyzed and examined to provide strategies for growth in future planning. This executive summary outlined the implementation of the Promise Academy. Included in the summary are factors that enhanced and/or constrained the success of the program. In addition, included in the summary is the program description, outcomes relating to the overarching research questions, and recommendations for future school reform programs. Lastly, the summary concluded with recommendations based on the stakeholders' perspectives, which include suggestions for the improvement of future program implementation initiatives resulting in positive social change.

Program Description

In many urban schools, scoring in the "Proficient" or "Advanced" range had been challenging for students in these areas. Empirical evidence from studies that suggest students living in disadvantaged communities have lower test scores (Sharkey, Schwartz, Ellen & Lacoe, 2014). An urban school district in southeastern Pennsylvania initiated a five-year strategic plan developed to improve student achievement targeting students who live in impoverished areas with little resources. The plan of action was started due to the large number of students (76%) who were considered "at-risk". This project study focused on one of the schools that implemented the Promise Academy initiative.

The PSSA data indicates that approximately 75% of the students failed the state mandated tests at one school that would later become a Promise Academy. As the assessment data was analyzed by the school district, the transition team recommended six areas within these failing schools to be addressed. The six areas of focus: teaching and learning, building capacity, safety, public engagement, resource allocation and diverse providers.

One year after the school district analyzed the data, the Promise Academy initiative was introduced and implemented into six failing schools. The initiative was executed because of the failing test scores, failure to meet AYP and lack of resources in low socio-economic areas of the inner-city. The goal of the program was to drastically increase student achievement and to provide the disadvantaged communities with quality schools.

The Intervention Program

Promise Academy

The Promise Academy initiative is a major reform effort in attempts to turn around the lowest performing schools in the district. This transformation included working with school communities to recruit and retain organizations and individuals who have met success in achieving higher levels of student achievement in schools that have been identified as low-performing (School District of Philadelphia, 2010). The main goal of the initiative was to turnaround underperforming schools into world-class schools where students will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college and careers. The major components of the initiative to improve student outcomes:

extended school day, extended school year, corrective intervention programs for reading and math, full-time school nurse, school counselors, technology integrated into learning, Reading and Math coaches, and other supplemental staff. According to Wilson & Corbett (2014), school reform efforts need to search within the schools and communities for strategies that best meet the needs of the students in that environment.   After carefully identifying the needs to the students in the original six low-performing schools, the Promise Academies were implemented.

Data Analysis

The three overarching research questions that guided the study were:

1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

2) How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

3) What are principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Promise

Academy?

This qualitative case study collected data was collected from stakeholders who had been with the Promise Academy in various capacities since the initial phase. The open-ended interviews allowed the data collection to provide findings which reflected an evaluation of the factors that enhanced and constrained the success of one Promise Academy. The triangulation of data collected from the three sources of participants served as the findings for this study. Recommendations for future school reform efforts for stakeholders were derived after analyzing the data and reported findings.

In this study, the researcher was responsible for examining data from the perspectives of the stakeholders through the interview participants and allowed them to

openly provide relevant feedback to the overarching research questions. The researcher conducted all interviews at the local school of interest, although another location option was offered to the participants. All of the participants selected to participate in the interview at the school in a private area. Prior to conducting the interviews, the topic was explained and all the participants in the study granted permission. The participants in the study were selected based on two criteria: they were at the Promise Academy at the beginning stages of implementation, and they had experience working at both a traditional public school and the Promise Academy. Permission to conduct the study, letters of invitation, and the Informed Consent were signed by the participants, and the administrators. These documents were approved by the IRB.

Prior to conducting the study and the interviews, the participants were informed that their names and identity would remain anonymous and the usage of numbers and codes would be used and stored securely in password-encrypted database. Participants were also required to sign the Informed Consent summarizing the rights of the participants, the purpose of the case study, the procedures, and the potential risks and benefits of participation. Once permission was granted to conduct the study by the school administrator and Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval # 03-14-16-0156237), the researcher began data collection. The data collection process consisted of one-on-one interviews with two administrators, ten teachers and three parent volunteers over a ten week period. The interviews were approximately twenty minutes. To review for accuracy, member checking was done after each interview.

