A Case Study of Cross-Sector Collaboration in Community Schools in Central Pennsylvania

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A Case Study of Cross-Sector Collaboration in Community Schools in Central Pennsylvania

A Dissertation Project

Presented to the Faculty of the

Department of Public Administration

West Chester University

West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

By

Jessica Knapp

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To my boys, in hopes that you will always be lifelong learners.

And to the most incredible women in my life: my mother, my aunt, and my grandmothers. Thank you for teaching me how to “do it all.” This is for you.
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Abstract

As societal problems become increasingly complex, organizations are more frequently embracing collaborative problem-solving methods to address issues that a single organization could not successfully solve alone. One such wicked problem is the state of education in the United States, particularly in low-income communities and school districts. The community school model is a method of education reform that requires cross-sector partnerships in order to be successful. This study examined the factors that led to successful cross-sector partnerships between Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania (CISPA) and two partner school districts in the implementation of the community school model in Pennsylvania. The results demonstrate that collaborative leadership, interorganizational trust, and communication are necessary for these collaborative endeavors to succeed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Wicked problems, a term originally coined by Rittel and Weber in 1973, refer to complex problems that are unable to be solved by a single individual or entity (Head 2008). These types of problems are at the center of a rapidly growing body of literature in the field of public administration and public policy. Due to the rise of these wicked problems, organizations in both the public and private sectors have begun to collaborate between and across sectors to create solutions to these challenges, including climate change, poverty, and the global refugee crisis.

A collaborative approach to problem-solving is increasingly popular in the field of education, which struggles with an overwhelming number of complex, unique problems such as teacher shortages, educational inequities, and school violence. Low-income communities and their school districts are often hit the hardest by these issues due to disinvestment and unequal access to resources (Daniel 2017). Compounding this, non-academic barriers such as poverty, community violence, food insecurity and homelessness also impact academic achievement. As such, educational communities are increasingly exploring collaborative solutions, such as the community school model of educational reform, to create more equitable and just education systems.

Collaboration across sectors is a core tenet of the community school model. This unique model of education reform focuses on leveraging and brokering community resources for the benefit of students, parents, and caregivers. Cross-sector collaboration, while it has many definitions throughout the academic literature, was defined by Bryson, Cross & Stone (2015) as “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in
two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately” (p. 648).

Despite the growing popularity of cross-sector collaboration to solve wicked problems, collaborative efforts are not always easy or successful. Factors such as collaborative leadership, shared vision, interorganizational trust, and communication all impact the longevity and success of a collaborative problem-solving effort (Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh 2011). This holds true when exploring the community school model.

To understand this, it is necessary to fully understand this model of education reform. A community school is defined as:

…both a place and a set of partnerships, connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community. A community school is distinguished by an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development. (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016 p. 1017)

The community school movement arose from the idea that public schools simply cannot provide students with everything they need to be successful, particularly in school districts and communities where the needs are significant. Rather, students need the organized and holistic support of their community to empower them to succeed in the classroom. A whole-child approach ensures that both academic and non-academic barriers are addressed through a diverse offering of integrated services and supports (Fehrer and Leos-Urbel, 2016).

The research on community schools has grown in recent years along with research on cross-sector collaboration. However, there are several significant gaps in the literature, the most significant of which is that the bulk of the research that exists on this topic has been published by
individuals within the field of education, with little-to-no literature about community schools authored by those in other academic areas, such as public administration. In this dissertation, the author intends to fill the above-mentioned gap in the literature regarding community schools and cross-sector collaboration. The author argues that collaboration between nonprofits and school districts (cross-sector collaboration) is a key component of the community school model of education reform. Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania has a long history of providing high-quality community school programs across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The research question to be answered is: What factors lead to the success of these cross-sector collaborative efforts?

A qualitative case study design is employed to study cross-sector collaboration across five community school sites that are operated by the nonprofit dropout prevention organization Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania (CISPA). The case study approach was chosen primarily due to its ability to lend a comprehensive understanding of the research topic within its unique social context. Further, as case studies allow for the study of systems, such as school districts, this approach was appropriate.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews; using a convenience sample, the author interviewed staff at CISPA as well as employees as CISPA’s partner school districts, all of whom played an active role in the implementation of a community school program. Interview consent was created in alignment with West Chester University’s policies and received approval from the University’s Institutional Review Board. Interviews were conducted virtually, via Zoom, utilizing a semi-structure approach to ensure enough freedom for participants to talk about issues of importance while also providing structure to the interview.
Data analysis was conducted, and the resulting data was coded and analyzed. By reviewing and analyzing the data, the author was able to identify concepts, words and phrases that were used frequently; these commonalities were then distilled down into 9 themes. These themes will be explored and tied back into the literature throughout the study.

To guide the reader, an overview of the dissertation will be provided. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to the dissertation project. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the existing literature on cross-sector collaboration, collaborative governance, and the community school model. Chapter 3 explores the author’s methodology and research design. Chapter 4 discusses and analyzes the results of the study. Chapter 5 outlines key findings, recommendations for practice and future research, and serves as the conclusion to this dissertation project.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This literature review consists of four sections. First, the concept of wicked problems and their relevance to the public administration literature is explored. Next, the foundations of collaborative governance are explored, leading into discussions on cross-sector collaboration, its role in education reform, and factors required for successful collaborative efforts. Lastly, literature surrounding the community school model is explored and synthesized as is relevant to the discussion on cross-sector collaboration and collaborative governance.

Wicked Problems

“Wicked problems” are problems that are often described as “complex, open-ended, and intractable” (Head, 2008, p.101.) This term was originally coined by Rittel and Weber in 1973 and is the topic of a growing body of literature in the field of public administration and public policy in the United States (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). While people have been working together to solve these complex problems since the beginning of time, in recent years, instances of formal collaborative governance have increased as the state has hollowed out. This ‘hollowing out’ largely refers to a reduction in the number of services and programs under the oversight of the federal government; as such, many nongovernmental organizations have been created to step in and fill the resulting gaps in service distribution.

Out of necessity, various organizations in the nonprofit, government and private sectors have begun to work collaboratively, across sectors and silos, to distribute services that are no longer solely government provided. This increase in collaboration, according to Emerson & Nabatchi (2015), can be directly linked to the increase of “wicked problems” in our society (p. 6). The global refugee crisis, homelessness, and climate change are all examples of “wicked
problems”; they are complex issues that cannot be successfully solved by a single organization or individual. Education reform in the United States is also an example of this type of complex problem; the community school model is a unique approach to education reform that relies on cross-sector collaboration and collaborative governance to reduce educational inequities and prepare students, particularly those from low-income communities, for academic success.

Collaborative problem-solving efforts are increasingly popular in the field of education, which is rife with “wicked problems” such as a lack of highly trained educators, funding inequities, outdated curriculums, and resource constraints. Low-income communities and school districts often feel the brunt of these hard-to-tame issues much more than those in affluent areas, as widespread disinvestment in low-income communities has perpetuated unequal access to resources that students need in order to succeed (Daniel, 2017). Compounding this lack of access to educational resources, non-academic challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, and/or housing instability also impact student achievement. Throughout the United States, educational communities are increasingly adopting interorganizational approaches in attempts to address these inequalities (Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo, 2017). One of these approaches is the community school model, which is growing in popularity in school districts with high instances of poverty coupled with low graduation rates. By providing access to critically needed community resources as well as wraparound services to combat non-academic barriers to success, community schools are rapidly gaining attention as a strategy to create more equitable and just education systems.

**Collaboration is Key**

In a 2017 report, the Institute for Educational Leadership and the Coalition for Community Schools released a set of seven standards that all community schools should follow, one of which is investing in building trusting relationships – with students, families, community
partners, and other local stakeholders. Indeed, deep collaboration can motivate school transformation by creating an environment in which schools and community organizations can come together as part of a shared approach to student success.

Cross-sector collaboration is the key to building a successful system of community schools due to the fact that creating and maintaining partnerships to bring community resources into the school building is a core tenet of this model. Before attempting to apply the concept of cross-sector collaboration to the community school model, however, it is critical for one to understand the foundation of collaborative governance as it applies to public administration.

**Foundations of Collaborative Governance**

For the last century, public administration was largely focused on the concept of boundaries which were seen as key to the administrative process as they defined the roles, responsibilities, and functions of organizations. According to Kettl (2006), within administrative agencies, “the most important boundaries have always been vertical” (p. 12). Traditionally, hierarchy and authority were viewed as the “key building blocks of coordination” (Kettl 2006, p. 12).

