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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School Education and Psychology

NEW SITE ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN SCHOOL  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy

by

Denise Calvert-Bertrand

April, 2013

Diana B. Hiatt-Michael, Ed.D.–Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Loris A. Parker. Thank you for being the rock in our family and in my life. It is because of your unwavering support and love that I am the woman I am today.

Thank you to my husband Joe and my son JoJo for your love, support, and patience throughout this journey. You both have made sacrifices, given me strength, and encouragement to allow me to continue to grow as a person and as a professional.

Thank you all for supporting me on this journey and helping me to stay the course until the end.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to the new site administrators that participated in this study and all site administrators. We have a tough, but rewarding job that never ends. Continue to reflect, encourage, care, and inspire children and adults you encounter in life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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complete this project. Thank you all for your wisdom and never ending support in my professional and personal endeavors. I am truly blessed to have you all as my mentors, friends, and cheerleaders.

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Assistant Principal Cesar Chavez Middle School, LUSD	2005-2006
Assistant Principal Mark Twain Elementary School & Lynwood Middle School, LUSD	2003-2005
Principal 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Academy, SFUSD	2002-2003
Assistant Principal Balboa High School, SFUSD	2002-2002

Assistant Principal Prairie Vista Middle School, HSD	2000-2002
Assistant Principal Warren Lane Elementary School, IUSD	1999-2000
Teacher Lakewood Elementary School, PUSD	1995-1999

## ABSTRACT

This study's purpose was to investigate new site administrators' perceptions of the term *community involvement*, of their role to engage the local community members as partners in their school, their preparation and support to work with their communities, and their challenges on-the-job with community engagement. This study also examined new site administrators' perceptions and needs to better understand what tools are necessary to help them create thriving community partnerships.

Thirty new site administrators across 4 counties of Southern California participated in a semi-structured 45-minute interview. All were employed less than 4 years and represented the gender, age and ethnic diversity of these counties. These individuals initially responded that parents were the community, not noting businesses, churches, health and the many other entities that surround and should be involved in school life. Each stated in some fashion that the role of the site administrator was to interface with the community beyond the site faculty and staff. All perceived that their academic preparation lacked any knowledge and skills to work with parents and the community although that is 1 of 6 required components for an administrative license in California. In addition, none indicated formal on-the-job professional development opportunities; 2 in the same district mentioned superintendent support of community involvement.

The first year administrators shared their sense of feeling overwhelmed in their new leadership position for a school staff and the myriad of policies/procedures. New site administrators in their second--fourth years commented on the struggle to find time to

deal with community partnerships, the lack of district support, and limitations created by policies/procedures.

The respondents expressed interest in working with community groups, noting the many benefits to the school. All suggested ways that school districts, counties, colleges, department of education, professional associations, accrediting agencies, and policymakers could provide required training in the knowledge and skills to develop sustaining community partnerships.

## Chapter 1: Problem and Purpose

### Background

Education has been viewed as a community responsibility since the founding of the American colonies. In 1647, the Colony of Massachusetts created a law that required towns with 50 or more families to provide a teacher for their children (Barger, n.d.). This law began the road towards compulsory education in America. This law required the entire community to be responsible for the well-being of its next generation, spearheaded by the belief that educated children grew up to be productive citizens who could foster strong families and a thriving economy (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). This revolutionary idea sparked continuing controversy as the American people struggled to find a common ground on just how much community involvement was necessary in educating their youth (Hiatt-Michael, 2006).

Today, educators still struggle with the role community plays in education. In a classic study, sociologist Coleman (1966) observed that learning and teaching are complex endeavors that extend beyond the involvement of the classroom teacher, the child, and the school. He noted that the success of a child's education depends on the external family and community forces that affect him or her. Current scholars have built upon his work (Blank, 2005; Davies, 2000; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hiatt-Michael, 2008, 2010; Walker, Shenker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). These scholars describe a variety of extrinsic factors that affect readiness and ability to learn, including family dynamics and community factors, and prescribe practices that involve the large community to support the school's endeavors.



Currently, new site administrators are faced with numerous challenges within their student population. These challenges include higher-than-average proportions of students in poverty, students whose parents have acquired limited formal education, immigrants and other students with limited English skills, students from unstable or changing family structures, and higher than the national average rate of student mobility (Marcos et al., 2009). Classroom teachers and site administrators have tried to address these issues within classrooms, but they require community support (Constantino, 2003; Price, 2008; Sanders, 2006; SEDL, 2000).

Legislation at the national and state level calls for highly qualified principals in all schools (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Administrators in California must complete an approved course of study in educational leadership demonstrating they have acquired the basic skills and knowledge for the Administrative Services Credential.

The present generation of site administrators and assistant site administrators are required by law to engage parents and the surrounding community, but these administrators may not be prepared with the knowledge and skills to engage them (Marcos et al., 2009). Without such knowledge and skills, site administrators and assistant site administrators lack successful methods to involve the larger community (Epstein, 2001). This presents a quandary for administrators who are charged with engaging the community.

Fullan (2001) as well as Goodlad (1969) argue school site administrators have always been, and are perhaps are more so today, critical in determining the success of any school reform. They explain that principals possess this power because they can legitimize the program by mobilizing the resources necessary for strong implementation.

Without site administrator leadership, the implementation of any program such as community involvement is not likely to be initiated, implemented, or sustained (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007; Epstein, 2001; Fullan, 2006; Goodlad, 1999; Maclay, 2000; Nelson, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1994). Site administrators are expected to carry out the reform effort of involving parents and building community partnerships in spite of limited professional development and training (Marcos et al., 2009; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

A school's leader is essential in the overall success of any school community (Fullan, 2006). Allen (1999) states that the purpose of organizational leadership is to create supportive environments, promote harmony and sustainability, and create shared responsibility and respect for others. Site administrators must influence and facilitate the level of community involvement in their school. Community involvement includes involvement of parents as well as a host of other agencies at the school site (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). To meet the aims of Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind legislation and initiatives surrounding community involvement in schools, site administrators need to know how to work with community members.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite research and laws supporting the importance and benefits of community involvement in the education process, Marcos et al.'s (2009) study suggests that new site administrators may begin their new role without the knowledge and skills to engage the larger community in the education process at their site. They also may not receive support from upper administration at their district in this endeavor. However, no research has focused on the new site administrators' perceptions of their role and the knowledge

and skills they actually possess and need in order to effectively engage the community. Literature is especially lacking in qualitative studies that focus on the site administrator's role in building relationships between schools and the community. Hence, there was a need for a study in this area.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate new site administrators' perceptions of the term *community involvement*, of their role to engage the local community members as partners in their school, their preparation and support to work with their communities, and their challenges on-the-job with community engagement. This study also examined new site administrators' perceptions and needs to better understand what tools are necessary to help them create thriving community partnerships. It is important to understand new site administrators' perceptions and needs regarding community engagement in order to create an impetus for change in administrative credentialing programs' curricula and school district level support.

### **Research Questions**

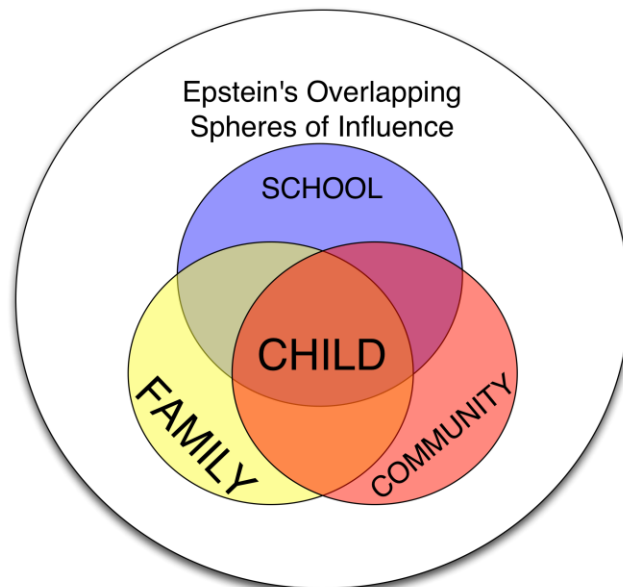
This study addressed five central research questions:

1. How do new site administrators perceive the term community partnership?
2. What role do new site administrators perceive they play in fostering community involvement?
3. What training, knowledge, skills, and support do new site administrators receive prior to and on-the-job to develop and sustain community partnerships?
4. To what extent do new site administrators apply Rubin's phases of collaboration for community partnerships?

5. What types of community partnerships pre-exist and developed at administrators' sites?

### Theoretical Frameworks

This study was guided by three frameworks: Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence, Rubin's collaborative leadership, and Hiatt-Michael's community-school collaboration model. Many scholars believe that collaboration is key to enhancing the effectiveness of schools (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Epstein, 2001; Fullan, 1991; Hiatt-Michael, 2006; Rubin, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2004).



*Figure 1.* Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence. Adapted from *School, family, and community partnerships: preparing educators and improving schools* (p. 21), by Joyce L. Epstein, 2001, Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Copyright 2001 by Westview Press a member of Perseus Group. Reprinted with permission.

Collaborative partnerships between school and the community at large benefit both sides by improved student learning, family engagement, and school effectiveness.

Epstein (2001) describes the theory of *overlapping spheres of influence* in which she establishes a correlation between how home, school, and community affect children's education and development (see Figure 1). In her work, *School, Family, and Community Partnership*, Epstein states that the term *community partnerships* is better than *parental involvement* because it recognizes that parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for student learning and development. Schools that involve educators, parents, and community members in establishing common goals exhibit characteristics of a collaborative environment (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1993; Rubin, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2000). Rubin's (2009) collaborative leadership framework guided this study in developing an understanding of collaboration process (further described in Chapter 2; see Figure 2).

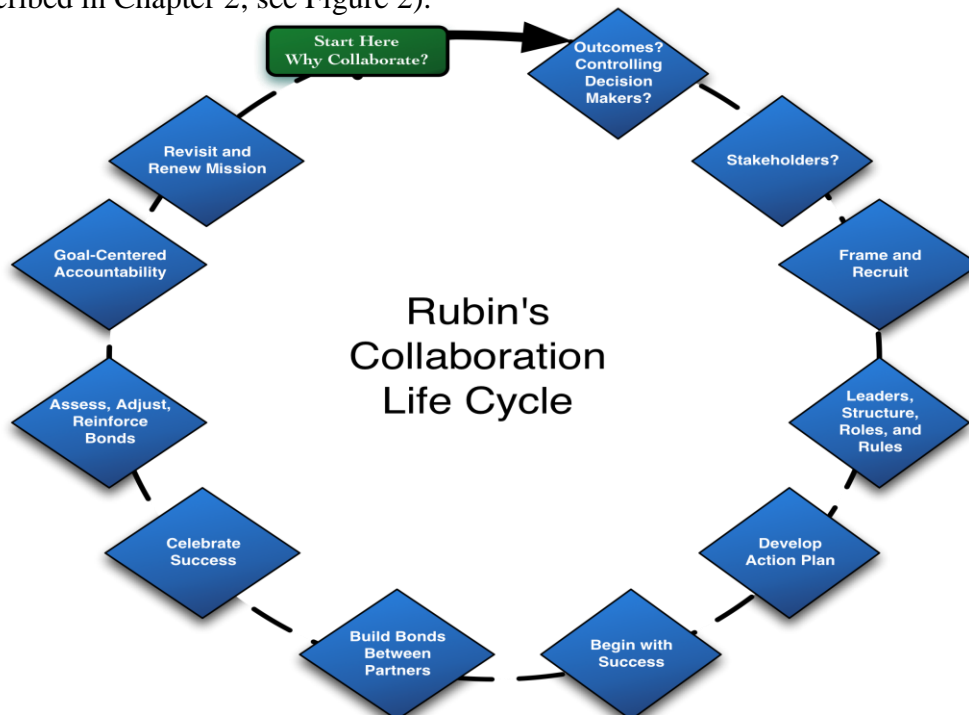


Figure 2. H. Rubin's collaboration life cycle. Adapted from *Collaborative leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by H. Rubin, 2009, Thousand Oak, CA: Corwin Press. Copyright by author. Reprinted with permission.

Rubin (2009) defines collaboration as “a purposeful relationship in which all parties strategically choose to cooperate in order to achieve shared or overlapping objectives” (p. 2). Furthermore, Rubin states the success of collaboration depends on the ability of the collaborative leader to build and maintain these relationships.

Collaboration requires skills to build, sustain, and manage relationships with people and organizations with whom they must collaborate. Most public leaders have never learned these skills, and that lack influences them to avoid collaboration and diminish its central importance (Rubin, 2009).

According to Hiatt-Michael (2003), new site administrators have a wide range of categories of community groups that can be tapped into to support the school’s endeavors (see Figure 3). A new site administrator’s role is enhanced with commitment from groups from all of these categories.



*Figure 3.* Hiatt-Michael community-school collaboration model. Reprinted as provided from Diana B. Hiatt-Michael, 1990. Copyright 1990 by Diana B. Hiatt-Michael. Reprinted with permission.

## **Significance of the Study**

**Practical significance.** This descriptive exploratory study presents specific data on how site administrators new to the principal position currently perceive their role in engaging the community, what they perceive to be their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the support and training they need to be successful in engaging the community in their school. Knowing how new site administrators perceive their role and the knowledge and skills they enter the position of principal with will help districts to develop professional development activities and implement systematic structures to support new site administrators in understanding how to engage the community. School districts and top district personnel will also have a better understanding of the importance of and the different types of community partnerships that are supporting the educational programs.

Aspiring and new site administrators will find this study valuable in defining their role, knowledge, and the skills they will need when designing and implementing their plan for community involvement. This study's findings can serve as a basis for a needs assessment for districts that are pursuing federal initiatives in engaging the community in their schools and providing support for site administrators. Community partners as well as site administrators will find value in this study as they continue to learn and understand (a) why some partnerships are successful and why others may not be and (b) what they can do to support each other during the process.

This study's findings provide insight to universities and school districts on the training and skills new site administrators need to obtain to effectively foster community partnerships. The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) may benefit from this study as it may serve as a needs assessment of the knowledge and skills

prospective site administrators may need in order to be prepared to engage the community. Thus, the findings may lead to changes to the criteria and content areas covered in administrative credentialing programs. This study may serve as the basis for assessing how limited community partnerships exist within schools. The information gleaned from the data analysis and conclusions reveal to accreditation organizations—including Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC)—the value of incorporating school, family, and community involvement as a focus area in the evaluation process for accreditation. Therefore schools, site administrators, school districts, and universities are more apt to focus on fostering community partnerships. In addition, this study's findings should be of importance to federal and local policy makers and organizations such as the Coalition of Community Schools (CCS) as they continue to review and make new policies around education and education reform.

**Theoretical significance.** This study provided empirical support for the development of new curricula and theories to strengthen our understanding of and capacity to develop leaders. This study also provided support for how principals utilize the categories of community support in Hiatt-Michael's community-school collaboration model.

**Methodological significance.** While the interview questions were worded positively, important information was sometimes gleaned from informal conversations and indirect observations prior to and post interview of the study participants. The significance of the data collected during these informal and indirect observations of the



participant's environment deepened the understanding of the participant's experiences and beliefs of their perceptions of engaging the community.

### **Definition of Terms**

This study utilized the following terms:

- **Collaboration:** Collaboration is a purposeful relationship in which all parties strategically choose to cooperate in order to achieve shared or overlapping objectives. Because of its voluntary nature, the success of collaboration depends on one or more collaborative leader's ability to build and maintain these relationships (Rubin, 2009).
- **Collaborative leader:** Anyone who has accepted responsibility for building or helping ensure the success of a heterogeneous team to accomplish a shared purpose (Rubin, 2009).
- **Collaborative leadership:** The skillful and mission-oriented facilitation of relevant relationships between different organizations and sets of individuals. Rubin (2009) defines collaborative leadership as the juncture of organizing and management.
- **Community:** Community refers to any neighborhood that influences students' learning and development (Epstein, 1995). Additionally, Dwyer (1998) defines community as a group of people who are socially independent, who participate together in discussions and decision making, who share certain practices, and who are benefited by their relationships.

- **Community member:** For the purpose of this study, this term refers to members of the community are individuals or groups of people who live and/or work in the area surrounding study sites.
- **Community partnership:** Connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly to promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Sanders, 2006). While parent involvement can be included within the broader definition of community involvement, it is important to note that parental involvement is not the focus of this study. Within this study, the term is used synonymously with community collaboration.
- **New site administrators:** The school building administrator who has held the position in any elementary school for less than 4 years.
- **Parent:** An adult who is legally responsible for a child enrolled in a public school, which for the purpose of this study includes legal guardians who may not be biological parents.
- **School, family, and community partnership:** This is a broad term that emphasizes that the institution of the school and the institution of the family share major responsibilities for children's education. This term implies a planned and comprehensive alliance to work toward shared goals (Epstein, 2001).
- **School district:** A local public educational agency that operates schools or contracts for school services in specific geographical areas and is recognized as the legal educational supervisory entity by the state.

- **Site administrator:** The official school administrator responsible for the pupil instruction and parent involvement programs within a specific elementary school building. California site administrators must hold an Administrative Service Credential granted by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This study operated under the following assumptions:

1. Community-school partnerships have positive benefits on educational endeavors in a school.
2. The site administrator is the key agent for engaging the local community in schools.
3. The participants were honest in their responses.

### **Delimitations**

This study was limited to new site administrators in that role at schools within Southern California, primarily Los Angeles County and Orange County. New site administrators' perceptions were limited to a particular point in time during 2008-2012.