The data collection was gathered in a two-part process. First, the one-on-one interviews were conducted with 15 participants, which provided data for the nine questions relating to their perceptions of factors that constrained and/or enhanced the success of one Promise Academy. Secondly, member checking was done after each interview to ensure credibility and validity. As the interviews were conducted, they were audio-taped and field notes were also taken. In addition, research logs were made while conducting the interviews. Following the interviews, the participant responses were transcribed, analyzed and coded into themes. The themes were developed with similar participant responses to the research questions. All of the interviews were conducted at the local site after school hours.   The following interview questions guided the study:

1. Tell me about your experience working at this Promise Academy?

All of the teacher participants indicated that they have worked in the Promise Academy since the beginning of its implementation in 2010. Prior to working at the Promise Academy, all of the teacher participants explained that they had been employed at a traditional public school. All of the teachers described their experiences working at the Promise Academy as challenging and equally rewarding. In addition, both administrators had also been employed at traditional public schools prior to working at the Promise Academy. All parent volunteers have been at the Promise Academy since the beginning stages in 2010.

2. In what ways was working here similar or different than working at a traditional public school?

The majority of the teachers agreed that working at the Promise Academy was

more challenging than working at a traditional public school. Some of the teachers described the students as more challenging than the students in other public schools. Participant 9 stated, "When other schools closed and we added to our population, their lower scores came with them." Participant 12 stated, "I think the children at the Promise Academy are more difficult to handle and we have a high population of students who have severe behavior problems." The teachers agreed that when our study body merged with the students of the neighboring schools that closed, it became more difficult to continue with the established norms of the Promise Academy.

The teachers stated the school hours were different at the Promise Academy in comparison to working at a traditional public school. Participant 1 and participant 3 expressed the school day included "an extra hour". Participant 5 stated, " It was different because we would come in every other Saturday for a half day and we worked an extra hour each day."

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All of the parent volunteers agreed that the major difference between the Promise Academy and a traditional public school was the additional staff members. Participant 14 stated, " I would say the difference would be the amount of supportive staff". Participant 15 stated, "The Promise Academy had more staff".

3. This Promise Academy made some progress in improving student achievement during the first year of implementation (2010). What in your opinion are some of the factors that lead to this increase in student achievement?

Several of the teachers and parent volunteers contributed the increase in student achievement to the principal at the time during the first two years of implementation of the Promise Academy. Participant 7 stated, "the principal was different at the time". Participant 3 stated, "I really feel it was based on who our leader was at the time". Participant 5 said, "It was everything starting with when the kids lined up in the morning, the principal would make the kids line up in a straight line and he would say encouraging words to them". Participant 10 stated, "The principal then was no joke…he made sure the teachers were doing what they were supposed to do". Participant 11 expressed, "The Promise Academy came with high expectations and then having a principal that actually implemented those expectations and monitored it".

4. By the third year, this Promise Academy had Math scores lower than the first prior to implementation. In your opinion, what are some of the factors that lead to this increase in student achievement?

Many of teachers and parent volunteers expressed that the decline of test scores was due to lack of fidelity. The Promise Academy model was not implemented with fidelity. The components of the program were supposed to be implemented for a minimum of four years in order to achieve growth. However, when funding was drastically cut, so were many of the resources. Participant 2 stated, "After the first year, the lost of resources….we felt it hard. Also there was no more extended day, there was no

Saturday school, there was no summer school program and we lost some of the support

staff". Participant 4 stated, "The Promise Academy supports started to dwindle. As the

years started go by….the coaching wasn't as constant, the initiatives started to dwindle

away, so the support wasn't there". Participant 11 stated, "I think the first two years the

Promise Academy program was implemented there was just a lot of resources and a lot of

buzz words going around. But then with the district budget, a lot of resources had to go".

Other teachers thought that the change in staff was also a major factor in the

decline of test scores. Participant 3 stated, " We had a lot of turnaround as far as the

teachers and leadership". Participant 5 stated, "a new principal who had a very more laid

back style, the kids went crazy". Participant 12 stated, "I have got to go back to the new

principal, she's not holding the teachers accountable".