However, the new challenges of the 21st century have proven to be far too complex for administrative agencies to solve while operating within these rigid boundaries. As such, scholars and practitioners began to shift their focus away from creating boundaries and into the study of collaboration. Kettl (2006) stated that “devising new strategies to bring public administration in sync with the multiorganizational, multisector operating realities of today’s government requires a collaborative, network-based approach” (p. 17). While cross organizational and sectoral boundaries have long been a part of public management and governance, the growing emphasis
on collaborative governance and collaborative public management acknowledges that the necessity for and frequency of these interorganizational efforts is likely going to continue to increase. To better situation collaborative governance and its role in the successful implementation of the community school model, we must also examine cross-sector collaboration, its role in education reform, and collaborative leadership.

**Cross-Sector Collaboration**

Collaboration can occur within or across sectors. As this form of governance has grown in popularity in recent decades, several frameworks for understanding cross-sector governance, including varying definitions of the term, have been published. Using the definition provided by Bryson, Cross & Stone (2015), for the purposes of this research, we will define cross-sector collaboration as “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately” (p. 648).

Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2011), published a collaborative governance regime framework that expands the concept of collaboration as a system that is both embedded in and interacting with a larger environment that includes “political, legal, socioeconomic, environmental, and other influences” (p. 8). This framework largely focuses on public organizations as collaborators, but the authors acknowledge the likely involvement of partners from other sectors as well. Emerson et al. separate the context of the collaboration from the drivers without which there would be no impetus for collaboration. These drivers include leadership, consequential incentives, interdependence, and uncertainty (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 9). The authors assert that while collaborative governance regimes are initially influenced and
formed by these drivers, as the regime develops, it is influenced by internal collaboration factors: principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action. Together, these dynamics create action, which may affect the collaborative governance regime’s system and context. Emerson et al.’s framework adds to the literature on cross-sector collaboration by articulating causal connections within collaborative efforts and exploring which of these relationships matter in varying contexts.

Another framework situation cross-sector collaboration is that of Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer (2012). This framework theorizes that communication is a “complex process of meaning negotiation and construction by which contextualized actors use symbols and make interpretations to create (and/or maintain, transform, destroy) the meanings that coordinate and control activity and knowledge” (Koschmann, Kuhn, & Pfarrer, 2012, p. 335). Koschmann et al. emphasize the need to create authoritative texts that can include cooperative norms, bylaws, or mission statements. These texts capture the collaboration’s direction and goals, assist in generating consent among partners, attract additional external resources, and help collaborators employ collective agency. This framework’s focus on communication theory and authoritative text are key additions to the literature on cross-sector collaborations.

**Cross-Sector Collaboration & Education Reform**

Cross-sector collaboration certainly has a role to play in education reform. A 2017 qualitative study by Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo examines how issues of difference, competition and resource constraint impacted cross-sector collaboration in a rural community in the western United States. Miller and colleagues (2017) argue that cross-sector collaboration in education occurs on social frontiers (p. 210). The social frontier perspective was originally described by
Burt in 1992, where social frontiers were described as places where networks of people and organizations from highly diverse backgrounds and interests interact in purposeful ways. This perspective was then later adapted by Miller and colleagues (2013) into an educational reform context (Miller, Wills & Scanlan).

In an analysis of 20 Native American communities attempting education reform, Miller, Wills & Scanlan (2013) applied this concept of social frontiers. The authors identified several characteristics that were common in cross-sector education collaboration. Reiterated in their 2017 study, the first attribute is that “key stakeholders come to social frontiers from organizations with diverse cultures and purposes” (Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo, 2017, p.196S). Second, schools and community organizations often have differing organizational practices, accountability hierarchies, and policy environments (Miller et al., 2017). For example, schools strive to reach student outcomes under local, state, and federal-level accountability policies such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Community-based organizations, however, are evaluated by other criteria and have different policy considerations than public school districts. These differences can present problems in collaboration if the frontier partners are pursuing different goals according to different frameworks. A third attribute identified by Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo (2017) is that cross-sector collaboration is often initiated when there is significant resource constraint. This idea of resource constraint as a driving force for collaboration is reiterated in the research on cross-sector collaboration and is in alignment with theories of resource dependency argued by Pfeiffer & Salancik (1978). This leads to Miller and colleagues’ fourth characteristic, which is that stakeholders in social frontiers often have histories of “interorganizational or intracommunity competitiveness” (Miller et al. p. 196S).

**Cross-Sector Collaboration: Factors for Success**
Despite its growing popularity, cross-sector collaborations are not without challenges and risks. Several factors must exist in order for these efforts to be successful. Across the research on collaboration, collaborative leadership is often recognized as one of the most important factors that can lead to the success of failure of a collaborative effort. Rubin (2009) defines collaborative leadership:

Collaborative leadership is the skillful and mission-oriented facilitation of relevant relationships. It is the juncture of organizing and management. Whereas teachers, community, and labor organizers are trained to patiently build their movements through one-on-one conversations with each individual they want to recruit, collaborative leaders do this and more by building structures to support and sustain these productive relationships over time. (p. 2-3)

Lawrence (2017) identified several characteristics of collaborative leadership, including shared vision and values, interdependence and shared responsibility, mutual respect, empathy and willingness to be vulnerable, ambiguity, effective communication, and synergy. According to Lawrence, “shared vision translates to shared ownership and commitment” (2017, p.91). This can be cultivated through deep listening and transparent dialogue.

Having a shared vision leads participants in a collaboration to feel a sense of shared responsibility and a “culture of interdependence” (Lawrence, 2015, p. 92). Shared responsibility refers to the concept that it is the collective responsibility of everyone to solve wicked problems. Mutual respect, the third characteristic of collaborative leadership, is particularly important when collaborating across cultures (Lawrence 2015). Respect is not enough, however; collaborative leadership requires empathy and vulnerability. These characteristics lead to increased trust
between collaborative partners. Atouba & Shumate build on the correlation between trust and vulnerability in collaborative efforts, stating “When an organization trusts, it essentially chooses to accept vulnerability” (2020 p. 304).

Lawrence (2015) argues that collaborative leaders must accept and be willing to live with ambiguity and uncertainty, maintain a continual dialogue with stakeholders, reflect critically, and listen deeply. Lastly, when collaborative leaders come together, they create synergy by combining their individual skills and knowledge but also create space for new learning (Lawrence 2015).

In addition to collaborative leadership, there are other factors that contribute to the success of collaborative efforts. Ansell & Gash (2007) assert that interorganizational communication is critical in these collaborative efforts because it facilitates trust-building and increases each organization’s commitment to the collaborative process. Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2011) support this, touting the importance of “deliberation, or candid and reasoned communication” for successful collaborations (p. 12). Deliberation, according to Emerson et al., includes “hard conversations, constructive self-assertion, asking and answering challenging questions, and expressing honest disagreements” (2011, p. 12).

Trust is a critical component in all collaborative efforts, as it reduces uncertainty and transaction costs, and can positively influence future collaborations (Jang et al. 2015). According to Atouba & Shumate (2020), trust is positively linked to partnership effectiveness in that it empowers partners to confidently execute on agreed-upon deliverables and reduces the likelihood of one partner taking advantage of or exploiting the other partner.

**What is a Community School?**
The Coalition for Community Schools is a nationwide network of national, state and local organizations in K-12 education, youth development, community planning and development, higher education, government, and philanthropy, as well as local and national community school networks, which work collaboratively to promote the community school model (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). The Coalition for Community Schools defines a community school as:

“…both a place and a set of partnerships, connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community. A community school is distinguished by an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development” (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016, p. 1017).

In 2015, there were more than 5,000 community schools in more than 150 communities across the United States, serving around 2 million students (Blank & Villarreal, 2015). The premise of this model is that traditional public schools simply cannot provide students with everything they need to be successful; rather, students’ needs the organized support of their community to propel them to success. Community schools are an intentional school transformation strategy that are laser-focused on results and rely heavily on collaboration between community leaders, educators, students, families, and community residents. While a regular school may have community partners and programs, these partner organizations typically operate in silos and are not clearly aligned with the actual, real needs of a school building, its student body, and its community. In a community school, on the other hand, there is a designated Community School Coordinator to serve as the single point of contact for all partnerships and outside services; this person oversees all integrated student services and programming to ensure there is no duplication of services or gaps in services. Further, parents and community members
are engaged in providing feedback about desired services and programs to ensure that actual needs of students and families are being met. This idea is reinforced in the literature about community schools, stating they are characterized by “close cooperation with community resources, the drive to actively involve parents in the educational and socialization processes, and the provision of extracurricular activities” (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016, p. 1017).

Community schools take a whole-child approach by working to remove both academic and non-academic barriers to success (including hunger, housing insecurity, and health or mental health challenges) by providing an array of integrated services and supports (Fehrer and Leos-Urbel, 2016). In short, this approach focuses not just on academics, but on social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development as well.