### **Summary**

According to the media, major educational foundations, the state and federal government, as well as publicly elected officials, public education in America must change to improve student learning and school effectiveness. However, change does not happen on its own, and it is up to site administrators and school administrators to spearhead a new wave of community collaboration that connects administrators, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole. This connection is imperative if schools are

going to enhance educational experiences in which children will thrive and learn skills to be successful in the community workforce.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature and Related Research**

The review of literature and research provides background about the dynamics of community involvement in schools and the role that the site administrator plays in creating a successful community school on his or her campus. This review of literature is divided into three sections: (a) school, family, and community partnerships; (b) knowledge and skills needed to develop and sustain community partnerships; and (c) the roles of credentialing preparation programs as well as site administrators. The literature is clear in showing that community engagement in schools lies at the heart of the process of educational leadership (Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003).

### **Historical Context of Community Involvement**

As early as the 1600s, society recognized that community involvement was a key factor in educating children. The Massachusetts Act of 1642 urged parents and the community to educate their children in reading and the laws. The church thought that if children were able to read and understood the law, it would create a more harmonious society because children would be able to read religious scriptures. President Thomas Jefferson believed that education should be free of religious bias and available to all. More importantly, he believed that the government should control education. Horace Mann and other notable reformers continued this belief of educating all children. Years later as a result of their efforts, free public education was made available to all American children at the elementary level by the end of the 19th century. As educational systems were established, parents and community authorities became more distant. Responsibility for educating children has shifted significantly from the days of the colonies. Parent and community involvement has dwindled at the local level.

The idea that there is a correlation between education and future economic growth is not new. In the early 1980s there was a push by policymakers for a nationwide effort to reform public education. A significant and highly publicized wave of school reform began following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. In the publication, policymakers and social critics predicted that the weakness of American education would usher in an era of economic decline. The report also spoke to parents directly:

As surely as you are your child's first and most influential teacher, your child's ideas about education and its significance begin with you. You must be a *living* example of what you expect your children to honor and to emulate. Moreover, you bear a responsibility to participate actively in your child's education. (p. 28)

The fears unleashed by these findings led to reform efforts that emphasized improving the academic achievement of all students.

The second significant wave of school reform began in April 1991, when President George H. W. Bush announced the publication of the report, *America 2000: An Education Strategy*. This was considered to be “a bold, comprehensive, and long-range plan to move every community in America toward the national education goals” (Alexander, 1991, p. iii) that had previously been adopted by the President and governors in 1990. *America 2000* was designed to approach four different areas of need with the same goal: (a) more accountability in schools, (b) innovative research programs, (c) retraining and motivating adults to learn, and (d) creating learning communities by involving every town and city.

In March 1994, the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* was signed into law. *Goals 2000* was based on the lessons learned from state and local improvement efforts sparked by the report *A Nation at Risk*. *Goals 2000*'s focus was to develop national consensus on curriculum and set national standards of achievement while concurrently urging locally-designed methods for implementing the national goals. *Goals 2000* established national educational goals surrounding eight areas: (a) school readiness; (b) school completion; (c) student achievement and citizenship; (d) teacher education and professional development; (e) leadership in math and science; (f) adult literacy and lifelong learning; (g) safe, disciplined, alcohol-free and drug-free schools; and (h) parental participation. The educational partnerships described in *Goals 2000*, plus the growing number of state initiatives and mandates related to parent, family, and community involvement, increased policymakers' attention on the meaningful involvement of parents and the community in education at the state and local levels. In order to document and analyze useful practices for educational reform, *Goals 2000* looked at more than 25 years of research in parent and community involvement and the outcomes of state and local initiatives and mandates. Under *Goals 2000*, at the federal level, all eight goals failed; the act neither prepared preschool children to be ready to learn nor generated a 90% increase in the national graduation rates as hoped. This result would seem to support the idea that educators were missing an essential component in ensuring that students are successful in school.

The passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in January 2001 continued to target educational reform efforts. NCLB aimed, among other things, to raise overall student achievement and reduce ethnicity-based and income-based disparities in school achievement. Parental and community involvement is a key part of this initiative, and to

accomplish many of its goals, NCLB mandates a wide range of mechanisms including regular standardized testing of students, the presence of high-quality teachers in classrooms, and increased parental involvement in students' education. The law distinguishes between two forms of parent involvement, one revolving around school choice and the other focusing on improving home-school relationships. Title I, Sec. 1118 of NCLB requires that schools receiving funds for serving students from low-income families implement activities to help foster greater family and community involvement. NCLB encourages schools to develop partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses to help all students learn and achieve (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Over time, home and school partnerships have changed dramatically. In the 19th century, the parents and the community controlled the school's actions. The home, church, and school supported the same goals for learning and for the integration of the student into the adult community (Epstein, 2001; Prentice & Houston, 1975). Church representatives and parents were responsible for hiring and firing teachers, setting the school calendar, and establishing the instructional curriculum. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries schools began to distance themselves from the home by emphasizing the teachers' special knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy (Epstein, 2001). The family was expected to teach social skills, personal background and cultural heritage, and manners, while the teaching of curriculum was left up to classroom teachers. The family's responsibility was separate from the school's goals to teach a common curriculum to students from diverse ethnic, financial, and social backgrounds (Epstein,



2001). During the 1980s and 1990s, family-school relations changed again. With the increased demand from the public for better schools, parents were requesting they be involved in and informed about their child's education. Epstein's (2001) theoretical model of overlapping spheres focuses on the connection between educators, parents, community groups, and commercial agencies. This model puts students at the center of the school, family, and community partnerships paradigm. Epstein talks about three spheres of influences: the internal, institutional, and individual. Many students, parents, and educators see their sphere of influence as separate, meaning that they do not see themselves as partners. Epstein points out the following:

In some schools there are still educators who say, "If the family would just do its job, we could do our job." And there are still families, who say, "I raised this child; now it is your job to educate her." These words embody a view of separate spheres of influence. Other educators say, "I cannot do my job without the help of my students' families and the support of this community." And some parents say, "I really need to know what is happening in school in order to help my child." These phrases embody the theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Schools and communities talk about programs and services that are family-friendly, meaning that they take into account the needs and realities of family life, are feasible to conduct, and are equitable toward all families. (p. 101)

Epstein (2001) suggests that parents and administrators create more "family-like schools" (p. 32) that recognize each child's individuality and make each child feel special and included. These schools would reach out to all families, even those who traditionally are easy to reach. When schools do so, families will begin to reinforce the importance of

school, homework, and activities that build student skills and feelings of success. Parents would also work together to create “school-like opportunities” (p. 32), events and programs that reinforce, recognize, and reward students for excellence in education. Once people hear about such concepts as *family-like schools* or *school-like families*, they may remember positive examples of schools, teachers, and places in the community that were “like a family” (p. 33) to them. They may remember how a teacher paid individual attention to them, recognized their uniqueness, or praised them for real progress, just as a parent might. They might recall aspects of their home life that were “just like school” (p. 33) and supported their work as a student, or they might remember community activities that made them feel smart or good about themselves and their families. They might recall that parents, siblings, and other family members engaged in and enjoyed educational activities and took pride in the schoolwork or homework that they did, just as a teacher might.

The benefit of schools working with communities is invaluable. Site administrators must embrace their roles as community collaboration leaders in order to create exceptional places of learning. Doing so will take a concerted effort that must move beyond the school and even the parents. Epstein’s (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence illuminates how the relationship between home, school, and community affect children’s education and development (see Figure 1). Epstein supports that the term *community partnerships* as more encompassing than *parental involvement* because it recognizes that parents, educators, and other in the community share responsibility for student learning and development.

### **Relevance of School, Family, and Community Partnerships**

DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005) contend that, in order to experience significant student achievement gains, schools must develop a culture that supports systematic focused instruction and decision-making around student learning goals. According to Constantino (2003), a school as the center of community is an idea that is increasingly accepted. This is evident from the fact that the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is an important component of former President Bush's NCLB and has been reauthorized under Title IV, Part B (Constantino, 2003). This program provides expanded academic enrichment that encompasses activities and programs meant to enhance academic achievement in ways that are culturally relevant to the community in which students live. Since this culture must be supported by the changing roles of educational leaders and teachers, schools cannot work in isolation; rather, they must work collaboratively with parents and the community if they want to create a culture of learning that successfully incorporates the best that families, schools, and communities have to offer. Community partnerships with schools develop academic proficiency as well as inspire students to learn and grow in non-academic settings (Constantino, 2003). Thus school leaders, principals in particular, must get involved in creating thriving school partnerships on their campus. These site administrators should become working partners with community members to mobilize the community (Price, 2008).

Recently, the role communities play in schools has been receiving increasing attention by researchers, as they begin to realize that communities are a vital component in socializing youths and ensuring students' success in a variety of societal domains (Sanders, 2006). Heath and McLaughlin (as cited in Epstein et al., 2002) argued that

community involvement is important because the “problems of educational achievement and academic success demand resources beyond the scope of the school and of most families” (p. 30).

Scientific evidence supports the inclusion of school, family, and community partnerships in efforts to reform education. Research on effective schools has consistently shown that high-performing schools have positive school-home relationships (Chrispeels, 1996; Hoffman, 1991; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2002). More importantly, these schools put forth strong efforts to reach out and work with their students’ families (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

Research shows that community partnerships are an essential part of any successful school. Students who attend schools with a strong sense of community perform better academically and have better social and emotional skills (Schaps, 2003). In fact, Barr and Parrett (2008) believe that the more a school curriculum involves issues and people from the students’ real-life community, the more engaged students will be in their learning. Parents should be part of these community partnerships. Epstein (2001) and Hiatt-Michael (2010) acknowledged that parent commitment is essential to student success, especially in schools that may have students who are considered to be at risk. Slavin, Karweit, and Madden (1989) define at-risk students as those students who are unlikely to leave school with an adequate level of basic skills. Levin (1989) defines at-risk students as those who lack the home and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices. The risk factors these students face include: low achievement, grade retention, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic

status, and attendance at schools with large numbers of poor students. By the year 2020, it is projected that the majority of America's public school students will be operating under conditions that place them at risk of educational failure (Irmsher, 1997). There are a variety of reasons why public education is failing inner city youths. The majority of the current studies show that race and class affect education (Kuykendall, 1992). While studies show that, as a whole, children who come from lower socioeconomic status households do worse in school than their wealthier counterparts, poor minority children fare worse than their White counterparts. Standardized test scores reflect disparities—as do the data on suspensions, expulsions, retentions, and drop-out rates—indicating that far too many Black and Hispanic youths are becoming distanced from mainstream America. To allow this to continue would create an economic and social crisis that would be felt on every level of society (Kuykendall, 1992).

Theorists have long recognized the important role strong school-home connections play in child development and education. Bronfenbrenner (1979), for example, argued that children's behavior and development are influenced by their interactions within their homes, schools, and communities, and also by the “social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other” (p. 6). Epstein's (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence is based on the position that a child's home and school environments each have a unique influence on her or his development. However, the degree to which adults in these settings maintain positive relationships with one another is critical to students' academic success (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

In the most challenged communities, it increasingly appears to be the school's role to stimulate and coordinate needed support in the home and the community. The changing family demographics, demands of the professional workplace, and growing diversity among students are some of the reasons that schools and families alone cannot provide sufficient resources to ensure that all children receive the experiences and support needed to succeed in the larger society (Epstein et al., 2002). Schools need these additional resources to successfully educate all students, and these resources, both human and material, are most often housed in communities (Epstein, 1995; Melaville, 1998; Waddock, 1995). Thus, those schools that are improving or effective understand the important role communities and parents play in teachers' ability to foster student learning and academic growth. Site administrators must understand the need for school leaders to develop strong relationships with families and community members. Rosenholz (as cited in Sanders & Sheldon, 2009) found that schools moving in a positive direction were actively working to bridge students' homes and schools. Horn and West (1992) found that parent and community involvement have a strong influence on student drop-out rates. Other areas that have been demonstrated to be positively affected by increased parent involvement include students' attendance, attitudes, behavior, and future aspirations (Henderson, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

There are many rationales for schools enhancing community involvement, the most powerful of which revolve around the idea that families and schools traditionally have been viewed by researchers as having the greatest impact on the development of children. Epstein (1995) theorizes that the overlapping influence of schools, families, and communities combine to socialize and educate children. Furthermore, Heath and

McLaughlin (1987) point out that problems of overpopulation, economic struggles, and community violence mean that community involvement is integral to helping with “the problems of educational achievement and academic success” (p. 579) that cannot be accomplished with the resources of most schools and/or families alone. Shore believes the following:

Too many schools and school systems are failing to carry out their basic educational mission. Many of them—both in urban and rural settings—are overwhelmed by the social and emotional needs of children who are growing up in poverty. (as cited in Sanders, 2006, p. 2)

Dryfoos (2003) and others have suggested that schools must reach out into the community in an attempt to strengthen the social capital available to children. Proponents argue that school community partnerships, specifically those that involve businesses, are critically important because business leaders, managers, and personnel are uniquely equipped to help schools prepare students for the changing workplace (Fitzgerald, 1997; Hopkins & Wendel, 1997; Nasworthy & Rood, 1990). Community involvement is one way to restore character to the schooling process. Community involvement focusing on student well-being will promote increased students’ social capital as a result of their connections with students’ communities (Benson, 1996; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994; Toffler, 1995).

### **Historical Overview of Community Collaboration**

Community collaboration in the form of community organizing dates back to the early 1960s. Saul Alinsky, considered by many to be the father of community

organizing, led the movement of organizing the community to influence those in power. During that time, organizing entailed a body of professional skills (Rubin, 2009).

The 1980s and early 1990s brought a change in managing schools, social services, health care organizations, and nonprofit organizations to accomplish public missions. This shift demanded leaders possess the skills to manage the organizations to accomplish their public missions. Chrislip and Larson (1994) developed the premise that if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization and community. This premise was a result of their study of more than 50 cases of collaboration around the country in which communities had successfully worked on significant public issues. The construct of this premise has three parts. The first part speaks of bringing appropriate people together. Groups of people traditionally come together to solve a problem. The appropriate people are usually those that have a stake in the outcome, whether they are for it or against it, or whether they generally care about the issue. The second part of the premise entails bringing people together in constructive ways. When dealing with a diverse group with different perspectives and interests, they must be brought together in constructive ways. The process of bringing the group together must be systematically designed to meet the different levels of trust, different degrees of skill, and different understanding of the issue. Third, the group must be armed with good information in order to make sound decisions.

The 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century revealed an era of civic disengagement and social erosion (Putnam, 2000). We reverse these adverse trends of social connectedness and restore civic engagement through collaboration.



Collaboration is a purposeful relationship in which all parties strategically choose to cooperate in order to achieve shared or overlapping objectives. Its purpose is to solve dilemmas effectively or accomplish an outcome. Although cooperation is part of being collaborative, collaboration involves more than just cooperation. Pugach and Johnson (2002) state:

This shared commitment to a school-wide goal is precisely what distinguishes collaboration from simple cooperation. Collaborating with other teachers is just not a matter of being cooperative, or being nice to your colleague. Being nice is important in creating a pleasant atmosphere, but can easily exist independent of focused, mutually agreed upon educational goals. (p. 15)

### **Leadership for Community Collaboration**

Collaborative leadership is the skillful and mission-oriented facilitation of relevant relationships. The mission of collaborative leadership within an educational setting is to provide the tools and strategies needed to bring both diverse individuals and the diverse institutions they represent together in an effort to focus their work on developing the relationships necessary to accomplish the purpose, which otherwise could not be done on an individualized basis (Landes, 2011). Chrislip and Larson (1994) summarize the nature of collaborative leadership as follows:

Collaborative leaders challenge the way things are being done by bringing new approaches to complex public issues when nothing else is working. They convince others that something can be done by working together. They empower people by engaging them on issues of shared concern and helping them achieve results by working together constructively. Their credibility comes from the

congruence of their beliefs with their actions....They recognize that their ability to get things done must come from respect, since they have no formal authority.

They keep people at the table through difficult frustrating times by achieving results with other approaches. They “encourage the heart” by helping to create and celebrate success along the way to sustain hope and participation. (p. 145)

Rubin (2009), in his book *Collaborative Leadership: Developing Effective Partnerships for Communities*, provides a conceptual framework on how collaboration should occur in an educational setting. Rubin describes a 14-phase process for collaboration’s life cycle that serves as a tool to assess the status, strengths, needs, next steps, and timelines of existing collaborations. Each phase may overlap, repeat, or occur simultaneously. Collaboration’s life cycle may be conceptually organized in five clusters of activities, as portrayed in Figure 4).

Phases of Collaboration's Life Cycle													
I The Launch	II Human Resources and Knowledge Base				III Administrative Structures and Systems			IV Culture of Collaboration			V Accountability, Sustainability, and Renewal		
Why Collaborate?	Outcomes? Decision Makers?	Research: Knowledge, Policy, Politics	Stakeholders?	Frame and Recruit	Leaders, Structure, Roles, and Rules	Develop an Action Plan	Begin With Success	Build Bonds Between Partners	Celebrate Success	Assess, Adjust, and Reinforce Bonds	Goal-Centered Accountability	Scaffold the Change	Revisit and Renew Mission

*Figure 4.* Rubin’s phases of collaboration’s life cycle and clusters of activities. Adapted from *Collaborative leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by H. Rubin, 2009, Thousand Oak, CA: Corwin Press. Copyright by author. Reprinted with permission.

## **The Dimensions of Leadership for Community Collaboration**

In *Collaborative Leadership*, Rubin (2009) talks at length about the skill sets needed to be a successful collaborative leader. He talks at length about the importance of being a “big picture” strategic thinker who pays attention to the life cycle of the partnerships. Successful leaders see the gaps and potential gaps and find ways to overcome them. They are always tactical in “assessing, planning, and managing” (p. 57), in collaborative processes. Collaborative leaders have asset-based perspectives; they shape the dialogue between the partners. They figure out ways to maximize existing assets so that they and their partners can find long-term solutions to problems that may be threatening a school’s culture.