5. In general, what factors do you think enhanced the success of the Promise

Academy?

Many of the teachers and parents contributed the success of the Promise Academy

to the extra resources and initiatives provided. The extra resources and initiatives

included an extended school day, weekly professional development for the staff, summer

school and smaller class sizes. Participant 8 noted, "One thing that I know made a

difference was classroom size. There were classroom sizes that were low, no more than

20". Participant 11 stated, "Having that additional instructional time and the resources

that go along with it…..helped to enhance the success of the Promise Academy".

Participant 12 stated, "I think the smaller classroom sizes had a big impact. In addition,

we had an extra hour a day….we worked on Saturday's which is important". Participant

13 stated, "We had more money in our schools, our children were in school for longer hours, we had Saturday school….. I think those are some of the strong factors".

6. In general, what factors do you think constrained the success of the Promise Academy?

Some of the teacher participants felt the change in leadership constrained the success of the Promise Academy. While other teachers felt the change in the student population also constrained the success of the Promise Academy. Participant 4 stated, "I would think the population has a lot to do with it and sometimes the attitudes towards learning, we have to really boost the morale of the students". Participant 7 stated, "I think definitely the change in the instructional leader…. I think when you change instructional leaders, such as the principal, I think that could have an impact, whether good or bad on a school's success." Participant 8 stated, "It seemed like we got a lot more children that were coming into the school that were not here before had behavioral problems and the way I'm looking at it now, the good ones changed because it's just an overall problem with behavior".   Participant 13 stated, "I believe that in the third year the administrator that was here originally, left. When he left, it left a hole here because now we had to have another principal come into our school. When that happens, everything changes because the second administrator has different views and ideas. I think it was too much of a change for the students who were here".

7. In what ways, if any, was the implementation different during years 1, 2 and 3 of the project?

Many participants in this study identified that the implementation of the program

changed primarily because of the reduction in funds. Largely, due to the lack of funds, the Promise Academy model lost its dominance. Participant 4 explained, "Well in the beginning there was a little more structure, I believe implementing the model was more enforced, the policies were more enforced. And I think they may have gotten a little lackadaisical enforcing the Promise Academy model". Participant 5 examined the lack of knowledge of the Promise Academy model with the newer teachers, "The third year, we had new teachers who were never instructed to take them to the bathroom together or walk them down on the right side of the hall". The Promise Academy model was presented and implemented during the first two years of the model. However, after the second year, the Promise Academy model was no longer enforced or implemented by the administrators or the teachers. Participant 7 explained, " Other than the difference in staffing, there was a difference in the school day and a difference in the simmer months." Participant 8 emphasized, " It just seemed like the teachers went out of their way more (in the first two years of implementation) to implement the programs." Participant 9 compared the first two years of implementation to the years three and beyond, "Now it just feels like a regular school. There's nothing here to tell me when I walk in the building other than the name that it's a Promise Academy". Participant 11 referred to the first two years of the Promise Academy, "I think teachers were very passionate but kind of nervous and hard working because it was a new initiative and eyes were really on us." Conversely, after the second year, participant 11 concluded, "I think the change happened when we received less resources and then there became rumors that the Promise Academy model was just going away". Similarly, participant 13 stated, "Years

one and two we received more money and the day was longer. Saturday school was mandated, the teacher received more money". In contrast to years one and two, participant 13 concluded, "Starting in the third year, all of that seemed to go away".

8. In what ways, if any, was the school climate different during years 1, 2, and 3 of the model?

During the first two years of the Promise Academy model, most of the participants agreed that there was order and the Promise Academy policies and procedures were enforced and implemented. However, after the second year, the teachers and administrators failed to implement or enforce the policies set forth in the Promise Academy handbook. Participant 2 stated, "There was always additional support staff throughout the school and in the classroom. And that's no longer visible in the Promise Academy". Participant 3 stated, " The teachers were made to feel strongly about the Promise Academy model and the students were also made to feel strongly about the model. Now since leadership and other things have changed, no one feels as strong about the Promise Academy model". Participant 4 stated, "In the beginning of the model, there was a different administrator so he had different academic and discipline policies than the current administrator, so the school climate has changed because of that". In the same way, participant 5 stated, "During years one and two when we had the first principal, school climate was tense in the sense he was a real stickler for every little detail, but when it came to year three we looked back on those years fondly because even though it was stressful to work for him, the school was in line, it was nice, it was very orderly". Participant 6 stated, "During the Promise Academy model, I feel like the students were

more conscious of how they behaved in school….they kind of followed the rules. As

supports started to dwindle, the climate of the school started to decrease as well".