There are four factors that are particularly important in creating an environment in which children can succeed in school: parental involvement, rigorous education, how children spend their out-of-school time (before school, after school, and vacations/holidays), and the health and stability of their home environment (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016). To ensure these factors are addressed within the community school, Heers et al. assert that community schools must focus their efforts on building partnerships with external institutions, involving parents in the educational process, and offering extracurricular activities (2016, p. 6). These focus areas are featured heavily throughout the literature on community schools and are reinforced by Blank & Villareal (2015) who emphasize the need for authentic family and community engagement coupled with expanded learning opportunities both inside and outside the school building. Authentic and meaningful engagement is led by welcoming and culturally informed teachers and school staff and is touted in the literature on community schools as a way
to strengthen the school community, build positive relationships and a healthy school climate, and improve student outcomes in academics, attendance, and discipline (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018).

The idea of strong and authentic family engagement is also reinforced by Haines, Gross, Blue-Banning, Francis & Turnbull (2015), who state that “mutual respect and effective collaboration among families and school staff” is critical to the success of a community school due to the fact that family-school partnerships contribute to both student achievement and success (p.235). Further, Haines et al. argue that families who feel like respected participants in a collaborative relationship are more likely to both contribute to and connect to their child’s school (2015). The community school model recognizes all of the above-stated factors and encompasses them as part of a unique educational approach to remediating educational inequities.

Why Community Schools?

Community schools were developed as a solution to the complex problem of the academic achievement gap, with the goal of offering a higher-quality education to children that reside in low-income neighborhoods and/or in low-income households. The rise of the community school movement can be attributed partially to the growing body of research that explores the ways in which disparities in students’ academic achievement and life chances are associated with out-of-school variables (Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo, 2017). This field of research has largely found that the poverty achievement gap, which is defined as the difference in academic achievement between poor children and non-poor children, has grown much faster than the racial achievement gap (Jacob & Ryan, 2018). There is also widespread acknowledgement of the various severe traumas that children can face, including homelessness, violence at home, familial drug abuse, neglect and physical or sexual abuse (Jacob & Ryan, 2018). Research consistently finds that this
Type of trauma is linked to a wide variety of negative life circumstances, including poverty, which then lead to low academic achievement (Widom, 2017).

Compared with children from families with a higher socioeconomic status, children with a lower socioeconomic status are exposed to challenges and barriers that put them in a disadvantaged position throughout their educational career (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016, p. 1018). These challenges often originate during out-of-school time, yet they follow students into their school buildings each day and prevent successful learning and engagement in school. This causes teachers and school administrators to spend classroom time on remediating these issues and addressing these challenges, rather than focusing their time on teaching.

Communities with concentrated poverty, regardless of whether they are urban or rural, are often disadvantaged by a lack of social and academic supports outside of the school building, as well as other environmental obstacles that impede students’ overall health, wellbeing, and safety (Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo, 2017). The linkage of educational disadvantages with external factors indicates that reform initiatives focused solely on internal school strategies will likely not be effective. Supporting this idea, Warren (2015) argues that school reform attempts that occur in isolation from community development initiatives are fruitless; indeed, “the fates of urban schools and communities are linked” (Warren, 2015, p 133). Consequently, there has been a “movement toward cross-sector strategies in which diverse partners collaborate to support students across the multiple systems in which they develop” (Miller et al. p. 194S). Adelman & Taylor (2008) state, “By sharing resources, expertise, and accountability, community schools can address challenges related to economic hardship and create essential conditions for learning by
concentrating on a single access point – public schools – to effectively target their efforts” (p.1040).

**Gaps in Existing Research**

There are several significant gaps in the literature on the growing community school movement. One such gap in the literature on this topic is that existing research on cross-sector collaboration in relation to community schools focuses disproportionately on urban settings (Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo, 2017). Further, there is a lack of research on how cross-sector partnerships are formed and maintained as it relates to the community school model of education reform.

Perhaps the most significant gap in relation to research on the community school model is that there is currently no scientific evidence that the community school model provides better educational opportunities to low-income students. Despite the increasing popularity of this model, coupled with anecdotal evidence from across the nation, there is no conclusive academic data that community schools lead to better outcomes than traditional schools. Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink (2016) were the first, and so far, only researchers to attempt to fill this gap by examining whether the expectations of community schools are supported through empirical research; the authors simultaneously attempt to provide a framework and structure by which effective and successful community schools can be created (p. 1017).

To operationalize community schools’ effectiveness, Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink (2016) identified three outcomes that are considered positive for community school students: increased academic performance, lower dropout rates, and reduced risky behavior (p. 1025). To qualify as “effective,” a community school would need to deliver those outcomes. The literature reviewed in this study indicated that cooperation, parental involvement, and
extracurricular activities are associated with reduced dropout rates and risky behavior. As such, the authors concluded that community schools “may be able to achieve their goals” since the activities they undertake focus on parent engagement, out-of-school time, and collaboration (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016, p. 1036). However, there is still no definitive answer to as to whether community schools are indeed effective and how to measure or prove that effectiveness, meaning that there is still a substantial gap in the research on this topic.

Finally, there is a significant lack of research on the community school model which is not published or authored by individuals in the field of education. This creates a gap in the literature on community schools that should be filled by researchers in other fields of study, including public administration. As both a practitioner in this model and a researcher, the author argues that there are concepts that are critical to the success of this model, such as cross-sector collaboration, that do not fall under the purview of the field of education. The implementation and oversight of a successful community school does indeed fall into the realm of public administration due to the fact that many community schools are run by local nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations and rely heavily on cross-sector collaboration and collaborative governance for resource generation.
Chapter 3: Data & Methods

Introduction

The goal of this study is to examine cross-sector collaboration between school districts and a nonprofit partner, Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania, across ten community school sites in Central Pennsylvania. This study aims to identify factors that lead to successful collaboration and community school implementation. Chapter Three builds on the academic literature review and provides an overview of the methods and data used for analysis. This chapter includes a description of the research procedures, research question, and limitations.

Methods

The author employed a qualitative case study design to study cross-sector collaboration across five community school sites that are operated by the nonprofit dropout prevention organization Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania. Hesse-Biber (2017) states, “A case study has no specific disciplinary or paradigmatic orientation and can be conducted from a range of qualitative methodologies – interpretive and social constructivist, for example – as well as quantitative methodological approaches – such as positivism”, the author will employ an interpretivist approach to this research (p. 221). The case study approach was chosen largely due to its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic within its social context. Further, a case study approach allows researchers to study systems, such as school districts.

To conceptualize a community school, the author utilized the definition of a community school as defined by the Coalition for Community Schools: a community school is “a place and a set of partnerships, connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community. A community school is distinguished by an integrated focus on academics, youth
development, family support, health and social services, and community development” (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016, p. 1017).

**Research Question**

Collaboration between nonprofits and school districts (cross-sector collaboration) is a key component of the community school model of education reform. Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania has a long history of providing high-quality community school programs across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. What factors lead to the success of these cross-sector collaborative efforts?

**Research Design**

The case study design led to several types of data being collected through semi-structured interviews. This approach was utilized in order to give the conversations some structure and guidance while still allowing for the freedom for participants to candidly discuss items that were of importance to them.

Further, the author utilized the social frontier lens as described by Miller, Scanlan & Phillippo (2017) to conceptualize relationships in cross-sector collaborations. According to Miller et al., relationships can be characterized as either bonding or bridging (2017). Bonding relationships develop cohesion within a specific group or organization, while bridging relationships offer connections to “diverse information, resources, and opportunities that lie beyond the group or organization” (Miller et al., 2017, p.196S). Structurally autonomous networks include solid bonding relationships as well as a myriad of bridging ones and enable tight bonds to be formed within the group while also encouraging innovative thought practices (Miller et al., 2017, p. 196S). Cross-sector collaborative relationships as they relate to the
community school system in Lancaster, are conceptualized as structurally autonomous
relationships.

**Population Selection**

This specific research study focuses on five community school sites across two school
districts in Central and Southwestern Pennsylvania, all of which are operated by Communities in
Schools of Pennsylvania. These sites were selected through a convenience sampling approach;
the researcher currently serves as the Vice President of Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania.
As such, the researcher has both access to and strong existing relationships with the nonprofit
and school district staff that are part of this sample.

Two school districts were chosen to be part of this study. School District A is located in
central Pennsylvania, and one middle and one elementary school will be studied from this
district. School District B is in southwestern Pennsylvania, and the schools participating in the
study are one elementary, one middle, and one high school. All five of the participating schools
currently operate as full-service community schools and are partnered with Communities in
Schools of Pennsylvania.