Because of its voluntary nature, the success of collaboration depends on one or more collaborative leaders’ ability to build and maintain these relationships (Rubin, 2009). A collaborative leader manages relationships through his or her behavior, communication, and organizational resources to influence others for the good of their collaboration and shared purpose. Schools and non-profits often fail to have the impact they set out to have on the community. The nature of their intentions attracts those who want to be involved for a shared purpose. They fail in their efforts because school leaders and public leaders never learn how to build, sustain, and direct relationships with the people and organizations with which they must collaborate (Rubin, 2009). Rubin (2009) suggest 25 dimensions of collaborative leadership. Each dimension (or skill sets) should be present to varying degrees in the partners comprising collaboration, if the collaboration is to succeed (Rubin, 2009). Rubin further states skill sets are starting points for self-assessment by collaborative leaders, targets for self-improvement, and

skills that should be apparent in the partners that educators aim to recruit into collaborations. They are merely an outline of the competencies around which professional development and higher education programs may begin to build curricula for teaching the skills of collaborative leadership. Each dimension contributes differently and to varying degrees to the success of collaboration (Rubin, 2009). Most are significant contributors to the success of the phases of collaboration's life cycle. Figure 5, presents a conceptual framework of the process (life cycle) and the characteristics (dimensions) of collaborative leaders.

A Conceptual Framework for Collaborative Leadership													
Dimensions of Collaborative Leadership	Phases of Collaborations Life Cycle												
	Why Collaborate?	Outcomes? Decision Makers?	Stakeholders?	Frame and Recruit	Leaders, Structure, Roles & Rules	Develop Action Plan	Design with Success	Build bonds between Partners	Celebrate Successes	Assess, Adjust Reinforce Bonds	Goal-centered Accountability	Revisit & Review Mission	
Strategic Thinking													
Asset Based Perspective													
Timing the Launch													
Recruiting the Right Mix													
Interpersonal Communication Skills													
Consensus Building													
Diplomacy													
Understanding the Rudiments of each Sector													
Data-Driven Leadership													
Psychosocial: Understanding People													
Institutionalizing the Worry													
Group Process													
Resource Development													
Marketing/Communications													
Technological Savvy													
Managerial Skill													
Systems Thinking													
Entrepreneurism													
Vision-Centered Leadership													
Integrity													
Spirituality													
Commitment to Diversity													
Charisma													

Figure 5. Rubin's phases of collaboration's life cycle and dimensions of collaboration. Adapted from *Collaborative leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by H. Rubin, 2009, Thousand Oak, CA: Corwin Press. Copyright by author. Reprinted with permission.

Clearly, collaborative leaders must have good interpersonal and communication skills that allow them to share their vision in a succinct, honest, and relevant manner. Collaborative leaders must be able to build consensus in a way that achieves their desired results while still keeping their partners happy. Collaborative leaders must also be diplomatic and find ways to juggle the competing interests of their partners so that everyone gets what they need. Collaborative leaders also must (a) have good organizational management skills; (b) be able to effectively manage their school community as well as their community partnerships; and (c) show their commitment, integrity, and vision and in ways that keep others committed to the partnership (Rubin, 2009). As Hiatt-Michael (2006) points out, “community groups bring a vast wealth of resources within the confines the school site, creating school-linked programs that provide needed services for families and children” (p. 24), so it is important that site administrators find ways to make these collaborations work. Collaboration is almost always more time-consuming and challenging than acting alone. Collaboration requires skills that most people were never taught, and because of this, individuals often develop these skills as they go. Some of the skills necessary to be a collaborative leader include strategic thinking, in which the collaborative leader understands the steps that are needed to make things happen, has the ability to articulate a vision, the ability to stay focused on long term goals, the ability to be sociable with parents and community leaders, and the ability to see the big picture and ignore quick fixes in exchange for long term, substantive change (Rubin, 2009).

Collaborative leaders have professional credibility. They must possess a substantive mastery of their school culture and a vision for where they want to go. They

must pay close attention to their peers, remain committed to the partnership, and avoid delegating too much of the work and responsibility to a lower-status person in their organization. This behavior may send a message to the other partners that the partnership is not a priority for the leader, potentially resulting in a lack of assets and access for the school leader. Professional integrity is another important attribute for collaborative leaders; leaders must mean what they say, say what they mean, and do what they say. While it might seem odd to talk about integrity as a skill, it is important to remember that it takes work to look beyond the needs of one's own organization and make real compromises that may benefit others. It also takes work to learn how not to judge others based on one's own code of ethics. The values of one's community may differ from one's own, and a leader cannot let that affect any collaboration that will be good for the school. It also takes work to truly embrace the concept of "people as ends, not means" (Rubin, 2009 , p. 63). This means that one sees one's partners as individuals, not as merely assets, embracing the intention of bringing out their best as well. This also fits into Hiatt-Michael's (2006) research on the importance of "character and civic education" (p. 20). Since children are mandated to go to school, schools are in a unique position to shape the morals and values of students based on the culture they create (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). As a result, students will model their teachers' and administrators' behavior. If teachers and site administrators show respect for others and express a desire to connect with the community, students will see the value of this and follow suit.

Collaborative leaders must also have a commitment to the diversity of people and ideas and understand all the races, ethnicities, religions, and philosophies that make up

the partnerships, creating strategies that are sensitive to their needs. They must also work on honing their charisma. This may take a lot of work for some people, but leaders have to work on ways to become appealing to others and secure their buy-in. The collaborative way of thinking conflicts with the traditional structures and reward systems in which most individuals routinely work (Rubin, 2009).

### **Knowledge and Skills Needed for Community Collaboration Leadership**

Today's site administrators are called to lead in a way in which they never have been called before. While historically, site administrators have been the managers of schools, they are now also expected to manage school curriculum and connect with the larger world. Legislation at the national and state level calls for highly qualified site administrators in all schools (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002), so it is imperative to determine the specific knowledge and skill sets for site administrators that could predict the successful leadership of a school and ensure that they can create and sustain community partnerships.

Senge et al. (2000) define community as “not a place defined by boundaries but by the sharing of life” (p. 325). In effect, school communities are defined by shared activities, rules, and culture. Sergiovanni (1994) defines a school community as a “collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are bonded to a set of shared ideas and ideals” (p. 8). Thus, what makes a school a community is the interaction of the students, teachers, and administration—interactions that might not necessarily be replicated in the larger world. It is hard for site administrators to interact with communities outside their school walls because those communities may not share the same ideals and values that they have been trying to foster in their schools.

Interactions with the community may create some discomfort for site administrators, but it is important for them to realize that if the community outside the school does not buy into what they are doing, their work can be undermined. Schmieder and Cairns (1996) discuss how understanding a community and a community's values is directly related to an administrator's ability to foster change. If a site administrator is willing to take the challenge, he or she can instill a respect for learning in the community so that parents and other influencers can enhance what students are learning in school. Furthermore, Schmieder and Cairns conclude that a leader who will be able to successfully engage a community must have the following attributes and skills:

- Know how to facilitate meeting within and between groups.
- Have highly developed networking skills.
- Know how to encourage involvement by all parties.
- Work to maintain positive relationships with other agencies.
- Portray self-confidence when dealing with the community.
- Be aware of their own biases, strengths, and weaknesses when dealing with the community.

As Hiatt-Michael (2010) states, dialogue is the cornerstone for site administrators being able to foster community involvement. If site administrators and their communities can come together in a shared dialogue that reflects the equal importance of all parties' concerns and motives, then school site administrators will achieve the outcome that they want a great deal of the time (Sanders, 2006). Thus, effective educational leaders must welcome a conversation regarding how the school fits into the community (Barth, 1990). Sanders and Harvey (2002), along with Carr (1997), propose that site administrators who



model for faculty and staff a genuine openness to parent and community involvement will establish an expectation for dialogue and communication among school personnel, families, communities, and students. By doing so, they will support others in developing leadership in the area of family and community involvement to create school cultures ripe for collaboration. Sanders (2006) further states that a lack of active site administrator support is the primary obstacle to successful community outreach.

The importance of leadership in initiating and fostering community engagement continues to be emphasized in literature; many researchers who study the subject see it as the key measure of success for an educational leader (Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003). In fostering a more community-friendly environment, site administrators should not become overwhelmed with the differences between their school community and the community at large. Some site administrators have a limited vision; they are so focused on their campus that they are blinded to life outside their school walls. Capra (2002) states that successful site administrators must have values and a vision that extends into the whole community. While they may not be familiar with the surrounding community, leaders benefit from looking at the community they serve and identifying shared values, shared visions, and social cohesion. This also gets site administrators thinking about the potential for economic growth that comes with community sponsorship, the best way to develop a learning community that is effective, the best way to implement inclusiveness, and what safety and security issues are involved. Capra (2002) and Grainger (2003) point out that school community involvement has reached the mainstream of educational policy making. Educational leaders understand that they shape the framework of a

school's culture and that it is their job to promote learning, collaborations, and environments that make their community members feel cared for and respected.

Although many authors emphasize the importance for educational leaders to focus on ideas regarding how to engage the community; there seems to be little emphasis on this importance in leadership training. In her research, Chadwick (2003) addresses the difficulties that educational leaders face in juggling their responsibility to their school community and the community as a whole. She states that for administrators, finding time in their busy schedules to facilitate the community engagement process is a definite challenge that requires a lot of preparation. Furthermore, Chadwick states it is important to find out whether there is support for community engagement and if previously shown engagement exists. It is important to focus on these areas. Recognizing there is a lack of literature in these areas, one can begin to discuss the need for more research and training methods by which site administrators can better engage the community.

### **Types of Collaborations**

Collaborations come in many shapes and forms. For the purpose of this study, we will look at two types of collaboration, itinerant and sustained. Itinerant collaborations are short-term collaborations in which a number of individuals and institutional representatives convene to tackle specific, clearly defined, and quickly achievable outcomes (Rubin, 2009). The second type of collaboration is sustained collaborations. Sustained collaborations are planned and managed systems of ongoing interactions. They are strategic, purposeful, and high-maintenance. The level of interaction is of higher level and long term.

## **The Role of Credentialing Preparation Programs**

According to Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2007), many studies have shown that the training site administrators typically receive in university programs and from their own districts does not do nearly enough to prepare them for their roles as leaders of learning. The accountability era has pressured principals and the community to improve student achievement. In addition, the impact has been felt with administrative preparation programs. The NCLB law has sparked a transition since its implementation for principals to move from a more administrative role to one of instructional leadership. Early administrator preparation programs according to Sharp and Walter (1997) focused on school finance and budgets, business methods, and organization of schools, with limited focus on instruction and curriculum. Today's programs prepare principals for accountability with a focus on instruction, curriculum, and data analysis.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP, 2002) publication *Leading Communities: Standards...What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do* serves as a guide to help principals reflect on and improve their practice. This guide was designed to make direct connections between the quality of school and the role of the school leader. NAESP believes that high quality schools are directly related to the actions of the school leader. With contributions from principals throughout the association, the NAESP identified the following six standards describing what principals should know and be able to do:

- Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center.
- Set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.
- Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards.
- Create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.
- Use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify, and apply instructional improvement.
- Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success (NAESP, 2002).

In looking at the site administrator's role in creating a learning community, it is important to explore the effectiveness of standard credential programs in preparing site administrators to engage parents and community organizations. Credentialing programs do a thorough job of teaching future site administrators how to create an effective curriculum and develop effective classroom management skills. However, these programs only give minimal attention to parental and community involvement. Site administrators are constantly being told that they have to go out into the community and engage parents, but they are not offered any substantive training in order to do so. Not only is there a lack of training in the classroom, but there is very little literature on the subject as well. This section of the literature review will explore the difficult job that site administrators have in building relations and creating bridges in communities.

The literature is replete with research on parent and community involvement. Ample research exists on the benefits of and importance of building these partnerships; however, limited research has focused on the specific skills necessary and the methods for developing these partnerships. This is problematic because administrative preparation programs and the role of the site administrator have changed throughout the 21st century. Local and state accountability laws and the need for administrators to move from being managers to instructional leaders in order to meet the demands of these new laws sparked this transformation. Although studies and reform efforts have been initiated in this area, researchers such as Levine (2005) criticize universities as being engaged in a “race to the bottom” (p. 54) as they compete for students by lowering their admission standards, watering down programs, and offering more degrees faster, easier, and more cheaply. This means that the students entering administrative preparation programs are all too often not getting the in-depth training that they need in certain areas. To combat this, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the NAESP, and the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA), along with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), formed a consortium in 1994 known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The purpose of the consortium was to develop professional standards for school leadership to address the need for reform in administrative preparation programs. The standards focus on developing school leaders whose priorities are improving teaching and learning and sustaining learning environments that allow success for all students (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2006). The ISLLC Standards for Leadership consist of six standards that were designed based on research on the linkages between educational

leadership, productive schools, and significant emerging trends in leadership. Since the original development of the ISLLC Standards for Leadership in 1996, further research and lessons learned prompted the revision of the six standards. While maintaining their focus, the standards were written for a new purpose and a new audience (CCSSO, 2008).

The six standards are as follows:

1. An educational leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
2. An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. An educational leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. An educational leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. An educational leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. An educational leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (CCSSO, 2008, p.14-15)

Few studies have been conducted, regarding the parent and community involvement movement, that truly reflect what novice or veteran site administrators believe are the skills and knowledge they need to gain from an administrator preparation program. Reform efforts and studies focus on preparing educational leaders to become instructional leaders with student achievement at the heart of their work. Even the most recent studies and research in the area of educational leadership place an emphasis on leaders being able to meet the needs of accountability and school improvement. Many will acknowledge that leadership training should include a component involving the community, but this is not done with breadth and complexity. Again, it is widely known what NCLB legislation states, and there is an abundance of research on parent involvement. Despite what NCLB legislation states, administrator preparation programs still fall short in the area of addressing the specific knowledge and skills that are most important to new site administrators in the field.

Becoming a credentialed education administrator is not an easy task. Educators seeking to become administrators must attend an accredited licensure program. Professional preparation programs are provided through universities, county offices, and school districts. Prospective school administrators in the state of California must obtain an Administrative Services Credential from the California Commission on Teaching Credentials (CTC). The CTC, a policymaking body, is California's state agency that certifies the competence of teachers, administrators, and other professionals who work in the public schools. The CTC was created by the Ryan Act in 1970. The major purpose of the agency is to serve as a state standards board for educator preparation for the public schools of California, the licensing and credentialing of professional educators in the

state, the enforcement of professional practices of educators, and the discipline of credential holders in the State of California.

California has a two-tiered credential structure. Prior to being issued an Administrative Services Credential, prospective administrators must attend and complete a CTC-approved administrator preparation program of specialized and professional preparation in California. Upon successful completion of a preparation program, prospective administrators may apply for a Tier I Preliminary Credential. A Tier II Clear Credential is issued when all credential requirements have been completed. The Administrative Services Credential authorizes the holder to provide services in K-12 grades, preschool, and classes organized primarily for adults.

An aspiring site administrator, in addition to attaining a Tier I Preliminary Administrative Services Credential, may serve in various leadership positions leading up to the principalship. Individuals seek and hold itinerant positions of leadership such as Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA), Title I Coordinators, district Curriculum Specialists, and Assistant Principals. Upon completing the academic courses for a Tier I credential, a candidate may receive a Certificate of Clearance. A Certificate of Clearance signifies that the candidate has successfully completed and received university recommendation for the Tier I Administrative Services Credential. The candidate may not apply to the CTC until he or she has been offered an administrative position requiring the credential. Administrators holding a Tier I Preliminary Administrative Services Credential have 4 years to clear their credential. Tier I credential holders must determine a professional development plan towards the completion of 140 hours.



The CTC views administrator preparation programs as a key component in developing school leaders equipped to improve student achievement. Administrative Services Credentials are issued to prospective individuals upon demonstrating competence in California's standards for school leadership from a CTC-approved administrator program or an alternative route authorized by California law. The CTC issues Administrative Services Credentials to individuals who demonstrate competence in California's standards for school leadership through completion of a CTC-approved administrator preparation program or an alternative route authorized by California law. The Administrative Services Credential authorizes the holder to provide the following services in Grades 12 and below, including preschool, and in classes organized primarily for adults:

- Develop, coordinate, and assess instructional programs
- Evaluate certificated and classified personnel
- Provide student discipline, including but not limited to suspension and expulsion
- Provide certificated and classified employee discipline, including but not limited to suspension, dismissal, and reinstatement
- Supervise certificated and classified personnel
- Manage school site, district, or county level fiscal services
- Recruit, employ, and assign certificated and classified personnel
- Develop, coordinate, and supervise student support services, including but not limited to extracurricular activities, pupil personnel services, health services, library services, and technology support services. (CTC, 2012)

Furthermore, an individual must hold an Administrative Services Credential to provide the following services in preschool, K-12, and to adults:

- Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of instructional services at the school site level
- Evaluate certificated personnel employed at the school site level, with the exception of the site administrator
- Student and certificated personnel discipline at the school site level. (CTC, 2012)

Clearly, the CTC's guidelines reflect a substantial concern about the quality and effectiveness of the preparation of teachers, administrators, and other school practitioners. It is also worth noting that the CTC understands that the changing role of school management and the added responsibilities and expectations placed on them translates into a need for more carefully designed, comprehensive preparation programs and ongoing developmental programs in this area.