9. In what ways if any, was teacher support different during years 1, 2 and 3 of the

project?

The majority of the participants in this study did not think teacher support was

much different in years one, two, and three of Promise Academy model. Although the

supports may have changed, teacher support remained constant through the years.

However, the professional development component of the program declined after years

one and two. Participant 2 stated, "The teacher support differed, professional

development is no longer built into the weekly schedule".   Participant 3 stated, "In the

beginning years of the model, I believe the teachers received more professional

development". Participant 9 stated, "I'm not sure that really made a difference, I think

the support was kind of here". Participant 11 stated, "Teacher support as far as the

resources available, I don't think changed…As far as the math teacher leader and the

literacy teacher leader, those resources always stayed in place…I feel like they were still

available at our disposal". In regards to professional development, participant 13 stated,

" In the beginning, the teachers had a lot more time devoted to professional development

after school".

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Research Questions

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Research Question 1

How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Triangulation was used to present diverse perspectives on the factors that

enhanced and/or constrained the success of one Promise Academy. The study included three parent participants to provide a deeper understanding of the specific phenomenon. Although all participants were asked all of the nine interview questions, the data collected and analyzed from parent perceptions focused on interview questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. The parent participants indicated that there were three major factors that constrained the success and the implementation of the Promise Academy. The factors were the change in leadership, changes in teaching staff, and lack of the implementation of the Promise Academy model after year two.

Research Question 2

How do teachers perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Interview questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 focused on responses to address research question 2.   The teacher participants indicated there was a successful implementation of the Promise Academy during years one and two. The teachers indicated there was consistency in the program, consistency with the principal and consistency with the teaching staff.   Implementing the components of the program remained constant, along with the educational staff. However, after the second year, the principal changed, along with some of the teaching staff. Funds were drastically decreased and the program was no longer implemented with fidelity. The majority of the teachers indicated there was no longer adequate timing in the instructional day to continue the upward trajectory of student success after the funds had been reduced. The Promise Academy model was not implemented as the way it was intended.

Research Question 3

How do administrators perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?

Interview questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 focused on the administrators responses to question 3. Both administrators stated the success of the Promise Academy was largely due to the extended school day and the extended school week. Both administrators agreed the superintendent at the time poured in an abundance of resources to the model. Participant 1 stated, "From the superintendent's associates, there was a team that came in and observed teachers, the way the school functioned, and the principal would receive feedback whether positive or negative." As a result, those practices helped to increase student achievement and also produced a successful program. On the contrary, there was no Promise Academy team after the second year. The extended school day and Saturday school had been diminished as well. The Promise Academy was not functioning as outlined in the Promise Academy handbook. More instructional time was needed and the special team was needed to maintain the success of the Promise Academy. Unfortunately, when the funds were dramatically decreased, the extra instructional time and the Promise Academy team was no longer in existence.

Themes Identified

The following themes and patterns emerged from the responses as coding was completed with the interview questions.

1. The Promise Academy was successful the first two years of implementation.
2. The extended school day and Saturday school made a positive impact on student success.
3. The smaller class sizes during years one and two of the Promise Academy

helped to increase student achievement.

4. The principal during years one and two assisted in the increase in student achievement.

5. The consistent teacher staff during years one and two helped to increase achievement.

6. After the second year of the Promise Academy, student achievement declined due to change in leadership and change in teachers.

7. After funds were decreased, the components of the program were diminished which lead to a decrease in student achievement.