Both school districts that are in part of this sample are located in small urban areas that
are shrinking centers of industry in the state. In both districts, more than 75% of the students are
economically disadvantaged. The communities of both school districts are challenged with high
poverty rates, high crime rates, high unemployment rates, and high rates of homelessness and
transiency among students.

**Professional Conflict of Interest Protections & Considerations**
The researcher is a practitioner, serving as the Vice President of Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania. As such, special protocols were implemented to mitigate conflicts of interest during this study. This conflict was disclosed by the researcher to the IRB in the researcher’s IRB application and was addressed during all interviews and observations that took place during the study.

**Informed Consent**

Informed consent was created in alignment with West Chester University’s policy and received IRB approval. The IRB approval email, informed consent form, and interview protocol are included in the Appendices. Participants in all interviews were provided with a copy of the interview guide and informed consent forms prior to conducting their interviews. Participants were also read the document at the start of their interview and were advised on the study’s overview, risks, and benefits, and were advised of the previously mentioned professional conflict of interest. Each interview participant signed the consent form; those who participated via virtual platforms signed the form electronically.

**Interview Procedures**

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders within the community school project, including key leadership positions at each school district and school building (Superintendents, Principals), front-line staff at each community school (Community School Directors, Community Navigators, Student Re-Engagement Specialists and Student Support Specialists), and leadership positions at the nonprofit partner, Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania (Senior Director of Programs, Program Managers). In total, 15 interviews were conducted; 10 of these were with CISPA staff and 5 were with employees of school district partners.
These individuals have unique perspectives on the work occurring at each community school site, as well as valuable insight into the ways in which these schools operate. In-depth interviews with these individuals provided data that was then analyzed to generate theory. The author utilized a semi-structured approach to the interviews to guide the conversation while ensuring that there was enough freedom for participants to talk about issues that were of particular importance to them. According to Hesse-Biber (2017), since the individuals being interviewed have specialized knowledge of the research topic, this sample approach is a convenience sample.

Coding & Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted utilizing the steps suggested by Hesse-Biber (2017). Hesse-Biber (2017) stresses that “there is no one right way” to conduct data analysis, however the steps outlined in the text provide a roadmap to begin this process (p. 308). These steps included preparing the data, exploring the data, specifying, and reducing the data, and coding the data (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

Coding and organizing the data took place after the data was transcribed. Once the author became deeply familiar with the data that was been collected, trends began to be identified by circling words or phrases that occur frequently or stand out. These circled concepts became codes, and the codes were narrowed down as the author continued to review and analyze the data. The codes were separated into categorical codes, descriptive codes, and analytical codes. The author pursued a focused coding approaching wherein concepts are built and clarified as the data is examined (Hesse-Biber, 2017). While the author has already conceptualized community schools and cross-sector relationships, it is likely that additional concepts will arise during the study that will need to be refined and conceptualized in the future. A focused coding approach
will allow for this building and clarifying of concepts as the data is analyzed in an ongoing process.

**Validity, Reliability, and Bias**

To ensure reliability and validity of the data, the author will be sure to compare the findings against any competing claims of knowledge to assess differences. Further, the author will acknowledge the recommendation of Hesse-Biber (2017) and will follow Kvale’s three-part model for judging the validity of qualitative data. The three parts include: validity as craftsmanship, communicative validity, and pragmatic validity (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The author will engage in dialogue with others who are conducting similar research to further confirm the validity of this study. Triangulating the results of this study will prove important in ensuring validity; by comparing the results of this study with other studies utilizing different methodologies, it will be possible to validate these research findings.

**Limitations**

This study will provide a significant contribution to the literature on community schools by focusing on the cross-sector relationships that are characteristic of this model of education reform. However, this study has several limitations that should be noted. Primarily, due to the author’s role as Vice President of the nonprofit partner and involvement within the community school project, there will be challenges in maintaining objectivity while conducting the study. The author’s pre-existing relationships will ensure there are no barriers to accessing the data and resources needed to conduct the study, however, it will be difficult to act in the role of observer as participant without fully participating.

Further, this study has a relatively small sample size of only five schools across two school districts. This narrow sample is a limitation in that the results of this study, while valid,
may not be generalized to all cross-sector collaborations and community school projects across the United States. However, this study is the first attempt to identify factors that lead to successful cross-sector collaborations between nonprofit organizations and school districts, and as such, contributes greatly to the literature on collaborative governance despite its limitations.
Chapter 4: Results & Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research question: what factors led to the success of the cross-sector collaborative efforts between Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania and its partner school districts in the implementation of the community school model? To answer this question, a qualitative case study was conducted, utilizing semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data was collected, transcribed, and coded into themes for analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, including the demographic data of the participants, descriptive characteristics of the interviews, and the themes that emerged from the analysis.

Participant Data & Demographics

This study consisted of 15 participants \((n = 15)\), 10 of whom are full-time employees at Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania, working in community school sites. These employees hold a variety of position titles, including Community Navigator, Community School Director, Student Re-Engagement Specialist, Community School Coordinator, and Program Manager.

The remaining 5 participants are full-time employees of school districts that partner with CISPA in implementing the community school model. The school district employees serve in various roles that support the implementation of the community school model in their designated districts, including Superintendent, Director of Federal Programs, Principal, Assistant Principal, and Director of Education.

Participant demographic information is presented in Table 1. The majority (66.7%) of respondents were employees of Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania. The sample consisted of 9 males (60%) and 6 females (40%). The 15 respondents identified as 9 different position
titles within their respective organizations: Community School Director (26.6%), Program Manager (13.3%), Community Navigator (6.7%), Student Re-Engagement Specialist (20%), Community School Coordinator (6.7%), Superintendent (13.3%), Director of Federal Programs (6.7%), Director of Education (6.7%) and Assistant Principal (6.7%).

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISPA</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Districts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title/Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community School Director</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Navigator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Re-Engagement Specialist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community School Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Federal Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 15 for each condition. Percentages may not equate to 100 due to rounding.

Interview characteristics include the time of day the interview was scheduled as well as the length of the interview. Interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom between the hours of 8:00 am (EST) and 4:00 pm. The majority of interviews were conducted between 8:00 am and 11:00
am. The interviews ranged from 9 minutes in length to 34 minutes in length, with the mean interview length at 20.5 minutes. A total of 211 minutes were spent conducting interviews.

Response Rate

At the beginning of this study, the researcher identified a total of 30 individuals as potential interviewees: 15 CISPA staff members and 15 school district staff members. Recruitment emails were sent out to all 30 individuals on March 29, 2022, with a follow-up email sent on April 4, 2022. Only 50% of the 30 individuals contacted agreed to participate in interviews. Two individuals, both employees of a school district, initially agreed to participate, but failed to attend their scheduled interview time. Attempts to reschedule with these individuals were unsuccessful.

Results

The participant interview data were de-identified according to the protocols outlined in the human subject review process. To de-identify interview audio and video recordings, notes, and transcripts, each participant was assigned a code based on the order in which their interviews were scheduled (i.e., P1 was the first participant to schedule their interview). The interview transcripts and audio recordings were stored separately from the participants signed informed consent forms.

Codes were extracted using a multi-step coding process from both transcripts and recordings of the interviews. Codes could be one word (e.g., challenge), or a phrase (e.g., “We have consistent and clear communication”). Initially, the researcher reviewed all interview transcripts upon completion of all the interviews and noted potential themes. The transcripts were then read a second and third time, during which the researcher narrowed down the core common themes throughout all 15 interviews. Once a list of themes was drafted, the researcher
conducted a final review to combine and eliminate redundant themes, which yielded the final list of codes. The 9 themes are: challenges, school-level collaborative leadership, communication, data/impact, existing personal relationship, strong nonprofit leadership, transparency, trust, and shared vision. While the theme challenges may seem counterintuitive to identifying factors for success, the simple truth is that no collaborative effort is without challenges. Identifying those challenges as well as ways to overcome them are critical components of the collaborative approach to problem-solving. The 9 themes with supportive case examples are illustrated in

Table 2

Themes with Case Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Code</th>
<th>Case Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Leadership (at the school level)</td>
<td>“I wanted to become so ingrained in … the daily operations of the school. That’s allowed me to build that rapport and relationship with our administrators.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>“I feel employed by both agencies as well as disconnected from both agencies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data/Impact</td>
<td>“We have a really relatively low office disciplinary referral rate this year compared to years past.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>“It’s important to show them what we are supposed to be doing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>“Our relationship with them is great. They trust in us. We trust in them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>“I’m pretty clear when I want something or don’t like something.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Personal Relationship</td>
<td>“At times I have related to you only because you and I had a personal relationship and worked together in the past.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Nonprofit Leadership</td>
<td>“It’s hard to gain momentum when the top leadership is changing.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The top themes that CISPA staff attributed to the success of their cross-sector collaborative efforts are school-level collaborative leadership (36%), communication (20%), and trust (20%). Transparency (12%), existing personal relationships (8%), and data/impact (4%) were mentioned at lesser rates. Strong nonprofit leadership and shared vision were not mentioned by CISPA staff at any point during their interviews. Table 3 shows the rate at which employees of Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania attributed the themes to the success of their collaboration with their designated school districts.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Leadership (school-level)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data/Impact</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Personal Relationship</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Nonprofit Leadership</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Vision</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School-Level Collaborative Leadership**

Of the 10 Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania employees that were interviewed for this study, 36% mentioned having a collaborative approach with school district staff to the success of the community school initiative in their designated school district.