An alternative method of receiving a California Preliminary Administrative Credentialing is to pass the California Preliminary Administrative Examination (CPACE). The CPACE is designed to align with Administrative Services program standards for preliminary certification. The CPACE provides an alternative method for the CTC to verify content skills with a focus on California school law, finances, organization, and English learner student needs. The set of administrative knowledge and skills described in the CPACE Content Specification is organized in the following four domains:

- Domain I- Visionary and Inclusive Leadership

- Domain II- Student Learning
- Domain III- Systems for Capacity Building
- Domain IV- Resource Management and Education Law (Pearson Education, 2012)

Today, most teachers and administrators, despite recent reforms, are still not prepared to understand, design, implement, and evaluate productive connections with the families of their students (Epstein, Sanders, & Clark 1999). The *Goals 2000* legislation's goal was for all educators to be ready to conduct partnerships with families and communities by the year 2000, but a recent survey of professors of education indicates that they have serious doubts about whether they are adequately preparing teachers to participate in learning communities. This shows that there is still much work to do in this area.

Epstein & Sanders (2006) report similar findings when surveyed a sample of 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) in the United States. In this study SCDE leaders reported that their most recent graduates were not well prepared to conduct programs and practices of school, family, and community partnerships. Only 19.1% graduating from SCDEs strongly agreed that the new principals graduating from their SCDEs were well prepared to conduct partnership programs. According to these education leaders, their current courses and content coverage were not adequately preparing new professional educators to work with students' families and communities (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

### **The Role of the Superintendent**

To create successful partnerships, the active participation of all the people who will be involved and affected is required (Hickey & Andrews, 1993). According to

Lampe (1993), who studied of 135 district superintendents and school principals across the state of California who supported the innovation of site-based management school district superintendent serves as the visionary leader for the principals in their district. In this role, the superintendent works with site administrators to establish a shared vision among the schools. The superintendent applies collaborative skills to develop and implement the vision within each school across the district. The superintendent is key to school reform within and across schools in the district. Besides establishing the shared vision, the superintendent supports principals' endeavors through resource allocation and encouraging opportunities.

Furthermore, the role of the superintendent is to create an environment in which partnerships ideas will arise and flourish (Hickey & Andrews, 1993). Hickey & Andrews (1993) go on to say the most important role of the superintendent is to endorse the effort and communicates the importance of partnerships and support the identification of and appropriate resources.

As with any leader of an organization, Chesser and McNeal (2000) realize that it is not just the beliefs of superintendents, but also their practices that promote school-family- community partnerships. They are the driving force in leading the organization in reform efforts. Superintendents like site administrators must believe in the importance of engaging the community. Realizing the importance of community engagement, the superintendent needs to develop and articulate a positive vision for collaborative ventures. This sets the tone and open the door for collaboration to occur. There is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between the school superintendent and school-family-community partnerships

### **The Role of the Site Administrator**

Site administrators must be facilitative leaders. Indeed, lack of active site administrator support may be an obstacle to successful community outreach. Fullan (1991) believes that the more times site administrators create collaborative structures; the more likely a collaborative culture will develop, enhancing the entire school community. Site administrators, as the leaders of school communities, must spearhead any and all collaborations. Purkey and Smith (1985) state that “site administrators are essential actors in schools and significantly influence whether or not their schools experience academic success” (p. 427). In their review of research, Purkey and Smith found that studies consistently identified site administrator leadership as an important characteristic of effectively collaborating schools. Site administrators serve as a model for faculty and staff and must (a) show a genuine openness to parent and community involvement; (b) establish an expectation for dialogue and communication among school personnel, families, communities, and students; and (c) support others in developing leadership in the area of family and community involvement, creating school cultures that are ripe for collaboration (Carr, 1997; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Fullan (2001) argued that school site administrators have always been, and perhaps are more so today, critical in determining the fate of any school reform. They possess this power because they can legitimize the program by mobilizing the resources necessary for strong implementation. Without site administrator leadership, the implementation of any program is not likely to be successful or sustained (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Site administrators affect school outcomes through the school’s purpose and goals, structure and social networks, people, and organizational culture. The site administrator is responsible for communicating a

shared vision that encompasses the ideas and expectations of all stakeholders. Site administrators influence social structures and networks at the school through their impact on interpersonal relationships and on how leadership is exercised. Site administrator leadership can bring the school community together, generating greater input into the decision-making process by developing networks among individuals throughout the school community (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Site administrators affect school outcomes by developing shared meanings and values among school personnel. Through the creation of greater social cohesion among members of the school community, site administrators create stronger, more effective schools (Bossert, 1995; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, 1994).

### **The Role of the Assistant Site Administrator**

The assistant site administrator position is held most by those aspiring to be the primary site administrator. It is a position that prepares leaders for the role of primary site administrator. The role of the assistant site administrator is one of the least researched and least discussed in professional journals and books (Weller & Weller, 2002). The assistant site administrator's job is often not clearly defined, and is instead left open for interpretation by both the site administrator and the central office. The traditional role of the site assistant site administrator has been that of a manager who handles the daily operations of the school building. The assistant site administrator's daily tasks include being the primary disciplinarian, monitoring attendance, coordinating student support services, and maintaining an orderly and safe campus. This role description applies to all educational levels K-12; however, these roles may manifest differently at different levels. In the elementary setting, the assistant site administrator

may be responsible for all operational tasks while the site administrator serves as the sole instructional leader. In the secondary level, there may be multiple assistant site administrators assigned to specific operational areas while the site administrator serves as the primary instructional leader. In this case, the assistant site administrator is so inundated with day-to-day operational tasks that he or she does not have time to be involved in community relations on a level that is collaborative and benefits the school. In addition to the operational tasks that they may be assigned, they are at the mercy of the site administrator with other duties as assigned by the site administrator (Weller & Weller, 2002).

Because of the ambiguity of the assistant site administrator's job description, assistant site administrators are often used ineffectively (Weller & Weller, 2002). The assistant site administrator represents order, consistency, and the first line of behavioral support (Holmes, 1999). Most interactions between assistant site administrators and parents are on negative terms as they are responsible for delivering news to parents regarding their child's attendance or behavior. Community interactions with assistant site administrators are also usually negative because they must deal with law enforcement agencies and other health agencies regarding students in need. In their daily tasks they may encounter numerous responsibilities in order to maintain a safe and orderly campus. Assistant site administrators do participate in positive interactions when assisting the site administrator in recognizing students for achievement. However, the site administrator is the primary person who recognizes students' successes.

A survey of 100 assistant principals indicated that people skills and good communication skills were among the most essential skills and knowledge areas for

effective assistant site administrators (Weller & Weller, 2002). Other skills listed by less than 40% of the respondents included the ability to work with community civic and business leaders. One of the survey respondents commented that many of these essential survival skills are not taught in degree programs (Weller & Weller, 2002).

Successful schools require that all school administrators act as public relations specialists and interact with key people within the school and in the surrounding community. Thus, the assistant site administrator should serve as a vital link between the site administrator, teachers, parents, and students, and function as an extension of the site administrator in promoting effective outcomes to the school community (Weller & Weller, 2002).

In order to be an effective communicator, administrators must possess excellent public relations skills. Administrators must be able to maneuver through the political arena to garner community support for their schools. Administrators are not trained to be politicians, yet they are expected to work toward and gain the support of powerful agents to support their school. School leaders must be effective in acquiring adequate resources and accomplishing their schools' missions. School leaders must know their communities and the power structures within them so they can develop the rapport necessary to have community members on their side. Assistant site administrators that are not trained nor given the opportunities to work with the community will lack these skills as site administrators.

### **Effectiveness and Obstacles to Community Partnerships**

Besides the lack of training there are other obstacles to the effectiveness of creating community partnerships. School-community partnerships can be defined as the



connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Epstein, 1995). There are several forms of school-community partnerships. The most common school-community partnerships occur with businesses. Other partnerships include those with universities, health care organizations, faith-based organizations, cultural and recreational institutions, other community-based organizations, and community volunteers. Partnership activities may have multiple foci. Activities may be student, family, school, or community centered. Student-centered activities provide direct services or goods to students. Family-centered activities focus primarily on parents or the entire family. School-centered activities benefit the school as a whole. Community-centered activities focus on the community and its citizens. Cushing and Kohl (1997) identified three barriers to successful school-community collaborations: (a) fear of public scrutiny, (b) staff burnout, and (c) teachers' and administrators' negative perceptions of students' families and communities. Fear of public scrutiny is important because many site administrators may fear opening up their campus to ridicule. Site administrators work hard to create a culture of learning that they think works, and they do not want to outside influences that do not understand their vision to undermine what they are doing. Staff burnout is also a big issue because time management is always challenging for site administrators and staff that are already overworked. Hiatt-Michael (2006) recognizes that more professional development is needed in these areas since:

the major emphasis in teacher preparation programs is on technical aspects of professional performance, not the deeply interpersonal aspects. In other words,

teachers are left to fend for themselves when it comes to creating strategies that will help them connect with their parents. It is a burden for new teachers and for administrators to be expected to learn this on the job when it should be part of their preparation program. (p. 12)

Blank, Melville, and Shah (2003) discuss the challenges that site administrators face including: (a) differences in philosophy and approach across fields, (b) historic turf conflicts, (c) families' and communities members' lack of knowledge and personnel, (d) lack of knowledge among community partners about the unique character and culture of the school, and (e) narrowly crafted funding streams that encourage isolation rather than integration. Sometimes educators have different philosophies, which makes it hard for educators to decide on one plan of engagement. Also, turf wars do tend to arise when a site administrator wants to go in one direction and his or her staff members might feel he or she is micromanaging. Lack of knowledge among community partners about the unique character and culture of the school is an important factor because often parents and community members want to get involved, but they do not take the time to get to know the staff at the school or ways to help that fit into the school's philosophy. As a result, they end up at cross purposes with what the school is trying to do. Also, and quite unfortunately, narrowly-crafted funding streams mean that community organizations may be vying for the same money; as a result, schools may be reluctant to partner with community organizations that could threaten their funding streams.

As Dryfoos (2003) points out, "collaboration is hard work: it takes endless time, meetings, patience, and understanding" (p. 54). This is important to realize because often times site administrators do have preconceived notions about their students' families and

communities. Site administrators are often primarily focused on their values, not the values of the students they teach. Many site administrators often feel so overwhelmed with these issues that they do not know where to start. They become so bogged down with their own issues and prejudices that they are too paralyzed to break out of their own box and reach out. Schools and community agencies have to learn each other's language, mores, concepts, and prejudices (Sanders, 2006). But while site administrators may have specific skill sets on which they need to work, many in the field believe that they can build on a foundation of passion, optimism, and respect for each student's individual experience (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000).

### **Summary**

A review of the literature shows that collaborating with parents and the community at large has a positive effect on student learning; in fact it is essential to the way school communities work in the 21st century. However, while the educational community agrees it is important to boost collaboration among schools, families, and communities, many obstacles to site administrators implementing this philosophy in their schools still exist. Research shows that administrators are often undertrained or untrained for this task. This researcher agrees with Hiatt-Michael's (2006) suggestion that "researchers and professional educators should team together to provide a parent involvement component in all pre-service teacher preparation programs" (p. 12). It is clear from the review of literature that more research needs to be conducted on this topic.

Current literature and research confirm the need for greater community involvement in schools. Community involvement is a leading factor in school reform and

academic achievement. The literature review consistently found that site administrators must be the catalyst for initiating and sustaining these partnerships within schools.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Overview of Research Design**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures used in the investigation of site administrators' role in establishing school and community partnerships. In order to answer the research questions, this descriptive study explored the perceptions of 30 new site administrators who are in their first 4 years in their first assignment as a principal in Southern California, primarily Los Angeles and Orange Counties. This descriptive and qualitative study utilized the semi-structured long interview process (McCracken, 1988; Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2006).

### **Description of Population**

Participants in this study were current administrators serving as elementary school principals in Kern, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Orange Counties' school districts. The schools residing in these counties are headed by site administrators (i.e., a principal) as the chief building administrator. The four counties serve large populations of students. Data for these populations were derived from the most recent survey, namely from the 2009-2010 school year, from the Department of Education website. Kern County serves an area of 11 cities within 8,141 square miles. Currently, 156 elementary public school sites exist in the county, each with a site administrator. Los Angeles County serves an area of 4,084 square miles spanning over 88 cities. The Los Angeles County Office of Education serves a population of 694,418 students in Grades K-5. There are 28 elementary and 47 unified school districts in Los Angeles County, for a total of 1,181 elementary schools (K-5 or K-8). These schools have one or more site administrators depending on the size of the school. Orange County serves a 780 square mile area.

There are 24 elementary and unified school districts in Orange County, with a total of 397 elementary schools. Orange County serves a student population of 219,972 in Grades K-5. There are approximately 1,181 elementary school site administrators in Los Angeles County, and 397 in Orange County, based on the number of schools. The number of new site administrators as defined by this study, those who are in the position less than 4 years, was unknown. Table 1 provides data for Los Angeles and Orange Counties for the number of new site administrators serving less than 2 years.

Table 1

*Number of First and Second Year Site Administrators by County*

County	Number of First Year Site Administrators	Number of Second Year Site Administrators
Los Angeles	23	65
Orange	15	10

### **Description of Sample**

Thus, the researcher explored ways to access this unknown population. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants in this study. Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under investigation (Patton, 2002). The researcher used various purposeful sampling strategies—school district references, personal networking, internet searches of district websites, and snowball sampling—to identify participants for the study from the larger population of site administrators. From the larger population of new site administrators, 77 who met the criterion of serving less than 4 years were contacted. Of these, 30 elementary site administrators were interviewed. These new site administrators

from school districts in Kern, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Orange Counties were selected for the study based on an additional criterion. The researcher aimed to select participants that were representative of the group of administrators as a whole based on their (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, and (c) years of service as an administrator. Figure 6 provides data on ethnicity for Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The study included one new site administrator from Kern County and one from San Diego County.

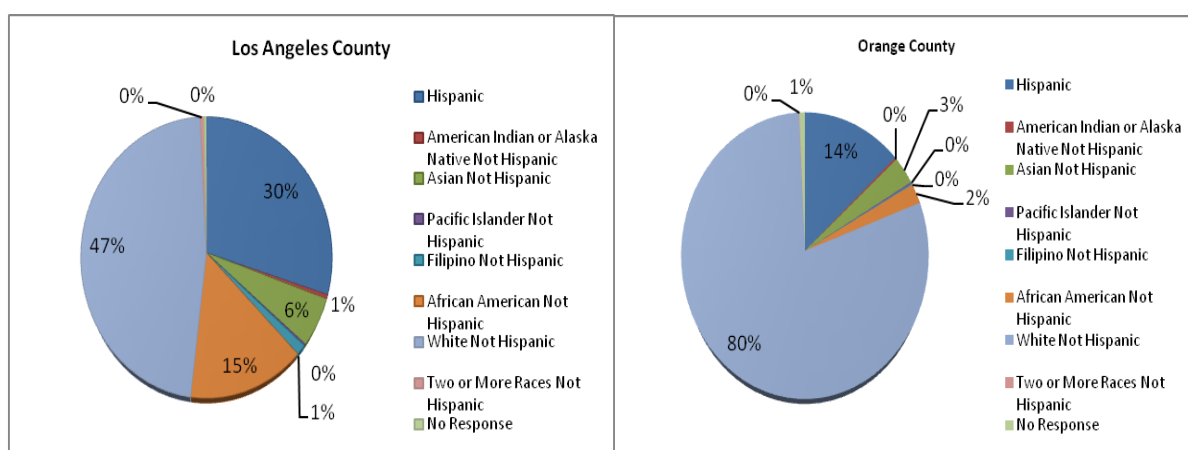


Figure 6. Number of site administrators by county.

All participants met the specified criteria, namely (a) having completed an accredited administrative credentialing preparation program in California, (b) having been awarded an Administrative Services Credential from the CTC, (c) being for the first time in the position as a principal at any level, and (d) currently practicing as a principal within their first 4 years in the position. Criterion sampling is the strategy that was employed for purposefully selecting information-rich cases. The logic of criterion sampling was to review and study all cases that meet the predetermined criteria of importance. Participants selected through this criterion sampling strategy provided

information-rich findings that revealed major system weaknesses that may become the focus for program or system improvement.

Snowball or chain sampling was the second strategy that was used to identify participants. Patton (2002) describes snowball sampling as an approach used to locate information-rich key informants through networking. In this process, the researcher begins by asking well-situated people for names of other people of interest that meet the criteria and would be good subjects for the study. The researcher had a small known sample of site administrators that met the study's criteria. The researcher asked those identified participants for additional people of interest. Using personal contacts with colleagues and their colleagues, the researcher was able to identify more participants who qualified for the study. Two additional resources were used, such as identifying prospective participants through networking. While the researcher attended a partnership forum in Utah, she made a contact who became a participant from San Diego. Her networking of university peers led to a new site administrator in Kern County. Prospective participants identified through this strategy were contacted via electronic mail or personal phone call to invite them to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

In addition to the contacts gained from known sample population, the researcher was provided with a list of school districts in Los Angeles County that had new site administrators participating in new principal academies. The researcher used the internet to research the school districts from the list to further identify specific site administrators that met the criteria. The researcher specifically looked at each elementary school website within the district website and read the principal's message to see which principals identified themselves as new to the school. The researcher used a similar



process to identify new site administrators in Orange County. The researcher was able to use the information obtained from the internet to make contacts with participants. The researcher continued this process until 77 contacts were made using these strategies.