Findings

Findings based on the three research questions indicated that the perceptions of the stakeholders of the Promise Academy reflected the implementation of the Promise Academy had positive impact on student learning during the first two years of the model. This was followed by a decline in student achievement during the third year and beyond. The decrease in student achievement was due to the drastic cut in the school district budget. Findings reflected answers to the following research questions: 1) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?   2) How do parents perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy? 3) How do administrators perceive the implementation of the Promise Academy?   Research question 1 highlighted teachers' responses in relation to the implementation of the Promise Academy. Research question 2 highlighted the parents' responses regarding the implementation of the Promise Academy. Research question 3 highlighted the administrators' perceptions of

the implementation of the Promise Academy. Themes emerged from the responses reflecting the factors that enhanced or constrained the success of one Promise Academy.

The findings of the perceptions of stakeholders' implementation of one Promise Academy and the fidelity of implementation are aligned to previous research data that supports the failures of the Promise Academy. According to Whitmire (2016)) students who attend school longer than the traditional school year have better educational outcomes. After funds were drastically cut, the extended school year was eliminated. Wolford (2015) suggests the Promise Academy efforts were marked with inadequate design, inadequate capacity, and inconsistent support. Unfortunately, after the first two years of implementation of the Promise Academy, supports were diminished. Research and examination of the Promise Academy have shown these factors constrained the success of one Promise Academy.

Recommendations

1. School reform efforts should be consistent and continue the plan of action throughout its intended duration.

2. New school initiatives should retain trained teaching staff throughout the intended duration of the initiative.

3. New school initiatives should recruit and retain strong leaders throughout the intended duration of time of the initiative.

4. New school initiatives should maintain the outlined strategic goals of the program for the intended amount of time.

5. New school initiatives should maintain the identified curriculum through the

duration of the program.

6. New school initiatives should maintain an extended school year and an extended school day to promote student success.

7. Administrators should provide common planning and professional development to provide continued success of the program.

8. New school initiatives should be introduced to teachers hired after the first year of implementation to ensure all staff are working towards a common goal.

The evaluation report will be presented to the principals, teachers, and other stakeholders of the Promise Academy during a future meeting at the school. On a later date, I will present my evaluation report to the Assistant Superintendent of our region to encourage the school district of future funding for the necessary resources to ensure continued student success in future reform efforts.

Conclusion

The program evaluation has provided a synopsis of the project. Program evaluation provides methods to assess the implementation and improvement of outcomes of a specific program. The participants' time and cooperation to be interviewed proved to beneficial to evaluate the factors that constrained or enhanced the success of one Promise Academy. Although factors have been identified, the depth of the program needs to be determined. In summary, the perceptions of the stakeholders' have given insight on the components needed to implement a successful school initiative. The continuation of the program relies heavily on the school district budget and to use the

results and recommendations to create positive social change.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

An Investigation of Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Implementation a Promise Academy

Date:
Time:
Location:

Introduction:
The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of one promise academy. All responses that you provide as a participant in this study will be kept confidential and your identify will remain anonymous. Any and all information that is provided through the interview will be reviewed by me and my doctoral committee. Should this study be published, individual results and data collected will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. This interview will be recorded and later transcribed and analyzed. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. (Begin recording)

Questions:

1. Tell me about your experience working at this Promise Academy.

2. In what ways was working here similar or different to your experience in working at a traditional public school?

3. This Promise Academy made some progress in improving student achievement during the first year of implementation (2010). What in your opinion are some of the factors that lead to this increase in student achievement? (Prompt for specifics, such as promise academy practices.

4. By the third year, this Promise Academy had Math scores lower than the first prior to implementation. In your opinion, what are some of the factors that lead to this decrease in student achievement? (Prompt for specific changes in implementation that may have contributed to this decrease.)

5. In general, what factors do you think enhanced the success of the Promise Academy?

6. In general, what factors do you think constrained the success of the Promise Academy?

7. In what ways, if any, was implementation different during years 1, 2, and 3 of the project?

8. In what ways, if any, was the school climate different during years 1, 2, and 3 of the model?

9. In what ways, if any, did teacher support differ during years 1,2, and 3 of the model?

* Thank each participant for their cooperation and participation in the interview. Assure them of confidentiality and anonymity.