**Embeddedness.** Participants indicated a commitment to becoming ingrained and embedded into their designated school buildings. One participant (P7) shared:
“I wanted to become so ingrained in, just, like the daily operations of the school. Like ... 
the nitty gritty, minute details of, like, a busy duty or a lunch duty or stuff like that. That’s 
allowed me to build that rapport and relationship with our administrators...”

Another participant (P3) recalls his efforts to become embedded within his designated 
school building by building relationships with the staff. He says:

“My efforts and my energy and my time was spent to make sure that we were integrated, 
embedded into the school system in terms of support services for students. Because of 
that, I have a great relationship with our staff.”

Willingness to Help. Participants also attributed this successful collaborative approach to 
their willingness to help when teachers, students, or families were in crisis. Various crises were 
mentioned throughout the interviews, including behavioral disruptions during class time, 
chronically absent students with outdated contact information, or teacher absences leaving lunch 
and recess duties unchaperoned. Participant P7 shared:

“So anytime a teacher is having a classroom crisis, we’re one of the ones that’s right 
there. A lot of times, when teachers see us, we’re kind of like a saving grace in that 
moment.”

Another participant recalls efforts that he made when students first returned to in-person 
learning after the pandemic. Participant P6 says:

“...we went around and found things that the school needed or needed in that 
moment. Sometimes that meant just, like, running notes for the office, or picking 
up extra lunch duties, those kinds of things. ...I think that has just opened the door
for us to have a lot of wiggle room. We do what we need to do, and we are supported in our decision-making.”

A more structured approach to collaborating with school district staff is through the creation of and participation in school-based committees. Many participants shared that their designated school buildings had various pre-established committees, such as Student Support Teams, leadership teams, Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) teams, etc. CISPA staff found that regular participation in these committees and teams helped foster feelings of collaboration between themselves and the school district staff.

Participant P7 shared how participation on school teams and committees results in a built-in feedback loop with school building staff:

“...we participate in a lot of, like, the student support teams. So, we’re in there with those teachers. We’re hearing their feedback and using that to make decisions that improve the school’s culture.”

Similarly, Participant P12 affirmed that participation on school teams and committees supports increased involvement and integration into the school’s culture:

“We also have a weekly meeting with our admin team. We’re also on the SAP [Student Assistance Program] team. We’re part of the student support team, part of the planning team. So, we’re kind of all over the place, and we’re involved ... as high as possible as an outside organization can be.”

**Communication**

Clarity & authenticity. Several sub-themes arose around the topic of communication. Participants shared that a commitment to clear, authentic communication led to more successful
collaborations between the nonprofit and school district partners. Communicating clearly about challenges, programs, and needs ensured clear expectations on behalf of both partners, and ultimately led to increased levels of trust.

Participant P10 shared about their approach to building trust with school district partners and staff through communication:

“...that type of communication is not always easy and you have to very intentional in terms of building that trust with them. So, one of the things, a strategy, would be to talk about your experiences, let them know who you are a bit. We spend 8 hours at work and that’s a large portion of time. People want to, sort of, know who you are a bit, and I think that’s important. But you establish that trust by being genuine and authentic through your interactions with them, especially initially, because people, as you know, will decide ten things about you in the first 10 seconds when they meet you.”

Participant P10 also shared how clear communication can help nonprofit staff overcome challenges they may encounter while working with school district partners:

“But when there are challenges, it’s about communication. You’ve got to reach out to them and allow them to reach out to you and say ‘hey, this is or is not working’. And I found that was helpful because when we had a challenge, the principal got back to me right away, sent me an email, and said, ‘Hey, here’s where I thought we were going. This is a challenge. Help me understand.’ And again, because we had established trust in our relationship, it wasn’t about pointing a finger or being unnecessarily critical about a process, but to simply say, ‘Hey ... how can we make this work?’”
**Virtual Communication & High-Level Points of Contact.** Another subtheme related to communication that arose during the interviews is the necessity of being willing to use virtual or digital means of communication in lieu of face-to-face communication. Participant P15 shared, “…our communication is oftentimes text messages, like, rea quick if something comes up. We also have radios; we are in constant communication.” Similarly, other participants stated that communicating via text, email, radio, and chat allowed them to be in constant, real-time communication with their school district partners. This leads to staff being able to make decisions quickly and respond to the needs of the school building faster than if they were waiting for face-to-face meeting time with school building staff.

Lastly, a Program Manager shared that clearly articulating a high-level point of contact for school district partners to communicate with has allowed for trust building at the leadership level. Participant P5 says:

“*I think that building or district administration know that they have points of contact ... that if they had a higher-level project they wanted to work on, a grant opportunity, or a district-wide initiative, or just needed to talk through a problem, the relationship is there.*”

**Transparency**

Some participants attributed the success of CISPA’s collaborations with school districts to the transparency with which the staff approached the collaboration. Participants shared varying thoughts on transparency, ranging from transparency in communication, to transparency in the actual work occurring at the school buildings. For example, participant P12 shared:
“...it’s important to show them what we’re supposed to be doing. And if I had to assign two words, I would definitely say visibility and intentionality...I would tell anyone going into this, that’s what you have to focus on. So, you have to be visible, you have to be there doing things, even if it’s not something you want to be doing. Sometimes, we just have to be there. We have to do it, and we have to show everyone that we’re there to help. And then, intentionality. So, when we say we were going to do something, we do it.”

Transparency was also discussed in terms of communication and language; participant P10 shared that CISPA’s intentional use of nonthreatening language and transparent, clear articulation of partnership expectations led to increased trust.

“Communities in Schools has always established a very nurturing, therapeutic setting in terms of how we want to communicate and interact with the schools, and the districts, and the Superintendent. So there’s nothing threatening about what it is that we’re trying to get done. We’ve established very clearly that this is a relationship, and a partnership, and, almost, a marriage, that we’re going to be together on, and committed to. ...And we’re going to work with you very closely to establish what we all want to see happen here.”

Lastly, transparency was discussed in terms of the nonprofit’s willingness to receive feedback from employees and work together on addressing challenges that arise in the field. Participant P1 shared, “I … work with an organization that is open to hearing what all the possible solutions are versus what they want the solutions to be.”

**Trust**
Participants also attributed trust to the success of the cross-sector collaborative efforts with school district partners. Sub-themes include building trust with school building and district staff as well as building trust internally with supervisors and coworkers. Overall, participants shared that trusting their colleagues as well as their collaborative partners led to more successful partnerships.

A program manager, participant P10, shared his approach to building trust with their staff, which includes connecting human-to-human rather than just supervisor-to-supervisee:

“Building that trust is having that discussion with them face-to-face, having an opportunity to, sort of, take the blue suit off, let your hair down a bit, and have that human interaction to allow them to understand that you’re just there to be supportive.”

The same participant also shared thoughts on the payoff of building trust with their supervisees, particularly when challenges arise:

“...having that conversation with the staff you’re working with to build trust, and ... being genuine and authentic is really important. ...You don’t have an agenda, and you can articulate that, ‘We’re here to support [you]’. That trust, I think, is absolutely everything; it really is... What’s important through trust is that it’s not good when things are good; it’s good when things go wrong. Things will go wrong. There will be challenges, there will be interruptions. But if they can trust that you will move forward in a manner that will be helpful, then it won’t be a challenge.”

Several participants reiterated that their willingness to assist teachers and building staff when they are overwhelmed helped to build trust as well as to secure buy-in for community school-related programming. Building trust with school building staff and leadership, such as
principals and assistant principals, also reduces the amount of red tape that staff face when they want to implement programs, make decisions regarding services, or otherwise need to act quickly to serve a student. Participant P6 shared, “We don’t have to run everything by one of the principals. We have buy-in from that level, so we can make decisions and trust that it’s going to be supported.”