The data was gathered from 11 (36%) men and 19 (63%) women. The participants included 7 (23%) African American, 7 (23%) Hispanic, 14 (47%) Caucasian, 1 (.03 %) Asian, and 1 (.03%) who declined to state racial or ethnic group. Participants were all located in Southern California with 47% of the participants from Los Angeles County, 47% Orange County, 3% San Diego County, and 3% from Kern County. For further information see Chapter 4.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

This study was conducted in accordance with regulations and guidelines established by Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval from IRB was granted on November 16, 2011 in order to conduct the participant interviews in this volunteer research. Participants' confidentiality was protected. Upon approval from the IRB, participants were provided with a consent form containing information about the study (see Appendix B). Participants were required to complete the consent form prior to the interview. The researcher did not use participants' names throughout the study. Participants were assigned a code to ensure their confidentiality. Participants' names were only known to the researcher. Interview transcripts were maintained separately from participant demographics during the interview process. Participants were not pressured to respond to any questions that made them uncomfortable. Participants were able to stop the interview at any time without being penalized for doing so. During and after the study, all data and documentation

pertaining to the study was maintained in a locked file cabinet and or on a password protected computer. Five years after the completion of the study, all data and supporting documents will be shredded and electronically deleted.

### **Data Collection Process**

The primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individuals in the organization that carry out the process (Seidman, 2006). Rubin and Rubin (1995) define qualitative interviewing as follows:

...a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. The goal of the researcher is to understand the meaning one makes of their experience while involved in the organization or process. Through qualitative interviews one can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which he did not participate.

(p. 1)

People's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. Without context there is little possibility of exploring the meaning of an experience (Patton, 1990). Interviewing provides a necessary avenue of inquiry in a qualitative research study.

deMarrias (2004) defines an interview as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p. 55). The researcher used the long interview method of inquiry. This method gives the researcher the opportunity to glimpse into the mind of another person and experience the world as they do themselves. The long interview was used for the purpose of its structure that understands the risk of participants in qualitative interviews. This semi-structured

format assumes that individual respondents define the world in unique ways, thus allowing the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 2009). McCracken (1988) states that the use of the long interview strategy allows the researcher to gain access to individuals without violating their privacy. Thus, the researcher is able to capture the data needed in a way that is unobtrusive, but within a manageable methodological context.

To ensure reliability, a trained researcher with knowledge of the content must be selected and questions reviewed and tested to eliminate ambiguities and inadequate wording (Isaac & Michael, 1997). The study's researcher conducted all interviews. An expert panel of five individuals reviewed the interview questions for reliability and validity. The researcher used the expert panel to perfect and hone interviewing skills necessary to conduct unbiased interviews for the study. An experienced panel of practicing elementary principals and educators that had more than 10 years of experience reviewed the interview questions. The interview questions were reviewed for practicality and clarity. The researcher modified the original questions, reordered the interview questions, and deleted one ambiguous question based upon the input from the panel members.

Data was collected during December 2011 and March 2012 upon receipt of permission from the IRB and the individuals. The researcher personally contacted each person by email and by telephone. Original emails and telephone connections were followed up a week later until a date and time was confirmed. Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. In order to ensure that

participants were representative of the sampled group, demographic data was collected during the interview. Demographic information included: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) ethnicity, (d) years in the position, (e) years in their district, (f) credentialing program attended, (g) CTC credentials, (h) area of residence, and (j) community and church affiliates. Research questions were derived from the five central research questions stated in Chapter 1.

Qualitative research is best when conducted in the natural environment. This allows the researcher to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003). Interviews held were face-to-face. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. The researcher met the participants in a predetermined location to conduct the interview. Interviews were held at the participants' school sites or at a predetermined location for their convenience during a time that allowed them to be free from distractions. Each interview was audio recorded for use in the data analysis process. The researcher used an interview protocol to document the information gathered (see Appendix C). Phone interviews were held for those participants that were unable to meet face-to-face. The same protocol was followed and these interviews were tape-recorded for data analyses.

### **Summary**

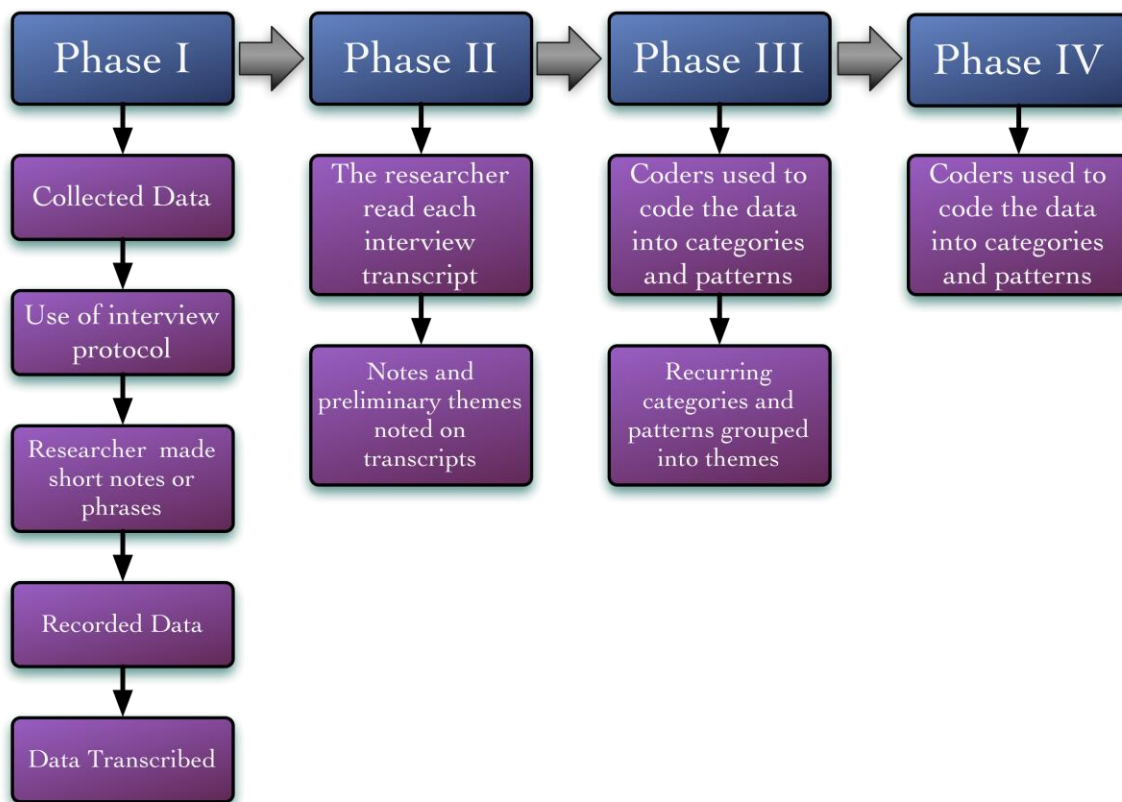
This chapter described the research study methodology and rationale for this qualitative descriptive study. The sample population and procedures for collecting data were also discussed. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data and key findings.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the results of analysis of the data collected in this study. Data was collected from semi-structured long interviews with new site administrators serving as principals at the elementary level in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and Kern counties concerning their perceptions of their role and engaging the local community. A total of 77 new site administrators in the elementary level were invited to participate in the study. Of this number, 30 were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with new site administrators at the elementary level face-to-face or by phone. Interviews lasted from 25 to 90 minutes.

### **Coding Process and Analysis of Data**

Data collection in a qualitative research may involve text (i.e., word) data and image (i.e., picture) data (Creswell, 2003). These data must be organized in a manner that allows the researcher to make interpretations and draw conclusions about the data. An inductive analysis of data, as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2001), was used to identify themes and subcategories. Through inductive analysis, the researcher follows an ongoing cyclical process of four overlapping phases. Phase I entails discovery of data through data collection and recording. Phase II entails organizing and categorizing data during and at the conclusion of data collection. Phase III engages the researcher in searching for patterns and themes. Lastly, in Phase IV themes are translated into narrative structures or visual representations. Figure 7 illustrates the process of inductive analysis used by the researcher in this study.



*Figure 7.* Phases of qualitative data analysis.

Qualitative data analysis may occur concurrently with the collection process.

During the interview process, the researcher used an audio recorder to record the interview. Recorded interviews were transcribed to electronic transcripts and maintained in an electronic database. Recording the interview helps the researcher capture subjects' responses in their entirety for reliability. The interview protocol allowed the researcher to make short phrases or notes of the interview or transcripts. Interview notes were reviewed following the interview. The researcher read all 30 respondent transcripts as well as analyzed notes taken during each interview. Interview materials were sorted based on emerging key ideas.

Pepperdine doctoral students were used to code and analyze the data. Seven doctoral students and one doctoral graduate from Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology were trained by the researcher in coding procedures, and

coding was conducted under the guidance of the researcher. The coders are credentialed educators in the K-12 setting and health care profession. Coders were selected and trained based on their willingness to participate and their previous research experience. Each coder previously completed a course in qualitative methods and analysis.

Coders were trained and guided by the researcher in the process of dividing the data into parts by a classification system (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The training was held at Pepperdine University School of Education and Psychology and lasted for 1 hour. An open coding process was used to determine a preliminary list of codes. Coders were then trained on the process for coding the data according to the preliminary list of codes. Each coder was assigned a set of six of the 30 respondents' transcripts to read. Transcripts were given a respondent's identification number, and all identifying information had been blacked out for confidentiality. Each respondent transcript was read twice by a different coder.

The researcher asked each coder to (a) read the responses and highlight commonly used words, phrases, or statements and (b) search and identify patterns of practice from each respondent. Due to the length of each respondent interview transcript, coders were given a week to code them to eliminate coder fatigue. Each coder recorded their data into themes, categories, and patterns to determine meaning, using Microsoft Excel to create a matrix, listing codes on the left column that corresponded with the respondents' identification number along the top row. The researcher and the coders reviewed the matrices for recurring themes, categories, and patterns. They then grouped the codes into themes in response to each research question. The final step consisted in the researcher creating a visual representation of the themes (see Figure 8).

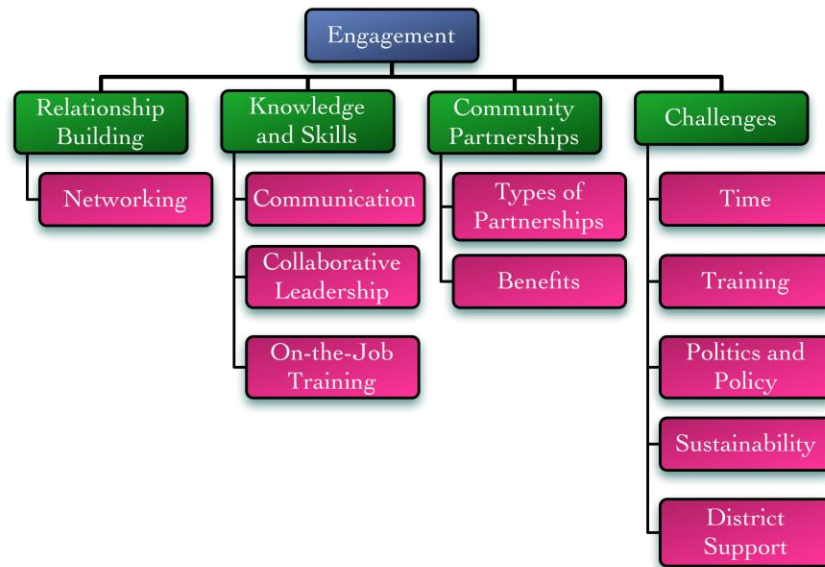


Figure 8. Themes that emerged from coding process.

**Themes.** Through the detailed analysis of data, 20 common themes emerged. The coders and the researcher narrowed down common themes and agreed on four major recurring themes emerged as evidenced by the data analysis. These major themes included: (a) community partnerships, (b) relationship building, (c) knowledge and skills, (d) challenges. Each theme is reflective of the five research questions.

1. How do new site administrators perceive the community?
2. What role does new site administrators perceive they play in fostering community involvement?
3. What training, knowledge, skills, and support do new site administrators receive to develop and sustain community partnerships?
4. Prior to the job and on the job
5. To what extent do new site administrators apply Rubin's phases of collaboration for community partnerships?



6. What types of community partnerships exist at your site
7. Prior to and which one they created.

### **Findings for Demographic Data**

The researcher used purposeful sampling to select the sample population. Criterion and snowball sampling strategies were used to further determine the criteria for eligible research participants. Each of respondents (R1...R30) met the criteria of eligibility as described in Chapter 3. The sample population represents a diverse perspective based on ethnicity, gender, age, credential program attended, geographic location, and years of service as site administrator.

**Geographic location.** Respondents in this study were from school districts within Orange, Los Angeles, San Diego and Kern Counties. Specifically, 47% of the respondents served in an elementary school in Los Angeles County, 47% in Orange County, 3% in Kern County, and 3% in San Diego County (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Number of Respondents by County*

Number of respondents	County
1	Kern
14	Los Angeles
14	Orange
1	San Diego

**Gender and ethnicity.** Women comprised of 63% of the population with the remaining 36% men. Respondents represented a diverse population with 50% Caucasian; 23% Hispanic; 20% African American; 3% Asian; 3% declined to state (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Number of Respondents by Ethnicity and Gender*

Number of Respondents	Ethnicity	Gender
6	African American	Female
1	African American	Male
6	Hispanic	Female
1	Hispanic	Male
8	Caucasian	Female
6	Caucasian	Male
1	Korean	Male
1	Declined to state	Female

**Years of service as a site administrator.** In response to the question “How long have you been an elementary site administrator?”, 30% of the respondents answered that they were in their fourth year, 16% responded that they were in their third year, 13% responded that they were in their second year, 26% in their first year, and 10% responded that they had been site administrators for less than 7 months (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Number of Respondents by Years of Service as a Site Administrator*

Number of Respondents	Years in Assignment
12	1
4	2
5	3
9	4

**Administrative credentials held.** The majority (90%,  $n \sim 30$ ) of the elementary principals interviewed held an Administrative Services Credential granted by CTC. Two respondents were granted state licensure through alternative methods such as achieving a passing score on the California Preliminary Administrative Credential Examination (CPACE) or through interstate license (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Number of Respondents who Reported Administrative Credential Programs by Universities*

Number of Respondents	Administrative Credential Program
11	California State University
3	University of California
13	Private University
2	CPACE
1	Interstate Licensure

## **Findings for Interview Data**

Through interviews conducted with new site administrators, four major themes related to the research questions emerged. The themes are as follows:

- Relationship building
- Knowledge and skills
- Community partnerships
- Challenges

In the subsections that follow, personal communications from participant statements in interviews are presented, as identified by participant number. These are direct quotes from participants that were collected between the dates of October 2011 and March 2012.

**Relationship building.** Relationship building was an emerging theme occurring as respondents were asked about their perceptions of their role in engaging the community. All of the new site administrators indicated they must be able to be instructional leaders as well as leaders outside and within their school community. When asked what was their perception of their role in engaging the community, site administrators expressed that it is an important and critical role. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated the role the site administrator plays in fostering community partnerships is based on their leadership skills and ability to lead. One respondent viewed administrators “as the ring leader” in fostering community partnerships (Respondent 25). Three respondents expressed similar sentiments:

- I truly feel that the administrator sets the tone for the school site, and that includes making a welcoming environment for parents and community members, yet the

idea of doing that is to ensure their school functions more effectively when parents and the community are involved and engaged. (Respondent 12)

- I think it starts with the site administrators because as far as community partnerships go, it has to do with building relationships with people. Then those relationships lead into fostering connections in getting community members involved. (Respondent 4)
- I think they play a key role in that if they foster relationships with the community, they bring more things to the students. (Respondent 19)

Networking and building relationships was a resounding message from the respondents. Ninety percent of the respondents expressed that building relationships with their community partners is essential in fostering and sustaining the partnership.

Respondents also indicated site administrators must be accessible. Fifty-three percent of the respondents stated getting information out to the community about their school sites' needs, mission, vision, and goals also supports their efforts of engaging the community.

One respondent summed it up best by saying, "I'm the face of my school. Principals are the face of their schools" (Respondent 20). A site administrator is the main person responsible for promoting the school. The general belief of the respondents was that community organizations and businesses must be aware of what is happening in the school in order to be responsive to the school's needs. Two respondents share their belief:

- Once the community realizes that you're open to assistance, generally you end up getting a lot of help. I've found that in the one and a half years that I've been an administrator here, that in working with a lot of community groups and letting

them know what I need and what's happening on the site, they've responded very well and as a result we've gotten a lot of help. (Respondent 2)

- I think it's important for every school site administrator to know how to nurture and grow relationships with community partners. Also, be able to get information out about what's happening within the school. That way people can support the school more. (Respondent 8)

The importance of being out and visible in the community contributes to the possibilities of fostering community partnerships. "It is important that you get out and walk the community so that way you do know your surrounding areas" (Respondent 11). "I think sometimes you have to go out and seek them, but there's a lot of things that are in the community already and you're just out there, and visible, and things come and you can take advantage of them" (Respondent 4). Visibility in the community helps the site administrators to be more familiar with the community they serve as well as the community becoming more familiar with them. Visibility at key times of the day also creates possibilities for potential partners that may arise from an encounter with a parent or neighbor in the community. Existing partners appreciate and expect for the site administrator to be available and actively engaging in the partnership efforts.

**Knowledge and skills.** Nurturing and growing relationships with community partners requires skills. The discussion with respondents was based on whether these skills are learned or based on natural abilities. Responses from the respondents would suggest both. New site administrators should possess skills that will allow them to be personable, friendly, and approachable. Sixty-seven percent of respondents stressed site administrators must be interested in engaging the community within their school site.

- If you have an interest in working with the community in which you serve...  
First, their needs to be an interest. Second, you know if you want to bring your community together, you need to know about the population in which you service. Although I don't live here, I ask questions about what's going on, what are some of the needs in the community. That gives me a better understanding of what type of services need to be provided. (Respondent 2)
- Once you have established an interest, you will need to use your personable skills to network and engage the community. You are also more willing to approach others as well as be approached. (Respondent 12)

One's personality goes hand and hand with a desire to play a role in fostering partnerships.