**Data and Impact**

One participant attributed the success of the partnership between CISPA and their school district to the impact of the programming, as evidenced through data collection. Participant P12 stated:

> “We have a relatively low office discipline referral rate this year compared to years past, which is phenomenal since it’s our first year back in-person since the pandemic started. …We have some other data points to show we are being successful…”

**Existing Personal Relationships**

One participant mentioned that some of the success experienced within their school building was because their CISPA colleague had worked with the district for years in a different role, before joining CISPA as part of the community school project. Participant P15 shared that the pre-existing relationship between that staff person and the district staff enabled them to be more effective in their role because of the existing trust that had previously been established.

**Challenges**

Many participants interviewed mentioned challenges with the cross-sector partnership during their interview. The challenges mentioned were diverse in nature, ranging from a lack of clarity of CISPA employee roles to school district staff’s inability to embrace change to
personality conflicts between school district staff, school building principals and district administrators.

Participant P14 shared thoughts about challenges in implementing new programs and new techniques within their school building, stating:

“…they [teachers] want us to give them feedback, and they want us to critique their approach to help them better their approach. But at the same time, they’re almost reluctant to change their ways. They’re … stuck in how they’ve been doing things, and they want to see results, but they want to continue to do things the same way as they’ve been doing them.”

Participant P10, Program Manager, shared several scenarios in which they had to navigate a situation where the school building principal and the district superintendent did not see eye-to-eye on how to approach a certain situation: “When you’re having a challenge at the principal level about communication, you’re looking at two different things. You’re seeing what the principal’s lens is and then what the staff member’s lens is. I did have this challenge … where the staff person felt one way strongly and the principal didn’t feel the same.”

Several CISPA staff members who were based in school buildings full-time expressed challenges relating to communicating and engaging with their employer, since they were not located in a centralized building, but rather spread out across multiple school buildings in a district. Participant P3 shared, “…communication may be sometimes a challenge. I think the challenge is just that physically, they’re [the employer] not here. You have to communicate via email and phone.”
Similarly, participant P1 shared that they felt “disconnected from both agencies”, and that their location inside a school building presented “challenges in terms of communicating with both groups [CISPA and the school district]”.

**Strong Nonprofit Leadership & Shared Vision**

No employees of Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania mentioned strong nonprofit leadership or shared vision as factors leading to success during their interviews.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the top themes that CISPA staff attributed to the success of their cross-sector collaborative efforts are school-level collaborative leadership (36%), communication (20%), and trust (20%). Transparency (12%), existing personal relationships (8%), and data/impact (4%) were also mentioned, however, at significantly lesser rates. The themes of strong nonprofit leadership and shared vision were not mentioned by CISPA staff at any point during their interviews.

**Results – School District Employees**

The top themes that school district staff attributed to the success of their cross-sector collaborative efforts are communication (20%), school-level collaborative leadership (20%), and trust (12%). Strong nonprofit leadership (8%), existing personal relationships (4%), data/impact (4%), and shared vision (4%) were mentioned at lesser rates. Transparency was not mentioned at all. Table 4 shows the breakdown of themes mentioned by school district staff.
**Table 4**

**Theme Breakdown - School District Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Approach with School Staff</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data/Impact</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing Personal Relationship</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Nonprofit Leadership</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Vision</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School-Level Collaborative Leadership**

All 5 of the school district staff interviewed for this research study discussed how collaboration between school district and CISPA staff contributed to the overall success of the collaborative community school project. According to the school district staff interviewed, this collaborative approach led to the implementation of district-wide solutions, supported building-level planning efforts, contributed to increased student supports, and led to a clear vision and mission of the community school work.

Participant P4, a superintendent, shared, “I think the communication and collaboration … has really helped us to define the vision of community schools.” Participant P11 shared how collaboration with school district and CISPA staff allowed them to quickly brainstorm and craft solutions to district-wide problems, such as chronic absenteeism.

“...by having that relationship with the Communities in Schools folks…allows me to say, “We have to help this, but I don’t know how to help this...So, can you please help?’ And they do. They always do. That has been key in everything we are doing.”
Participant P9, a district-level Director of Education and former principal of a community school shared that the CISPA staff worked collaboratively with building staff and leadership to support building-level planning initiatives on a quarterly and monthly basis. These collaborative meetings were used to review data and assess the effectiveness of programs and services within a designated middle school building.

Similarly, participant P8 shared that collaboration between CISPA staff and school building staff in an elementary school allowed everyone to meet the needs of students more effectively and in a more holistic manner.

“...I’m always having conversations with them [students] and their families, and they’re talking about the involvement of the CIS team and what their role is. And they’re [the CIS team] going to homes for attendance. They’re having home visits to try to promote attendance, and they’re having conversations with families to address barriers as to why their children aren’t getting to school. They’re working with other community organizations to try to help address some of those barriers. They’re doing positive activities with the students to try to promote and encourage positive connectedness to the school. So, there’s a lot of positive activities being done so the students feel more connected.”

**Communication**

Participant P4, a superintendent, discussed how communication led to a stronger collaborative partnership by setting a strong foundation for the relationships from the start. They shared that they communicate with the CISPA team in their district immediately at the beginning of each academic year to set the tone for the year. They also make sure that they introduce themselves to new staff as they onboard and take time to meet with them and get to know them.
Additionally, P4 shared that strong communication practices also help to provide support to folks when the job becomes difficult:

“...I really want to communicate to people who are new to our school system, who we are, because I think if you don’t embrace who we are from the very beginning and appreciate how this job can be so incredibly challenging, but also incredibly rewarding, you will find yourself struggling because it is hard here.”

Similarly, Participant P2, another superintendent, shared that they also make an intentional effort to introduce themselves to their CISPA team and connect with them in-person throughout the year in order to make them feel included, embedded, and “part of the team”.

Several participants shared that communication was important in supporting the success of the collaborative efforts by helping the partners successfully navigate through challenging times. The ability to have direct, straightforward conversations when things are not working or when school district stakeholders are unhappy with something allows for the partners to work together to overcome challenges. Participant P4 shared, “…at the end of the day, I think that the program and the partnership is flexible enough that it can address any issues, any needs, that our school district has because the communication is there…”

**Existing Personal Relationships**

Participant P12 had an existing relationship with the Vice President of CISPA when their school district entered into a contractual relationship with the organization to launch community schools. P12 shared that they were more confident entering into the partnership due to having worked with the Vice President in the past on a similar project while they were employed with different organizations. P12 shared, “I think we’ve been very fortunate for you and I to be kind
of the leads in this, to build it, because … you knew expectations. Having done the job before, I had certain expectations.”

**Strong Nonprofit Leadership**

Two of the school district staff that were interviewed attributed strong leadership at the nonprofit partner (CISPA) to the success of the cross-sector collaboration. Overall, participants shared that consistency was important in leadership, as well as visibility, the ability to listen to the district’s needs, and have honest, tough conversations.

When asked what led to strong, trusting relationships between CISPA and the school district partner, participant P11 stated, “First and foremost is a consistent person…there were like three different [Vice Presidents] … and each one came with a different vision or understanding or style. And it’s hard to gain momentum when the top leadership is changing.” The same participant shared that leadership at CISPA had been visible in their community, coming to town to host events, visit schools, and attend in-person meetings with the district, despite being located several hours away. Efforts on behalf of the organization’s leadership to be local and visible within the district community was reflective of strong leadership practices and contributed to a more successful collaborative partnership.

Two participants discussed their appreciation for CISPA leadership’s ability to participate in open, honest conversations about challenges regarding the partnership and community school programming. Participant P11 shared that when the organization came under new leadership in 2019, “we were able to have that honest conversation about what really needs to happen in order for this to work.”

**Trust**
School district participants mentioned trust in a few ways, including having trust in the CISPA staff in their district/building, having trust in CISPA’s leadership, and having trust in the partnership’s ability to navigate challenges. Participant P4 shared, “At the end of the day, I think that the program and the partnership is flexible enough that it can address any issues.” Participant P2, when speaking about CISPA’s leadership, stated that “I know you hold this place important by your actions. You and I, we are always on the same team.”

**Shared Vision**

One participant mentioned that sharing a vision for the collaborative project with their CISPA team members led to a more successful partnership. However, the participant clarified that in addition to agreeing to a shared vision, both partners must “live it” in their day-to-day approach to the work.

**Challenges**

School district employees, similar to CISPA employees, shared thoughts about challenges relating to the partnership and the community school work. Most of the challenges shared were related to understanding specific services and supports that CISPA could offer the district, the internal structure of CISPA’s team, and the ability to hire and retain quality CISPA staff to work within the school district.

Participant P4, a superintendent, shared that their main challenge at the beginning of the partnership was “just really getting an innate understanding of what CISPA could bring to the school district.”
Participant P2, also a superintendent, shared “One of the struggles for me is really understanding CISPA’s structure, because often you’re adding people, moving people around, or changing titles.”

Participant P2 also shared that retaining CISPA staff was a challenge; turnover in the school-based CISPA positions led to disruptions in services which were difficult for students and caregivers to navigate, as well as building principals. P2 stated, “So, the energy in the program, is always needing to be rekindled when people leave the program…I think, one of the big things is how can we continue to have the same [CISPA] employees in positions for a longer period of time?”

Participant P8, an assistant principal, shared frustrations they felt when the CISPA staff person assigned to their building was not willing or able to do the work that the building leadership felt was necessary for the program to achieve success:

“…she was very adamant about staying within a confined box of what she was able to do and what she was not able to do. And that did not meet our needs because she spent most of her time in her office doing data and research, and she was fighting with us about what to do. It did not meet the needs of our school and it was just another person to oversee and supervise, which was not helpful. It created more work.”

Transparency

None of the interviews with school district staff yielded excerpts coded for transparency.

Data and Impact

None of the interviews with school district staff yielded excerpts coded for data/impact.
Conclusion

The top themes that school district staff attributed to the success of their cross-sector collaborative efforts are communication (20%), school-level collaborative leadership (20%), and trust (12%). Strong nonprofit leadership (8%), existing personal relationships (4%), data/impact (4%), and shared vision (4%) were also mentioned, but at lesser rates. The theme of transparency was not mentioned at all. It is also important to note that 35.7% of school district staff mentioned challenges with the collaborative governance approach.
Chapter 5: Key Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research question: what factors led to the success of the cross-sector collaborative efforts between Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania and its partner school districts in the implementation of the community school model? This research provides an important contribution to the literature on collaborative governance in that it is one of the first studies about collaboration and the community school model to be authored by someone outside of the field of education.

This study successfully brings the field of public administration into the conversation about the community school method of education reform, which inherently relies on cross-sector partnerships for success. Viewing the community school model through the lens of cross-sector collaboration will center it within the field of public administration, bringing more attention to the ways in which the foundations of collaborative governance can be leveraged to yield successful community school partnerships across the country.

The contextual literature on community schools and cross-sector collaboration supports the findings of this study. “Wicked problems”, meaning those that are complex and unable to be solved by one entity alone, are on the rise. In response to the increasing number of wicked problems in our society (climate change, poverty, the global refugee crisis), both scholars and practitioners have begun to embrace a more “collaborative, network-based approach” to problem-solving (Kettl 2006, p. 17). This collaboration can occur within or across sectors, however, cross-sector collaborative governance is the focus of this dissertation. Defined as “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two
or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately” (Bryson, Cross & Stone 2015, p. 648).

A collaborative problem-solving approach has become increasingly popular in the field of education. The state of education in the Untied States is rife with wicked problems, including shortages of qualified teachers, racial and economic inequities, broken funding formulae, and low graduation and retention rates. Non-academic barriers, such as poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, and unmet health and mental health needs only exacerbates these existing systematic problems. Practitioners and academics alike are embracing the community school model of education as a reform mechanism.

A community school is defined as:

…both a place and a set of partnerships, connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community. A community school is distinguished by an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development. (Heers, Van Klaveren, Groot & van den Brink, 2016, p. 1017)

The movement towards community schools is rooted in the idea that school districts alone cannot provide students with the holistic supports needed to be successful academically. This is particularly true in communities with high rates of racial and economic disparities. Cross-sector collaboration is a core tenet of the community school model; this unique approach to education focuses on leveraging and brokering community resources to create easy access for students, families and caregivers. Organized and holistic support partnered with a whole-child approach to education ensures that both academic and non-academic barriers are addressed
through a robust, holistic offering of integrated services and supports (Fehrer and Leos-Urbel, 2016).

The research on community schools has grown in recent years along with that of cross-sector collaboration. However, one significant gap still exists: the bulk of the literature on the community school model is authored by researchers and practitioners from the field of K-12 public education. Due to the inherent nature of community school work, this excludes important perspectives from researchers and practitioners in public administration. This dissertation and research aims to close that gap by clearly positioning research on community schools into the realm of public administration.

**Discussion**

Through a qualitative research design that featured semi-structured interviews with staff from both Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania as well as two partner school districts, the data collection and analysis phases yielded rich data and results. The coding process revealed nine themes that participants associated with success: challenges, school-level collaborative leadership, communication, data/impact, existing personal relationship, strong nonprofit leadership, transparency, trust, and shared vision.

There were some noteworthy similarities between what the CISPA employees and school district employees mentioned as factors leading to the success of the community school partnership. School-level collaborative leadership was mentioned by 36% of CISPA employees and 20% of school district employees. When both CISPA employees and district employees demonstrated collaborative leadership at the school level, it resulted in innovative district-wide solutions, supported building-level planning efforts, led to more trusting relationships, and
contributed a clear shared vision of the goals of the partnership. This aligns with existing research on collaborative leadership as a critical tool to support successful collaboration (Rubin 2009).

Communication was also mentioned by 20% of both CISPA employees and school district staff as a factor contributing to success. Participants shared that clear, authentic communication helped them navigate challenges within the partnership, build stronger interorganizational relationships, and increase levels of trust between partners. These findings are supported by previous research on collaborative governance and the importance of communication. For example, Atouba & Shumate (2020) outlined the importance of communication and interorganizational trust, arguing that the presence of those two factors lead to increased effectiveness of partnerships. Further, Ansell & Gash (2007), found that interorganizational communications facilitates the building of trust between partners and increases each organization’s commitment to the collaboration. Lastly, Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2011) found that “candid and reasoned communication” was a necessary ingredient for successful cross-sector collaborations (p. 12).

Trust was the third most-cited factor leading to the success of the collaboration between CISPA and its partner school districts, with 12% of CISPA staff and 20% of district staff identifying this theme. Both interorganizational and intraorganizational trust were mentioned as important drivers of strong collaborations. CISPA employees expressed trust in their coworkers and leadership as well as trust with their school district partners. Similarly, school district employees expressed trust in CISPA’s school-based staff and leadership. This finding aligns with the Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community School’s seven standards for community schools, one of which is investing in trusting relationships. Further, prior research
on this subject has shown that trust is critically important in cross-sector partnerships as it reduces uncertainty and transaction costs (Jang et al. 2015). Atouba & Shumate (2020) also posit that trust is positively linked to partnership effectiveness by inspiring partners to confidently execute on agreed-upon deliverables, as such, reducing the probability of one partner taking advantage of or exploiting the other partner.

Challenges were mentioned by both groups of participants, with school district staff focusing on challenges relating to understanding the role of CISPA, understanding CISPA’s hierarchy, and CISPA’s difficulties in retaining employees. CISPA staff expressed challenges engaging with their employer, challenges navigating conflicts between school district staff and administrators, and difficulties in getting school district staff to understand CISPA’s role in the school building.

School district staff also mentioned strong nonprofit leadership, data/impact, pre-existing personal relationships, and a shared vision as factors contributing to success. CISPA staff, on the other hand, did not mention strong nonprofit leadership or shared vision in their interviews. They did, however, mention transparency as a factor that leads to success, while school district staff did not.

**Recommendations for Practice**

This research has direct application to practitioners both in the nonprofit sector and the field of education as they consider embarking on a cross-sector collaborative initiative to implement the community school model. The research study has identified several factors that should exist within a cross-sector collaboration to ensure its success. The following section provides recommendations for practice.
First and foremost, the author recommends that practitioners within the field of education and youth services embrace the growing trend of community schools as an effective method of education reform. Public education in the United States is rife with wicked problems which cannot be solved by school districts alone. There is a growing body of literature, this dissertation included, that address the efficacy of the community school movement as a method of education reform. Practitioners and academics alike should embrace this model, particularly for schools located in communities with significant racial and socio-economic inequities.

Practitioners who are involved with or considering participating in a cross-sector collaborative effort should become well-versed in the tenets of collaborative leadership. As opposed to the vertical hierarchical structures of the past, collaborative leadership empowers all participants to emerge as leaders of their project or initiative. The findings of this study align with the existing literature on collaboration, affirming that collaborative efforts benefit when participants demonstrate collaborative leadership and its associated characteristics, including shared vision and values, interdependence and shared responsibility, mutual respect, empathy, and willingness to be vulnerable, ambiguity, effective communication, and constructive collaboration.

Practitioners should also intentionally implement mechanisms to support effective communication, which will assist in building trust within and between the collaborative partners. Trust is essential in any collaborative effort and can be built through the adoption of collaborative leadership and effective communication. As such, the author strongly recommends that practitioners in cross-sector collaborative initiatives focus on practices to build interorganizational trust. This trust is key in reducing both uncertainty and transaction costs and
is positively linked to partnership effectiveness. It can be argued that a cross-sector collaborative partnership cannot be successful without trust.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The narrow sample size of respondents is a limitation in that it could indicate that findings may not be generally applicable to all cross-sector community school initiatives. Additionally, the author’s role as Vice President of CISPA and close personal and professional ties to this work and the study’s participants could impact the validity of the findings.