- I think a person's personality and desire play a role. The principal has to have intrinsic motivation to create a bond with the partners. Therefore the partners will be willing to invest their money in schools. So the principal has to paint the picture for the partner as to why they need their partnership. (Respondent 23)
- I think it kind of goes back to just your training as a human being. You know things that your mom teaches you, I think are probably as important as any formal training in setting the groundwork for having community partnerships.  
(Respondent 4)

An overwhelming 93% of the respondents interviewed expressed the view that communication is another key to building and nurturing any type of collaborative partnership. Communication skills included having strong written and verbal communication skills, use of technology, and knowing and understanding one's needs.

- One of the most important skills for an administrator to develop is to learn to see, to know what the community partner wants to get out of the partnership, to identify what their interest is and what their goals are and then to be able to communicate how the school site would be a match for the goals that the community partners could offer. (Respondent 3)
- You have to have superior communication skills that include writing skills, speaking, and listening skills. (Respondent 20)
- I think that you need people skills, the ability to communicate effectively both written and oral. I've sent a lot of letters out to community organizations in the area and businesses, and I think that good written skills are important to communicate the needs of the school and the ideas behind possible partnerships. (Respondent 16)

Social media and the use of technology has become an essential means of how society members interact with one another, communicate their needs, and showcase their businesses and projects. A site administrator may receive numerous emails daily. They need to be able to navigate their email and create time to review and follow up with emails. Respondents noted they have experienced high volumes of emails ranging from school business to promotional offers to potential partnerships. One respondent commented why they find it important to read their emails routinely:

If you are able to incorporate checking your emails regularly and reading various things that come across to you into your daily routine you will lessen the chance to miss potential opportunities for partnerships. You're always getting mail and you're always getting email from different partnerships and from the district,



central district and local district and then responding to them if something is interesting that you think will help your students. (Respondent 19)

**Community partnerships.** Several types of partnerships emerged from responses from the respondents. Partnerships can be categorized into two beneficial groups: monetary and direct. Partnerships that provided monetary benefits were those that were fostered to provide the school sites with funding that otherwise may not be available. Partnerships that provided direct benefits were those that provided services directly to the instructional program in the form of services. Respondents identified the following partners that existed at their site:

- Churches
- Local businesses
- Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Nonprofit organizations
- Colleges
- Law enforcement agencies
- Local civics

Data revealed 83% of the respondents were open to various partnerships that would help to meet financial needs of the school. The current fiscal state of California's budget has limited to nearly extinguishing programs that once heavily relied on state funding. Schools are reaching out to businesses, churches, and organizations for assistance in maintaining what they can. A wave of churches are partnering with their neighboring schools to donate instructional supplies, food, and clothing for students and their families. Businesses and organizations are picking up the tab for field trips,

equipment, and musical instruments. Schools primarily seek out partnerships for monetary reasons.

Direct benefits to students as a result of partnerships were mentioned, although not as often as those that provided monetary benefits. Twenty-three percent of the respondents shared partnerships that focused on exposing students through services in art and music during and after school. Three site administrators noted how their students were able to receive instruction in music that was not provided by the school or the district due to lack of funds. District level personnel, who then put the site administrators in touch with the organizations, in fact fostered these partnerships initially. Partnerships of this nature are greatly in need, as current funding crisis has caused school districts to do away with music programs.

Other partnerships that provide direct benefits were those that supported the school's instructional focus and improved campus life and culture. Respondents reported that organizations would come in and work directly with students on improving their academics. Volunteers came in and read books to classrooms, performed lessons, and gave demonstrations that related to their field or industry. The respondents also reported that respondents who lived in the community where they worked benefited from the natural partnerships that were created. One respondent shared the benefits her school received from existing partnerships:

It benefits our school greatly to get the education materials that we get from the Elks Club that comes, and they talk to the children about being successful and goal-setting and things of that nature to make sure that our children stay on the straight and narrow and focus towards achievement. The partnership with the

church group gives us a chance to stress to parents the importance of education; and they, in turn, can stress that to their children. (Respondent12)

**Challenges.** All of the respondents commented on the value of fostering partnerships, yet all of the respondents also expressed concerns regarding challenges they faced which hindered them in engaging the community. In recent years, site administrators have made the shift from managers to instructional leaders. High stakes accountability and reform efforts require site administrators to be in the classroom and heavily focused on instructional practices in the building. There is so much to do and such little time and resources to accomplish all that needs to. Respondents identified five major challenges they face in fostering community partnerships: (a) time restraints, (b) lack of training and preparation, (c) politics and policy, (d) sustainability, and (e) district support.

**Time constraints.** Forty percent of the respondents shared the following comments in regards to time restraints:

- I don't think that there's been a very large focus on trying to solicit more of a connection with the community in prior years. I think a lot of that just has to do with a lack of time. There's only 24 hours in a day, and there's usually only about 12 hours in a workday. (Respondent 19)
- I have a lot to do. I don't have time to talk to all of these people that come through the door. (Respondent 21)
- I think one thing that happens is we get very busy and that we feel as though going even off campus to, I don't know, to make those connections, because you've got, you're so busy with what's going on within your campus. It's kind of

hard, I feel, to just be reaching out, you know, timewise as you know.

(Respondent 10)

- I think time is an issue. You're feeling a little overwhelmed just about every day in your job, because it just takes you in so many different directions. I think that's one of the things that gets put on the back burner because you have so many issues that you have to address that, you know, seem to take precedent over that.

(Respondent 10)

Three respondents in their first year as a site administrator shared their experience with time restraint in engaging the community:

- That was actually the furthest thing from my mind, because when I first came here there was so much that needed to be done. There were not a lot of systems and procedures in place. My first year was mainly operational. The behavior of the kids was out of control, so I had to put in some kind of school-wide positive behavior support program. (Respondent 19)
- It's a tough thing to do, to bring them in. I find in my 6 months I haven't concentrated on that at all, because I don't have a chance to do that. I'm still in survival mode of getting through my job. (Respondent 17)
- In terms of the most critical stakeholders, the most critical people who are here on this campus are students, our staff, and our parents. Those have been my top three priorities over the first 6 months. Not that the community isn't, but I think just in terms of a prioritization and wanting to get off to a successful start with each of those three. I think that needs to happen before you can, say, jump straight in from a community standpoint. (Respondent 19)

**Lack of training and preparation.** Respondents were asked the question, “What if any, practical training did you receive that was most helpful in preparing you to involve the community?” Of the 98% of the respondents who attended an accredited credential program, all indicated that they were not prepared to reach out to community leaders. Respondents shared their preparation experiences in regards to their accredited credential program:

- There is nothing from a college standpoint that ever stood out. For me, I have a phenomenal elementary school principal who set the expectation bar of what a school should really be like. That’s been a real big driving force for me as a motivator. (Respondent 19)
- My administrative program coursework did not really touch on it much except for to talk a little bit about the fact that there are advantages to getting involved in that. I’ve learned probably from other administrators, watching them work, you know, “how did you get that at your school?” (Respondent 18).

A respondent who attended a University of California administrative credential program stated the following:

I didn’t think as an administrator that I was trained in how to foster community partnerships or go out and pull organizations into the school. I think that’s the biggest skill gap. I hadn’t really thought about that until I started answering your questions. It’s really interesting that if they want us to form these partnerships, it would be beneficial to have coursework at the university level when you are getting trained for your credential or even at the district level. If it’s a priority,

then help us along and give us those resources so we can make that a reality.

(Respondent 17)

All respondents have held interim positions as assistant principal that would have created a possibility for them to be engaged in the community, yet they were still unprepared to be a collaborative leader when they became principal. This shows that the assistant principal's role, one that would be a natural for training in this area, is not being utilized as such. There are a number of reasons for this. First, their principal might not be engaged in the community, or their principal might have been so engaged in the community that they took on that role without grooming their assistant principal, and assigned the assistant principal to other operational tasks.

Due to their lack of training and experience in engaging the community, respondents also expressed frustration in having to take on a public relations role they were not trained for. One respondent expressed, "While administrative programs need to do a better job of preparing potential site administrators for their role, a lot of it was just tapping into skills they didn't even realize they had" (Respondent 29). Another respondent shared, "The most helpful was on-the-job training with prior careers, my own background with my own family that was a family of entrepreneurs. It's nothing you can learn in a class" (Respondent 21).

**Politics and policy.** Thirty-seven percent of the respondents noted that politics and district policy can deter their partnership efforts. Each district has set school board policies on accepting gifts and donations. Certain projects performed by partners may also need approval from district level personnel and school boards. Respondents have commented on how current community and school board politics have created challenges

in partnership efforts being performed. For example, a community event can require administrators to deal with a number of compliance issues that turn off both the parents and community group. One respondent shared:

It doesn't have to be anything big. . . . There are relatively little things like having a photo release for kids that can hold up a community event. (Respondent 4)

The extra work involved with bringing the community into schools lead many of the respondents to think twice about engaging them. To that end, respondents expressed their opinions that more education on the policies and politics of a school is a must.

**Sustainability.** While short term collaborations designed to create immediate and visible outcomes are easy to build, long-term collaborations need to be nurtured. All of the respondents stated that they had not lost any partners that they are aware of; however, respondents that are new site administrators admit that they often do not know the school's existing community partners when they come on board. They often find out about their partners through word of mouth or teachers advocating for a certain group to come in.

Twenty-seven percent of the respondents expressed that sustaining their hard won partnerships was a challenge, but that it's a challenge that they accept as site administrators. Three respondents shared these sentiments on sustaining partnerships:

- We as administrators need to be comfortable working with . . . other people who are not necessarily educators. We get in our educational circles and don't necessarily have the background to work with community groups. (Respondent 2)

- When I think of sustaining successful community partnerships, it has a lot to do with the personal relationships that you form with your liaisons. . . . I think that kind of sets the foundation to be able to work together in a supportive relationship. (Respondent 4)

There has to be willingness and an ability to engage the community as all stakeholders in the school, because the principal cannot do it alone. Administrators only have one viewpoint, and you need input from everyone in order to make the school the best place it can be. (Respondent 12)

**District support.** Thirty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that there was very limited district support. All of the respondents criticized limited availability of personnel and funding to support their efforts in engaging community partners and the complete lack of training they received. Respondents lamented that there were few networking opportunities and the ones that were offered, such as the Principal for a Day Program, was limited to once a year. Respondents did say they received information on potential community partners through monthly principal meetings, emails and flyers, but were provided no information on follow-up strategies.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

Four themes emerged from the data related to new site administrators' engagement with community partners: relationship building, knowledge and skills, community partnerships, and challenges. Each is discussed in the following subsections.

**Relationship building.** Findings revealed new site administrators valued their role as the key person responsible for relationship building, the first theme. As the new member of an existing community and school culture, these respondents viewed



relationships as important and as the foundation for collaborative work. Ninety percent of the respondents indicated they valued building relationships with community partners. Fifty-three percent of the respondents viewed themselves as public relations agents responsible for being the primary source for interfacing with the community in which they served.

**Knowledge and skills.** This was the second theme to emerge. Communication skills and building relationships were highly rated by 67% of the respondents. Demographic data revealed that 93% of the participants completed an accredited administrative credentialing program in a California university. All of the participants have held interim positions such as assistant principal and Title I coordinator. These positions are held outside of the classroom and often include quasi-administrative duties.

Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated the coursework they completed for their administrative credential did not specifically address engaging community partnerships. The focus was more on involving parents, and very little to no focus was on community partners. No course work description or title was recalled by any of the respondents that identified community partnerships as part of the administrative credential programs. Eighty percent of the respondents expressed that their training with community partnership was based on their own personal experiences and on-the-job training. Regarding their district, respondents noted that they received information on potential community partners through monthly principal meetings, emails, and flyers. No participants mentioned information on follow-up strategies or any local professional associations that could provide assistance and training.

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that there was very limited district support. All of the respondents criticized limited availability of personnel and funding to support their efforts in engaging community partners and the lack of training they received. Respondents lamented that there were few networking opportunities and what was offered, such as the Principal for a Day Program, was limited to once a year.

**Types of community partnerships.** For the third emerging theme, the data revealed that 93% of the respondents viewed their community partners as primarily their parents. On the other hand, 2 of the 30 respondents fully described their community partnerships as involving community members such as churches and law enforcement agencies. Ninety-three percent of the respondents stated that they continued any existing partnerships. None of the respondents indicated they had lost any partnerships that existed prior to their assignment. Respondents continued with the partnerships because of the monetary and direct benefits to students and the school. Data showed partnerships existed with churches, law enforcement agencies, non-profit organizations, civic leaders, and businesses.

**Challenges.** Challenges were the fourth emerging theme. Five major challenges arose for new site administrators were (a) time restraints, (b) lack of training and preparation, (c) politics and policy, (d) sustainability, and (e) district support. Forty percent of the respondents shared the view that time restraints have made it difficult for fostering community partnerships to be a priority in their daily work. Three first-year site administrators revealed that fostering community partnerships was challenging because their first priorities were to know their staff, lead daily operations, assume accountability, and maintain a safe campus. In addition to time restraints, 98% of the respondents

indicated that they were not prepared for community outreach as part of their administrative preparation program. Thirty percent of the respondents further stated that district policies and politics do not align with current practices of fostering community partnerships and collaboration, thus impeding their efforts to establish and sustain community partnerships.

The interview responses provided an in-depth look at the practices of new site administrators in fostering community partnerships. Further analysis of the data revealed three of the new site administrators had not entered the collaboration's life cycle. These new site administrators were within their first 12 months in the position of principal. They expressed a need to collaborate but felt that they were constrained in the current high-stakes accountability era to focus on testing targets. At some point during the interview, each remarked on the ever-present need to meet the state and federal academic growth targets.

The remaining 93% of the new site administrators' practices suggest that they are operating primarily in Phase I and beginning further phases of Rubin's collaboration life cycle. In Phase I new site administrators were able to determine why there was a need to collaborate based on the goals they sought to achieve. They have determined that they are the *institutional worry* committed to leading the collaboration charge. Furthermore, these new site administrators have exhibited some of Rubin's behaviors in Phase II, such as engaging in short-term or itinerant collaborations. Considering the nature and types of collaborations reported by the respondents, none of the new site administrators operated beyond Phase II, such as creating a strategic plan for collaboration that recruits partners,

develops an action plan, and maintains collaborative relationships. They appeared unaware of any strategic and systemic process of collaborating.

## Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Summary

**Statement of the problem and purpose.** Despite research and laws supporting the importance and benefits of community involvement in the education process, Marcos et al.'s (2009) study suggests that new site administrators may begin their new role without the knowledge and skills to engage the larger community in the education process at their site. They also may not receive support from upper administration at their district in this endeavor. However, no research has focused on the new site administrators' perceptions of their role and the knowledge and skills they actually possess and need in order to effectively engage the community. Literature is especially lacking in qualitative studies that focus on the site administrator's role in building relationships between schools and the community. Hence, there was a need for a study in this area.

The purpose of this study was to investigate new site administrators' perceptions of the term *community involvement*, their role to engage the local community members as partners in their school, their preparation and support to work with their communities, and their challenges on-the-job with community engagement. This study also examined new site administrators' perceptions and needs to better understand what tools are necessary to help them create thriving community partnerships. It is important to understand new site administrators' perceptions and needs regarding community engagement in order to create an impetus for change in administrative credentialing programs' curricula and school district level support.

**Research methodology.** The research methods used for this study were descriptive and qualitative. The researcher used semi-structured long interviews to investigate new site administrators' perceptions of their role of engaging the local community members as partners. Site administrators selected for this study was a purposeful sample employing criterion and snowball sampling strategies.

To achieve the purpose of this study, data was collected from 30 new site administrators during November 2011 and March 2012. The researcher interviewed new site administrators. Digitally recorded semi-structured interviews were held either face-to-face or by phone. Interviews ranged in duration from 30 minutes to an hour and a half.

The interview protocol guided the collection of the data to answer the research questions designed for this study. Data collected was transcribed and analyzed. Eight doctoral students from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology were trained by the principal researcher to code the data.

Respondents in this study were from school districts within Orange, Los Angeles, San Diego and Kern Counties: 46.6% of the respondents served in an elementary school in Los Angeles County, 46.6% in Orange County, 3% in Kern County, and 3% in San Diego County. Women comprised of 63% of the population, and men the remaining 36%. Respondents represented a diverse population with 50% Caucasian, 23% Hispanic, 20% African American, 3% Asian, 3% who declined to state. This study's population was new elementary site administrators who have worked in the position of principals for 4 years or less.

In answer to their years in the principalship, 30% of the respondents answered that they were in their fourth year, 16% responded that they were in their third year, 13%

responded that they were in their second year, 26% in their first year, and 10% responded that they had been site administrators for less than 7 months. For credentials, 90% of the elementary principals interviewed held an Administrative Services Credential granted by CTC and 10% were granted state licensure through alternative methods such as achieving a passing score on the California Preliminary Administrative Credential Examination (CPACE) or through interstate license.

**Summary of findings.** Four themes emerged from the data related to new site administrators' engagement with community partners: relationship building, knowledge and skills, community partnerships, and challenges. Findings revealed new site administrators valued their role as the key person responsible for relationship building, the first theme. As the new member of an existing community and school culture, these respondents viewed relationships as important and as the foundation for collaborative work. Ninety percent of the respondents indicated they valued building relationships with community partners. Fifty-three percent of the respondents viewed themselves as public relations agents responsible for being the primary source for interfacing with the community in which they served.

The second theme to emerge was knowledge and skills. Communication skills and building relationships were highly rated by 67% of the respondents. All of the participants have held interim positions such as assistant principal and Title I coordinator. These positions are held outside of the classroom and often include quasi-administrative duties. Demographic data revealed that 90% of the participants completed an accredited administrative credentialing program in a California university. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents indicated the coursework they completed for their administrative

credential did not specifically address engaging community partnerships. Eighty percent of the respondents expressed that their training was based on their own personal experiences and on-the-job training. Regarding their district, respondents noted that they received information on potential community partners through monthly principal meetings, emails and flyers. None mentioned information on follow-up strategies or any local professional associations that could provide assistance and training. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that there was very limited district support. All of the respondents criticized limited availability of personnel and funding to support their efforts in engaging community partners and the lack of training they received. Respondents lamented that there were few networking opportunities.

The third emerging theme was types of community partnerships. The data revealed that 93% of the respondents viewed their community partners as primarily their parents. Data showed partnerships existed with churches, law enforcement agencies, non-profit organizations, civic leaders, and businesses. Ninety-three percent of the respondents revealed they continued any existing partnerships. None of the respondents indicated they had lost any partnerships that existed prior to their assignment. Respondents continued with the partnerships because of the monetary and direct benefits to students and the school.

The fourth emerging theme was challenges. Five major challenges arose for new site administrators: (a) time restraints, (b) lack of training and preparation, (c) politics and policy, (d) sustainability, and (e) district support. Forty percent of the respondents shared that time restraints have made it difficult for fostering community partnerships to be a priority in their daily work. Three first-year site administrators revealed that fostering



community partnerships was challenging because their first priorities were to know their staff, lead daily operations, assume accountability, and maintain a safe campus. In addition to time restraints, 98% of the respondents indicated that they were not prepared for community outreach as part of their administrative preparation program. Thirty percent of the respondents further reveal district policies and politics do not align with current practices of fostering community partnerships and collaboration, thus impeding their efforts to establish and sustain community partnerships.

The interview responses provided an in-depth look at the practices of new site administrators in fostering community partnerships. Further analysis of the data revealed three of the new site administrators have not entered the Collaboration's Life Cycle. These new site administrators are within their first 12 months in the position of principal. They expressed a need to collaborate but felt that they were constrained in the current high-stakes accountability era to focus on testing targets. At some point during the interview, each remarked on the ever-present need to meet the state and federal academic growth targets.

The remaining 93% of the new site administrators' practices suggest that they are operating primarily in Phase I and beginning further phases of Rubin's collaboration life cycle. In Phase I new site administrators were able to determine why there was a need to collaborate based on the goals they sought to achieve. They have determined that they are the ones responsible for and committed to leading the collaboration charge. Furthermore, these new site administrators have exhibited some of Rubin's behaviors in Phase II, such as engaging in short-term or itinerant collaborations. Considering the nature and types of collaborations reported by the respondents, none of the new site

administrators operated beyond Phase II, such as creating a strategic plan for collaboration that recruits partners, develops an action plan, and maintains community partnerships. They appeared unaware of any strategic and systemic process of collaborating.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study revealed the perceptions of currently practicing new site administrators on their role in engaging the local community and whether they feel they are prepared to do so. Based upon the findings of this study, the following seven conclusions were drawn.

**Conclusion 1: New site administrators possess a limited concept of community partnerships.** When asked questions during the interview that pertained to engaging the community, 93% of the respondents initially referred specifically to involving parents in their school. One respondent stated, “When I’m thinking about my community I’m including my parents and parental involvement” (Respondent 10). However, two respondents initially responded that they engaged the community through community partnerships comprised of businesses and other community agencies. The responses of 28 respondents indicate that site administrators do not have an understanding of the full definition and practices of school, family, and community partnerships.

The misinterpretation of the term *community partnership* can be explained as caused by the fact that the literature on the importance of school, family, and community involvement places little emphasis on community partnerships. For example, NCLB legislation mandates parent and community involvement but does not make the

distinction between parent and community. This law references school-family-community, apparently treating community as an afterthought. The law does not specify recipients to seek out partnerships beyond the parents. Epstein and others in the literature purport the term *community partnerships* as more encompassing than *parental involvement* because parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for student learning and development. However, in Epstein's (2006) six types of involvement, five of the six types emphasize parental involvement, whereas only one type focuses specifically on the community at large.

Other indications from research on the lack of the understanding of community partnerships may be due to the level of understanding at the central office. Research has largely examined school-family-community partnerships at the site level and not at the central office level (Mawhinney & Smrekar, 1996). In these studies, the central office was often portrayed as impeding collaborative efforts because of their unintentionally conflicting policy and procedures. Central office administrators also lacked an understanding of the practices and collaborations taking place at the site level. This lack of knowledge did not contribute to the advancement of the development of policies that incorporated feedback from site level administrators.

A democratic society's community should encompass the members of the community beyond the school walls (Dewey, 1916/1944). Capra (2002) states that successful site administrators have values and a vision that extends into the community. Some site administrators are so focused on their campus that they are blinded to life outside their school walls. A shift in focus on community collaboration efforts in

literature, academia, and school districts will bring about more of an awareness of school-community partnerships.

This study concurs with Blank et al. (2003) study. This study discusses differences in philosophy and approach across fields and the lack of knowledge among community partners about the unique character and culture of collaboration and community schools.

**Conclusion 2: New site administrators perceive their role is to be the leader and interface between the school and the community.** All of the respondents felt themselves to be the leader in setting the tone for their school and to be responsible for engaging the community. Site administrators primarily are responsible for and essential for the leadership and growth of any collaborative efforts and school reform (Fullan, 2006; Goodlad, 1969; Rubin, 2009; Sergiovanni, 1994). They further indicated that it is their role to lead the efforts in fostering community partnerships. In addition, 53% perceived they must act as public relation officers promoting their school within the community. As public relation agents they must be able to network, build relationships, communicate, and follow up.

The importance of leadership in initiating and fostering community engagement is supported in the literature. Many researchers who study the subject see community engagement as the key measure of success for an educational leader (Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003). In their research, Purkey and Smith (1983) found that studies consistently identified site administrator leadership as an important characteristic of effectively collaborating schools.

Site administrators are responsible for the leadership and growth of their site (Fullan, 2006; Goodlad, 1969; Sergiovanni, 2004). Any reform efforts must be guided and supported by the site administrator in order for it to be successful. Fullan (2001) argued that school site administrators have always been, and perhaps are more so today, critical in determining the fate of any school reform. Site administrator leadership can bring the school community together, generating greater input into the decision-making process by developing networks among individuals throughout the school community (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

There are some similarities between the respondents' descriptions of their leadership role and those described by scholars (Fullan, 2001; Purkey & Smith, 1985). As site administrators, the respondents describe this role as one that communicates the school's vision and mission, leads reform efforts, and engages their stake-holders in the decision-making process according to state mandates. However, the respondents' overwhelming responses to parents as their community still implies that their leadership capabilities are not focused in extending beyond parents to the community.

**Conclusion 3: New site administrators value building school-community partnerships.** During the interview, with the discussion focusing on building community partnerships, all of the respondents indicated that they value community partnerships at their site. In addition, 90% of the respondents commented on the need to build personal relationships in order to foster and sustain community partnerships. In addition, 67% of the respondents stressed that the site administrator must be the key person to foster and be accessible to community partners. "It's important that every school site administrator know how to nurture and grow relationships with community

partners” (Respondent 8). The findings suggest that new site administrators believe that local community partnerships would assist their school. These findings support the work of scholars (Brooks & Kavanaugh, 1999; Henderson & Mapp 2002). These scholars discuss how educators believe that relationships with community stakeholders create greater opportunities for support and learning, provide new resources, and give additional help to increase educational opportunities for students.

Educational leaders understand that they shape the framework of a school’s culture and that it is their job to promote learning, collaboration, and environments that make their community members feel cared for and respected. As they begin to foster relationships within the community, they must be able to manage the relationships as a collaborative leader (Rubin, 2009).

**Conclusion 4: New site administrators lacked academic and on-the-job preparation to work with community partnerships.** None of the respondents recalled any academic course or activity that focused on building community partnerships. In response to their academic course work for their administrative program, one respondent reported they had not received any training, mentorship, or administrative coursework on how to engage the community (Respondent 15). Another respondent reported that the administrative preparation program included coursework on the budget, human resources, and other basic courses, but not on engaging the community (Respondent 1). The analysis of the common themes revealed two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they possessed some skills in fostering partnerships. All respondents reported that they did not have academic training on community partnership development and maintenance. These respondents shared that their skills working with community partners were honed

while serving in positions in service-oriented organizations and non-educational positions, and undergraduate fieldwork experiences. Five respondents shared that they learned ways to establish community partnerships from other principals while serving in interim positions such as assistant principal. These respondents expressed an understanding that many of the skill sets they have learned during their administrative work, such as how to be personable, how to be an effective communicator, how to think creatively, how to be an effective research and developer. All these skill sets must come into play if they are going to be successful.

Fifty-three percent of the respondents stated that today's site administrators must not only possess the skills needed to be an effective instructional leader on their campus but must be able to engage the broader community through effective communication and articulating their shared vision to the community. The present generation of site administrators are required by law to engage parents and the surrounding community; however, they may not be prepared with the knowledge and skills to engage them (Marcos et al., 2009). Analysis of the data further revealed that although the respondents possess some of the skills of a collaborative leader, they were unaware of the strategic and systematic process of collaboration.

According to NAESP (2002), one of the six standards identified as essential principal duties is to actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success. Chadwick (2003) addresses the difficulties administrators face in trying to achieve this standard. She notes site administrators' difficulty in finding the time to facilitate the community engagement process. She also notes the need to find out if there is support for community engagement and if previous engagement exists.

An analysis of the findings reveals new site administrators possess few of the skill sets Rubin (2009) speaks of in his book *Collaborative Leadership*. Rubin states that the skill sets needed to be a successful collaborative leader and create strong community partnerships are usually acquired outside of schooling. His conceptual framework defines collaborative leadership and the process of collaboration. Collaborative leaders must have good interpersonal and communication skills that allow them to share their vision to their stakeholders. In addition, Rubin suggests that leaders be able to (a) have good organizational management skills; (b) be able to effectively manage their school community as well as their community partnerships; and (c) show their commitment, integrity, and vision, in ways that keep others committed to the partnership.

Rubin's (2009) collaboration's life cycle model describes 14 phases of collaboration and 25 dimensions (or skill sets) of collaborative leadership. The nature of each of the 25 dimensions are competencies that should be present to varying degrees in the partners comprising the partnership. Without such knowledge and skills, administrators lack successful methods to involve the larger community (Epstein, 2001).

**Conclusion 5: New site administrators report many challenges in forming community partners.** Five major challenges that emerged from the data are (a) time restraints, (b) lack of training and preparation, (c) politics and policy, (d) sustainability, and (e) district support faced by new site administrators. The first challenge was time. Forty percent of the respondents indicated that time restraints made it difficult to place fostering community partnerships as a high priority. Finding the time amongst other highly prioritized operational tasks was not an apparent option to new site administrators, especially first year administrators.



In addition to time restraints, 98% of the respondents admitted they did not feel they had received adequate training to prepare them for outreach to community partners. 37% of respondents shared negative experiences with politics and their district policies they encountered while in the process of developing community partnerships. These challenges have led to frustrations amongst new site administrators.

As Dryfoos (2003) points out, “collaboration is hard work: it takes endless time, meetings, patience, and understanding” (p. 54). In her research, Chadwick (2003) addresses the difficulties that educational leaders face in juggling their responsibility to their school community and the community as a whole. She states that for administrators, finding time in their busy schedules to facilitate the community engagement process is a definite challenge that requires a lot of preparation.

The pressures of time restraints, lack of skills and knowledge, and being a site administrator in a high-stake accountability era overshadows any ideas or goals in developing community partnerships for new site administrators. In a personal conversation with H. Rubin, he states, “All the forces and expectations that are placed on principals cannot be done by one person” (personal communication, August 8, 2012). Since few principals are trained to develop community partners and most lack knowledge and skills to efficiently develop such partnerships, external partnership building may seem to be time-consuming. Therefore, he noted that building community partnerships will assume a low priority for many principals. This statement is supported by the findings that the new site administrators reported that establishing new community partnerships was not “on their radar screen.” Rather, these new administrators shared that their experiences within the first year dealt primarily with getting to know their

school faculty and parent community. These new site administrators indicated that they initially focused on being an instructional leader as well as attending to daily operational tasks and safety.

Thirty percent of the respondents further reveal district policies and politics do not align with current practices of fostering community partnerships and collaboration, thus impeding their efforts to establish and sustain community partnerships. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents noted that politics and district policy can deter their partnership efforts. Each district has set school board policies on accepting gifts and donations. Certain projects performed by partners may also need approval from district level personnel and school boards. Respondents have commented that another way current community and school board politics have created challenges in partnership efforts being performed is that a community event can require administrators to deal with a number of compliance issues that lead to disinterest in both the parents and community group.

**Conclusion 6: Accredited administrative preparation programs have not prepared site administrators to conduct programs and practices of school, family, and community partnership.** Respondents in this study do not feel they have adequately been prepared to engage the local community. Twenty-eight of the 30 respondents completed a credential program accredited by the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing to be granted an Administrative Services Credential. Two of the 30 respondents were granted Administrative Services Credentials through alternative methods. However, all respondents who completed a credential program were not able to recall a specific course title or curriculum that addressed community partnerships. They

did note the mention of parental involvement occurred, but none on community partnerships. One respondent shared his sentiments regarding his pre-service experience:

I didn't think as an administrator that I was trained in how to foster community partnerships or go out and pull organizations into the school. I think that's the biggest skill gap. (Respondent 17)

Early administrator preparation programs focused on instruction and curriculum (Sharp & Walter, 1997). Administrator preparation does a thorough job (a) of preparing future site administrators for accountability with a focus on instruction, curriculum, and data analysis, as well as (b) to develop effective classroom management skills. Yet these programs only give minimal attention to parental and community involvement.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), study after study has shown that the training site administrators typically receive in university programs and from their own districts does not do nearly enough to prepare them for their roles as leaders of learning in many aspects. In a study titled "Prospects for Change: Preparing Educators for School, Family, and Community Partnerships," Epstein and Sanders (2006) report similar findings when they surveyed a sample of 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) in the United States. In this study SCDE leaders reported that their most recent graduates were not well prepared to conduct programs and practices of school, family, and community partnerships. Only 19.1% graduating from SCDEs strongly agreed that the new principals graduating from their SCDEs were well prepared to conduct partnership programs. According to these education leaders, their current courses and content coverage were not adequately preparing new professional educators to work with students' families and communities (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). The

findings in the present study supported this earlier finding, in that 28 of the 30 respondents reported they did not recall a full course covering community partnerships.

**Conclusion 7: New site administrators suggested ways school district and professional associations could provide training to develop community partnerships for incoming and continuing site administrators.** A common response amongst respondents was that districts did not provide opportunities for additional training in the area of fostering community partnerships. They explained how their superintendent's position in the community should guide and support their work for community partnerships for their schools. They described how superintendents are able to seek and attract community partnerships that match the focus of the school district, hence matching with appropriate site administrator and schools. Respondents who indicated their superintendents had a strong interest in establishing partnerships were able to benefit from those partnerships. Interest and active participation from school superintendents in engaging the community may have a direct impact on the number and level of partnerships a school may have. Four of the respondents received strong support from their school superintendent or district. Respondents that were part of this level of establishing community partnerships provided a rich and in-depth account of the partnerships that not only existed at their site but within the district. In addition they observed how their superintendent effectively established partnerships, which set the tone and modeled the expectations in establishing and sustaining partnerships in their district.

Most respondents reported minimal support from district level in the form of providing information during principal meetings or from emails regarding partnerships available, with no instruction on networking or follow-up. Respondents did mention that

programs such as Principal for a Day gave them the opportunity to network or seek partnerships as part of the event. Others received support with the assistance of additional personnel such as community liaisons and Title I coordinators.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, as well as suggestions from new site administrators for next steps, the researcher proposes the recommendations in the following paragraphs.

**Recommendation 1.** School districts should include creating a collaborative culture and community partnerships as a key focus in the district's vision, mission, and strategic plan. The researcher recommends school districts include creating community partnerships as a key focus in their vision and mission statements. A strategic plan is developed and aligned with the vision and mission statements to guide the action of the school board, superintendent, and employees. School districts must have a common understanding of what community partnerships are. When a district decides that community partnerships are a primary focus, others in the organization will find it important as well.

District policies and procedures must be reviewed and aligned to goals on community partnerships. The inclusion of site level administrators and their feedback in the development of policies and procedures helps to ensure there is a clear understanding and vision of the system of collaboration that all personnel are operating from. Central office staff is often not aware of the collaborations that take place at the site level, and they have valuable knowledge and experiences that should be included in the process.

**Recommendation 2.** Site administrators become effective collaborative leaders with the community. Rubin, in a personal communication (August 8, 2012), suggested that collaborative leaders first must be able to both authentically see and articulate the rationale and the self interest for collaboration. He further suggests effective collaborative leaders create an internal culture of collaboration within their school site. In doing so, site administrators become the recruiter, listener, and guide for engaging their staff in building a culture inside their school in which collaboration is valued both in the classroom and in the larger community.

To support new site administrators in their efforts in creating a collaborative culture internally and externally, Rubin (2009) offers tools to reflect on where they are as a collaborative leader (see Figure 5). The 25 dimensions of collaborative leadership are skills sets that may serve as the starting point for self-assessment, targets for self-improvement, and skills principals will look for in the partners they aim to recruit in collaborating (Rubin, 2009). These skill-sets further allow the leader to reflect, inform, and implement collaboration as part of their daily activity. Each dimension (or skill set) should be present to varying degrees in the partners comprising collaboration, if the collaboration is to succeed (Rubin, 2009).