Future Research Opportunities

This study is the first to center cross-sector community school projects within the public administration literature. There is no shortage of research on community schools written for and by educators, however, until now, there has not been a body of research on this topic as it relates to public administration. As such, there are countless opportunities for future research to continue the conversations about community schools and educational reform as those topics relate to collaborative governance and the field of public administration as a whole. Particularly, the field would benefit from additional research on the community school model and cross-sector collaboration, as it relates to best practices in collaborative leadership.

Additionally, researchers could further explore how to embed the practices of trust and communication into a cross-sector collaborative partnership. The field would also benefit from future research on the sustainability of these efforts from a nonprofit finance perspective, as well as a programmatic perspective.
Due to the limited number of school district employees who participated in this study, further research on cross-sector collaboration and the community school model, with a focus on the perspectives of school district partners, would benefit the field as a whole. Lastly, since nonprofit employee turnover was mentioned as a factor that introduces risk to the collaborative efforts, the field would benefit from studies that identify ways to increase employee retention, particularly in organizations with robust cross-sector collaborations.

**Concluding Thoughts**

In a world where problems are increasingly complex, and in which the state of education is increasingly dire, practitioners and academics alike would benefit from focusing on community schools as a method of reform. The community school model holistically supports students, parents, and caregivers with both academic and non-academic needs. To successfully implement this model of schooling, strong cross-sector partnerships are absolutely necessary.

The results of this study will support practitioners embarking on a community school journey by clearly illustrating that cross-sector collaborative initiatives benefit from trust, communication, and collaborative leadership. With these characteristics, educators and practitioners can embrace collaborative governance as they implement the community school model of education reform. Collaborative governance is not without challenges, however, with the key tenets mentioned previously in place practitioners and partners will be able to successfully navigate challenges and execute the educational reform that low-income communities across the United States to desperately need.
References


Appendix I – IRB Approval Letter

Mar 24, 2022 4:26:58 PM EDT

To: Jessica Knapp
Public Policy and Administra.


Dear Jessica Knapp:

Thank you for your submitted application to the WCUPA Institutional Review Board. Since it was deemed expedited, it was required that two reviewers evaluated the submission. We have had the opportunity to review your application and have rendered the decision below for Cross-Sector Collaboration & Community Schools: A Case Study in Central Pennsylvania.

Decision: Approved

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

WCUPA Institutional Review Board

IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155
Appendix II – Recruitment Email

IRB Number: FY2022 - 287

PI: Jessica Knapp

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hi [Participant first name],

As you may know, I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Public Administration program at West Chester University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study on cross-sector collaboration between school districts and the nonprofit Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania, across five community school sites. My goal in this study is to identify factors that lead to successful collaboration and community school implementation. I am emailing you to ask for your participation in this study by sharing your knowledge and experience regarding this collaboration via a Zoom interview.

The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. Your responses will be completely anonymous. Upon completion of this study, I plan to use my findings to complete my dissertation requirement at West Chester University, and for published research in peer-reviewed journals.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to this email. You may contact me at: as the principal investigator at (JK916158@wcupa.edu). If you prefer to speak with someone else, you may contact my Doctoral Advisor, Dr. Kristen Crossney at: kcrossney@wcupa.edu.

Best,

Jessica Knapp

IRB Number: FY2022 - 287
Appendix III – Informed Consent

IRB Informed Consent
IRB NUMBER: 2022-287
PI: Jessica Knapp

Project Title:
Investigator(s): Jessica Knapp, Dr. Kristen Crossney (Faculty Sponsor)

Project Overview: Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being conducted by Jessica Knapp as part of their Doctoral Dissertation to analyze what makes cross-sector collaboration between Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania and their partner school districts successful as they work together to implement the community school model. Your participation will be via a Zoom interview and will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour to complete. Your responses to the interview questions will be anonymized.

If you would like to take part in this research study, the West Chester University requires your consent. Please select the consent options at the end of this consent form and use the forward progress arrow to continue.

You may ask Jessica Knapp any questions to help you understand this study. As this study is voluntary, you are not required to participate. If you choose to be part of the study, you have the right to change your mind or stop the interview at any time.

1. What is the purpose of this study?
   a. To understand how nonprofits such as Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania can successfully partner across sectors with public school districts to implement the community school model.

2. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do the following:
   a. Complete a 45-60 minute Zoom interview that will be recorded.

3. Are there any experimental medical treatments?
   a. No.

4. Is there any risk to me?
   a. No.

5. Is there any benefit to me?
   a. No.

6. How will you protect my privacy?
   a. The session will be recorded.
   b. Your records will be kept private. Only Jessica Knapp, Kristen Crossney, and West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) will have access to your name and responses.
   c. Your name and all identifiable information will not be used in any reports.
   d. All records will be coded. No names will be used, only pseudonyms.
e. Records will be stored in a password-protected folder and will be destroyed after 7 years.

7. Do I get paid to take part in this study?
   a. No.

8. Who do I contact in case of research-related injuries?
   a. For any questions with this study, please contact:
      i. Primary Investigator: Jessica Knapp at JK916158@wcupa.edu
      ii. Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kristen Crossney at kcrossney@wcupa.edu

9. What will you do with my Identifiable Information/Biospecimen?
   a. Not applicable

10. What will be done with the data in the future?
    a. Participant’s de-identified data may be used when publishing Jessica Knapp’s dissertation articles, and/or in conference presentations.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the OSRP at 610-436-3557.

I have read this form and I understand the statements in this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can stop at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all possible risks in a study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to decrease any risk. I consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________
Subject/Participant Signature

________________________________
Date
Appendix IV – Interview Protocol

IRB NUMBER:
PI: Jessica Knapp

Interview Protocol

Interview #:
Interviewee:
Date:
Time:

Thank you for joining me today. My name is Jessica, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Public Administration program at West Chester University. I am conducting research on cross-sector collaboration between Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania (CISPA) and their school district partners as they work to implement the community school model. Your insight will be beneficial to my research and will inform and advance the field of cross-sector collaboration and community schools.

To better facilitate notetaking, I would like to record our conversation. This was covered in the informed consent, but I’d like to confirm your consent to the recording of this interview. Do you consent?

I will begin recording now. Before we start, are you familiar with the concepts of collaboration and community schools? (If no, explain further for clarity).

**Question 1:** Please identify yourself as one of the following:

1) An employee of Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania
2) An employee of a school district

**Question 2:** How long have you served in this role?

**Question 3:** What is your role in the partnership between Communities in Schools of Pennsylvania and (insert school district name here)?

**Question 4:** On a scale from 1-5, please rate your understanding of the purpose and goals of the partnership between CISPA and your school district (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest).

*Follow Up: Please explain why you chose that rating.*

**Question 5:** [For School District Staff] If you can recall, how long has CISPA offered programming at your school site/in your district?
Question 6: [For School District Staff] In your role, do you interact with and communicate with CISPA staff or CISPA leadership team members on a regular basis?
*Follow Up: If yes, please rate the quantity and quality of your communication with the CISPA staff at your school on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.
*Follow Up: Please explain why you gave the quantity/quality of communication the rating that you did.

Question 7: [For School District Staff] In your role, do you often work with CISPA building staff or CISPA leadership on projects or tasks?
*Follow Up: If yes, please rate your experience working together on tasks with CISPA on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.
*Follow Up: Please explain why you gave the rating you did.

Question 8: [For School District Staff] What are some of the benefits, in your opinion, of having CISPA programs in your school building?

Question 9: [For School District Staff] Since CISPA has offered programs in your school/school district, have you seen any positive gains in academics, attendance, or behavior?
*Follow Up: If yes, please explain.

Question 10: [For School District Staff] Have you ever encountered challenges or frustrations with the CISPA staff in your school building/school district?
*Follow Up: If yes, please explain.
*Follow Up: If yes, were those challenges resolved? How were they resolved?
*Follow Up: If challenges were not resolved, how could CISPA work with you to remediate these problems?

Question 11: [For School District Staff]: On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, how would you rate the success of your partnership with CISPA?
*Follow Up: Please explain why you chose that rating.

Question 12: [For School District Staff]: What, if any, improvements would you like to see in this collaborative effort? Please explain.

Question 13: [For School District Staff] Would you recommend CISPA’s programs to other school districts who do not currently have these programs?
*Follow Up: If yes, what would you say that the benefits of these programs are?

Question 17: [For School District Staff] In your role, do you often work with school district staff or district leadership on projects or programs?
*Follow Up: If yes, please rate your experience working together on tasks on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.
*Follow Up: Please explain why you gave the rating you did.