The researcher recommends professional development trainers and higher education programs use these competencies as a framework to begin to develop curricula for teaching the skills of collaborative leadership. In order to prepare administrators to understand and implement community partnerships, the researcher recommends higher education programs include required coursework on partnerships. Professional associations such as ACSA may use these competencies to develop academies for new

and practicing educational leaders. The academies should be relevant, explore a variety of topics in school-community partners, and be led by exemplary educational leaders currently practicing collaboration and school-community partnerships.

The researcher also recommends the use of current technology resources to continue the dialogue of the participants of this study and other site administrators in the reflection and persistent development in becoming a collaborative leader.

**Recommendation 3.** School district leaders and professional organizations must support site administrators in developing effective community partnerships. New site administrators often times do not feel strong in their networking skills, but they must hone them if they are going to be successful in creating successful community partners. Hiatt-Michael (2006) recognizes that more professional development is needed in these areas. Site administrators need to be afforded more opportunities with district support and guidance to practice their networking skills more often. District leaders and professional organizations may provide support by developing and implementing workshops and trainings that provide currently practicing site administrators with the skills and strategies they need in order to engage the community. In designing these workshops and trainings, professional developers must take into consideration where site administrators are in their practice and understanding of engaging the community. The concerned-based adoption model (CBAM) provides a framework that identifies and provides ways to assess the concerns of participants based on the model's seven levels (Hall & Hord, 2010). The findings from this study suggest that site administrators are at Level 1 (informational). At the informational level, professional development participants seek information about the innovation. Often times we skip the concerns of

the participants and jump to the how-do-we-do-it during professional development. Professional development designed with the CBAM model in mind ensures that site administrators would receive professional development that meets their needs at each stage of their learning in how to engage the community.

It is also recommended that site administrators identify their barriers to success. They should take time to reflect on their current skills and knowledge, then develop a plan to gain further skills. Site administrators may take advantage of social media. The use of social media may alleviate any fears or barriers that a face-to-face meeting presents. This medium also, if managed properly, could help with getting around time restraints.

**Recommendation 4.** Findings from this study should be disseminated to school districts, counties, colleges, department of education, professional associations, accrediting agencies, and policymakers. Findings from this study should be disseminated to school districts in the state, colleges, California Department of Education (CDE), California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and other policy makers such as Coalition of Community Schools (CCS) to inform them of the current situation experienced by new site administrators in their effort to foster collaborative efforts in this emerging era of school, family, and community involvement and full-service community schools.

School districts, colleges, and departments of education will find this study valuable as they plan and develop a structure for collaborative work and school community partnerships in schools. The districts will be able to begin to plan



professional development and trainings at the district level to support site administrators in developing and sustaining partnerships. It is recommended that ACSA use the findings from this study to help include this topic in professional development in the form of workshops and trainings. It is recommend that ACSA design an academy targeting a solid foundation of training in collaborative leadership for community schools as more schools and districts move towards this goal. WASC would use this study to infuse expectations of a collaborative leader and community involvement as part of the accreditation process. This will further encourage and force schools and staff to focus on community involvement as described in this study.

**Recommendation 5.** School districts through the superintendent's office should promote an effective action team for partnerships in every school. Everyone with an interest in students' success has a role to play in developing productive partnerships. Findings from the present study have shown that one principal alone cannot create a comprehensive and lasting program for partnership activities. Site administrators must enlist other teachers, staff, parents, and community members to foster community partnerships. This researcher recommends an ATP be created at the district and site levels. District leaders play an important role in determining whether and how well schools develop and maintain successful programs of community involvement. The development of a district level ATPs will lead to a shared understanding and a plan of action in how community partnerships will be supported and fostered at the district and site levels. The creation of an ATP will help schools sites foster and sustain community partnerships. The ATP may be a subcommittee of the school site council, the instructional leadership team, or the local parent group at the site. The ATP is

responsible for writing and implementing plans for partnerships to produce desired results for community partnerships. The ATP works together to review the school's goals; select, design, implement, and evaluate partnership activities; and improve partnership practices. The ATP can support the site administrator in fostering community partnerships through a collective effort.

**Recommendation 6.** Institutions of higher education should adhere to state credentialing mandates to include basic level academic knowledge regarding importance of community partnerships. There is an ongoing debate amongst leaders in higher education about the best and most feasible ways to improve the preparation of future administrators to conduct partnerships. Research studies recommend that full, required courses are needed so that all students obtain coherent and comprehensive coverage of partnership topics. Others recommend integrating or infusing partnership topics within many other courses that prepare educators for their profession (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). New site administrators were not able to identify a full course within their credential preparation program with the specific content of school community partnerships. Some did note that parental involvement was covered, and they were more prepared to involve parents. This study suggests the course content should provide a comprehensive in depth look at school, family, and community partnerships.

**Recommendation 7.** School districts and administrator associations should provide on-the-job workshops and events to promote community partnerships. The support of the school district and its superintendent plays an important role in establishing community partnerships at the site level. The data gathered from respondents show there is very limited support new site administrators receive. This

study's respondents provided several suggestions they felt would be useful for school districts to implement to support new and currently practicing site administrators in fostering community partnerships. Respondents indicated having a district level person designated to serve as a liaison between community partners and schools would help with seeking out new community partners and matching them with perspective schools and site administrators. The researcher suggests the position already situated to serve as the liaison may perhaps be the chief communications officer. The chief communications officer is the person responsible for communicating news and information regarding the district to the community. The liaison would coordinate activities and events that would engage the community at the district and site level, thus creating a district-wide culture of collaboration and community partnerships. In addition, the liaison would provide consistent communication with the community regarding the partnerships, thereby acknowledging partners and encouraging others to participate in district endeavors.

At the site level, site administrators new to the school site should participate in a transition meeting with the outgoing administrator to share information on existing partnerships and efforts that have taken place thus far. This would also be a good opportunity for site administrators to share information about the school's surrounding community. Site administrators should be provided a tool kit that contains templates for written communications to use to inform potential partners about the district and the school while inviting them to become partners. A telephone script or guide was also recommended to use when making initial contacts with partners (Respondent 2). The most important recommendation from new site administrators was for districts and administrator agencies to design trainings and workshops on fostering community

partnerships. Respondents indicated they would benefit from such professional growth. Professional development should occur for new site administrators as well as currently practicing administrators. Professional growth activities should allow the participants to leave with practical strategies that will allow them to engage in community partnerships right away. A plan for professional development will be instrumental at the state and local levels as more schools and districts shift to becoming more collaborative and working with schools.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following recommendations can be used to add to the body of knowledge regarding community partnerships:

- Replicate this study with in different geographic and socioeconomic areas or educational levels (secondary) that may reveal similar findings.
- Replicate this study with site administrators with more than 5 years of experience.
- Replicate this study with site administrators serving in private and charter school systems.
- Conduct a study on the extent to which graduates from an administrative credentialing program accredited by CTC are prepared to effectively involve community partners (a) upon completing a full course on partnerships or by accumulating knowledge and skills or (b) as topics are infused in many courses.
- Recognizing there is a lack of literature in these areas, one can begin to discuss the need for more research and training methods by which site administrators can better engage the community.

By thinking in new ways about school, family, and community partnerships, researchers will continue to increase knowledge about partnerships, and educators will improve policy and practices (Epstein, 2006).

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## APPENDIX A

## Recruitment Letter

Dear Administrator,

My name is Denise Calvert-Bertrand and I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University working on my dissertation. Under Dr. Diana B. Hiatt-Michael, my faculty advisor, I am working on a research study about new site administrators serving in the position of elementary principal. This study will focus on your perception of your new position and your capability to work with the local community.

I enthusiastically invite you to participate in this voluntary study. Your participation will consist of an interview where you will be asked 11 questions regarding engaging the local community as partners in your school and what you feel prepared you to do so. This study will require one meeting for approximately 45 minutes. This meeting may occur at place of your choice, a location that is free of external distractions.

If you would like to participate in this study, please confirm your participation via phone or email. Thank you for your participation. Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Denise Calvert-Bertrand  
Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy Doctoral Candidate  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Pepperdine University

## APPENDIX B

## Participant Consent Form

This research project is conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a dissertation study from the Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy doctoral program at Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology. The purpose of this research project entitled “New Site Administrators’ Perception of their Job and the Local Community” is to investigate new site administrators’ perceptions of their role in engaging the local community as partners in their school and what site administrators feel they are trained to do. Participants in this study currently hold a site administrator position as a principal at the elementary level within my first four years in the position.

This study is strictly voluntary. This study will require one meeting for approximately 45 minutes. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. Each response obtained by the participants will be completely confidential. Participants will be assigned a code to ensure their confidentiality. Names and any demographic data will be kept separately from interview transcriptions. The tapes and transcripts will be used for research purposes only, and once the study is completed will be stored in a locked file cabinet and or on a password protected computer. All data and supporting documents will be destroyed, electronically deleted, or shredded by the primary researcher after the fifth year of storage.

Participants may refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from, the study at any time without prejudice to my current or future standing as an administrator. In the event, I experience fatigue or need to take a short break one will be granted to me. There might be times that the researcher may find it necessary to end my study participation.

There is no direct benefit from participation in this study; however, the benefits to the profession may include: (1) further insight about community involvement in schools; (2) further knowledge about site administrators role in developing and sustaining community partnerships; (3) further exploration into administrative preparation courses in California (4) further information for school districts on providing support to site administrators in developing community partnerships.

I understand that if I have any questions regarding the study procedures, I can contact Denise Bertrand at [REDACTED] to get answers to my questions. If I have further questions, I may contact Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael at [REDACTED]. If I have further questions, I may contact Dr. Yuying Tsong, Chairperson of Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

I understand the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have



received a copy of this informed consent, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research study described above.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

---

Principal Investigator

---

Date

## APPENDIX C

## Interview Protocol

## New Elementary Site Administrator Interview

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Code: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Denise Calvert-Bertrand. I am working on an approved research study at Pepperdine University under the direction of Dr. Diana B. Hiatt-Michael. This study is designed to gather data from new elementary site administrators in the position of elementary principal within their first four years in the position on their perceptions of working with the local community.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project and taking time from your busy schedule. Before we begin the interview, I would like to reassure you that this interview will be confidential. I will record this interview to use as data for coding and analysis. The electronic audio file and transcripts will only be available to me. Do you mind if I record the interview? If there is anything you don't want me to record just let me know and I will turn off the recorder.

Excerpts from this interview may be part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report. Do you have any questions at this time?

Is it all right for me to turn on the recorder?

**Background**

I would like to gather background information regarding you and your position.

*Do you mind sharing your age?*

25-30                      31-35                      36-40                      41-45                      46-50                      51-55                      56+

*What ethnicity do you identify with most?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Do you live in the community (city/county) you work in?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Do you have any church or community affiliations in the community you work in?*

*How long have you been an elementary site administrator?*

At this site? \_\_\_\_\_ Other elementary site? \_\_\_\_\_ (name/how long/location)

In this district? \_\_\_\_\_ Other district? \_\_\_\_\_ Other State \_\_\_\_\_

What administrative credential program did you attend? \_\_\_\_\_

What credentials do you hold granted by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC)?

---

What educational interim positions (assistant principal, Title I Coordinator, etc.) have you held prior to your position as site administrator?

### **Interview**

Question 1. What is your perception of the role site administrators play in fostering community partnerships?

Question 2. What skills and knowledge does an administrator need to develop and sustain community partnerships?

What skills and knowledge helped you in developing and sustaining community partnerships?

If none, what skills and knowledge do you feel would help a new administrator in developing and sustaining community partnerships?

Question 3. What, if any, practical training did you receive that was most helpful in preparing you to involve the community?

- Field experience, administrative program coursework, mentors, and trainings?

Question 4. What, if any, support do you receive from your district in developing and sustaining community partnerships?

What does this support look like?

- Training, personnel, funding, networking

How are they advertised to site administrators?

How often?

What other professional development activities have you participated in focusing on community partnerships?

*Question 5. When you began your new position, what community partnerships existed?*

How did you know (evidence)?

Have you lost any partners? Why?

If none, then how did you get the community involved or how do you plan to do this?

*Question 6. What event/factors prompted you to work with the new or existing partners?*

What benefits did you see from these events/factors in developing partnerships?

*Question 7. As a site administrator, what obstacles do you face when developing and sustaining community partnerships?*

How can these obstacles/barriers be overcome?

*Is there anything else you would like to offer along the lines of community involvement and partnerships?*

## APPENDIX D

## Participant Demographic Information

Respondent Code	Date of Interview	County	Ethnicity	Years as Principal	Administration Preparation Program	Credentials Held
1	12/13/2011	Orange County	Hispanic	4	California State University	MS, BCLAD Reading Specialist Admin II
2	12/15/2011	Los Angeles County	African American	2	California State University	MS, CLAD Admin II
3	12/15/2011	Orange County	Hispanic	3	California State University	MS, CLAD Admin II
4	12/12/2011	Orange County	Caucasian	1	University of California	MS, BCLAD Admin II
5	12/16/2011	Los Angeles County	African American	1	Private University in California	MS CLAD Admin II
6	1/22/2012	Orange County	Hispanic	1	Private University in California	MS, BCLAD
7	1/12/2012	Orange County	Hispanic	4	California State University	Life MS Admin II
8	1/12/2012	Orange County	Hispanic	4	Private University in California	MS, BCLAD Admin II
9	1/12/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	1	Private University in California	MS, CLAD Admin II
10	1/13/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	4	California State University	MS, CLAD Admin. II Arizona K-12 Cred.
11	1/16/2012	Los Angeles County	No Response	3	Private University in California	MS, CLAD Admin. II
12	1/18/2012	Los Angeles County	African American	4	University of California	MS, CLAD Admin II
13	1/19/2012	Orange County	Korean	1.5	California State University	MS, CLAD Admin II

<b>Respondent Code</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years as Principal</b>	<b>Administration Preparation Program</b>	<b>Credentials Held</b>
14	1/19/2012	Los Angeles County	Caucasian	4	Private University in California	MS, CLAD Admin II
15	1/23/2012	Orange County	Hispanic	14 months	University of California	MS,BCLAD Admin II PSS
16	1/25/2012	Los Angeles County	Caucasian	2	Private University in California	MS, CLAD Admin. II
17	1/27/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	6 months	Private University in California	MS CLAD-Waiver Admin II
18	2/2/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	4	Private University in California	Life MS Admin II
19	2/2/2012	Los Angeles County	African American	4	California State University	MS, CLAD Admin II
20	2/7/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	1	CPACE	MS, CLAD Admin II
21	2/8/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	1	Private University in California	MS, CLAD Admin II
22	2/16/2012	Los Angeles County	Caucasian	2.5	California State University	MS, BCLAD Admin II
23	2/21/2012	Kern County	Caucasian	3	Private University in California	Ryans MS Admin II AB2913
24	2/23/2012	Los Angeles County	African American	3	California State University	Admin II
25	3/1/2012	Los Angeles County	African American	2	Private University in California	MS, CLAD Admin II
26	3/7/2012	Los Angeles County	Chicana	9 mos.	California State University	MS CLAD Admin II
27	3/8/2012	San Diego County	Caucasian	3	California State University	MS, CLAD Admin II

<b>Respondent Code</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years as Principal</b>	<b>Administration Preparation Program</b>	<b>Credentials Held</b>
28	3/12/2012	Los Angeles County	Caucasian	7 mos.	Interstate Licensure	Admin II
29	3/15/2012	Orange County	Caucasian	4	CPACE	MS, CLAD Admin II
30	3/15/2012	Los Angeles County	African American	1	Private University in California	Admin II PPS

## APPENDIX E

## Copyright Permission- Joyce L. Epstein



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**Customer:** Denise Calvert-Bertrand  
**Account Number:** 3000634783  
**Organization:** Pepperdine University  
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Order Details

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- **ISBN:** 978-0-8133-8755-0
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<b>Editor of portion(s)</b>	n/a
<b>Author of portion(s)</b>	Joyce L. Epstein
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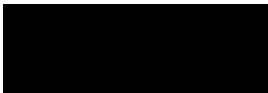
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## APPENDIX F

## Copyright Permission Letter- Hank Rubin

Denise Calvert-Bertrand



February 26, 2013

Hank Rubin, PhD  
Professor and Senior Researcher  
Winona State University  
MN State Colleges & Universities  


Dear Dr. Rubin:

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Pepperdine University entitled "New Site Administrator's Perception of Their Role in Community Partnerships." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:

Rubin, H. (2009). *Collaborative leadership* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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- Figure 7.4 Collaboration's life cycle, printed on page
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If this meets with your approval, please sign this letter below and return it to me via email at [denise.bertrand@sausd.us](mailto:denise.bertrand@sausd.us). Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Denise Calvert-Bertrand

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

  
Hank Rubin

Date: 2.26.15

## APPENDIX G

## Copyright Permission- Diana B. Hiatt-Michael

Denise Calvert-Bertrand



March 18, 2013

Diana B. Hiatt-Michael, Ed.D.  
Pepperdine University  
Malibu, CA

Dear Dr. Hiatt-Michael:

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Pepperdine University entitled "New Site Administrator's Perception of Their Role in Community Partnerships." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation the following:

- Community-school collaboration model.

The requested permission covers future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by ProQuest through its UMI Dissertation Publishing business. ProQuest may produce and sell copies of my dissertation on demand and may make my dissertation available for free internet download at my request. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own verify that you own [or your company owns] the copyright to the above materials.

If this meets with your approval, please sign this letter below and return it to me via email at [doris.calvert@pepperdine.edu](mailto:doris.calvert@pepperdine.edu). Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Calvert-Bertrand".

Denise Calvert-Bertrand

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

Diana Hiatt-Michael  
Name

March 18, 2013  
Date