

Spanning Boundaries and Balancing Tensions: A Systems Perspective on Community School Coordinators

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Abstract

This comparative case study concerns the daily work of community school coordinators and the challenges that they face. Informed by a conceptual framework based on organizational boundary spanning and systems theories, the authors analyzed transcripts from time study responses, structured interviews with school leaders, and documents from three community schools over a period of three years. The results reveal that community school coordinators work across organizational boundaries and face tensions presented by complex authority structures and inconsistent funding. The article concludes with guidance for current researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in community-based school reforms.

Key Words: community school coordinators, boundary spanning, systems

Introduction

Community-centered models offer attractive alternatives to school reform initiatives that place sole responsibility for student success on school personnel (Dixon, Royal, & Henry, 2014; Jacobson, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014; May & Sanders, 2015). Rejecting the coercive tactics of high-stakes testing, state takeovers, and market-based incentives, community-centered schools address children's needs comprehensively and in collaboration with families

and community members (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; Khalifa, 2012). As evidence of the growing appeal of this approach, by 2018, over 5,000 public schools demonstrated their support for community-centered education by adopting the community school model (National Center for Community Schools, 2018).

Community schools provide a menu of services and supports for children and youth by partnering with families, community-based organizations, and local businesses (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 2018; Dryfoos, 2005; Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017; Valli, 2016). Although these partnerships can bring sorely needed resources into public schools, they also add responsibilities, which include the management of an extensive partner network and an array of programs, to a school principal's already-full agenda (Jean-Marie, Ruffin, & Burr, 2010). Therefore, community schools employ dedicated, full-time community school coordinators (CSC) who act as informal leaders on the ground, working across organizational boundaries to "mobilize and integrate community assets into the life of the school and lessen management demands on principals" (Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006, p. vi). Demonstrating the importance of the CSC to the success of a community school, *Communities in Schools'* (2010) five-year evaluation found that having full-time, trained CSCs was strongly associated with program fidelity and positive school-level outcomes.

Despite the pivotal role of CSCs, researchers have only begun to understand the unique challenges that these individuals face as they bridge multiple organizations (e.g., FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018a; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, Galindo, & DeTablan, 2019). In this study, we seek to better understand how the structure of their roles shaped the experiences of CSCs in three schools from a regional community school coalition over a period of three years. In the following, we review the literature related to the role of the CSC and the tensions inherent in working across organizational boundaries. We describe the qualitative analyses of time study, document, and interview data that reveal the tensions that CSCs experience in balancing the interests of the community school coalition, their lead partners, and their schools. The article concludes with a discussion of the study's implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in community schools and other community-based reforms.

Background

The community school model is a flexible framework for organizing community resources around student success, setting it apart from whole-school reforms that require fidelity to externally developed programs (Blank et al., 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 2018; Dryfoos, 2005). As a result of

the model's flexibility, community schools, although sharing several core characteristics, vary in size, type, and programming (Lubell, 2011). Maier, Daniel, Oakes, and Lam's (2017) extensive review of the evidence on community school effectiveness presents four common elements of community schools: (a) integrated student supports, (b) expanded learning opportunities, (c) family and community engagement, and (d) collaborative leadership and practice. The full-time CSC is central to a community school's collaborative leadership structure. The following sections provide a description of the treatment of CSCs in the literature, explanation of the CSC's position within the organizational structure of the school, and a list of the CSC's core responsibilities.

Community School Coordinators in the Literature

Although the community school movement has grown steadily since the late 1990s, the community school literature base is still developing (Maier et al., 2017; Min et al., 2017). The core conceptualization of the CSC role is found in practitioner guides published by the National Center for Community Schools (Lubell, 2011) and the Coalition for Community Schools (2018). Authors of scholarly literature also have offered glimpses into the work of CSCs in reviews of the community school literature (Maier et al., 2017; Valli, 2016) and community school studies with a broader focus (Anderson-Butcher, Paluta, Sterling, & Anderson, 2017; Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Frankovich & Lewe-Brady, 2019; Galindo, Sanders, & Abel, 2017; Jean-Marie et al., 2010; Sanders, 2016).

When researchers have turned their attention to community school leadership, they often have focused on the work of school principals (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2010; FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018b; Green, 2015, 2018; Sanders, 2018). A few studies, however, feature the CSC. For example, Anderson-Butcher and colleagues published several articles on the expanded boundary-crossing role of social workers who act as school–community coordinators in the Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008; Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, 2006). More recently, three small qualitative case studies have focused primarily on CSCs through the lenses of social capital (Ruffin, 2013), professional capital (FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018a), and relational and cross-boundary leadership (Sanders et al., 2019). Despite their differing foci, all three studies concluded that the principal was a key contributor to the CSC's efficacy. In discussing the importance of the CSC–principal relationship, Ruffin (2013) concluded, “leadership mattered, and the degree to which the CSC had access and was empowered to develop the relationships and partnerships influenced the degree of in-depth reciprocal relationships and partnerships” (p. 127).

The Community School Coordinator's Position in the School

Although community school experts widely agree that the full-time, site-based coordinator is a fundamental figure in a community school (Blank et al., 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 2018; Dryfoos, 2005; Min et al., 2017; Valli, 2016), the structural positions of CSCs within their organizations differ (Blank, Jacobsen, Melaville, & Pearson, 2010; Lubell, 2011). Some CSCs work in highly organized coalitions of community schools that operate at a regional scale, using a collective impact approach (Jacobson, 2016), while others may be the only CSC in the local area. Because community schools obtain funding from combinations of public and private sources, CSCs' employers vary (Blank et al., 2003, 2010; McMahan, Ward, Pruett, Davidson, & Griffith, 2000). Although CSCs in district-directed community schools often share the same school district employer as the educators in their buildings, the employer in university-assisted community schools is typically a university or a related entity. In lead-partner models, CSCs' employers are community-based organizations (Lubell, 2011; Maier et al., 2017). No matter who employs them, CSCs' job security may be precarious, as many community schools rely on a patchwork of short-term funding streams that undermine a school's ability to maintain programming over time (Blank et al., 2003, 2010; McMahan et al., 2000).

The literature reveals little about the tradeoffs inherent in the various organizational structures of community schools and how they may influence the work of CSCs. We also have scant information about how the responsibilities of CSCs in elementary schools differ from those who work in secondary schools. The research on collective action partnerships, however, suggests that CSCs whose schools join coalitions with coordinating organizations may receive administrative, training, and logistical support that is less available to unaffiliated community schools (Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015). Although district-directed models offer the simplified structure of a common employer, Honig (2006) found that district employees tasked with implementing school–community partnerships felt marginalized by the district office and eventually shifted focus from community work to more traditional responsibilities.

The Community School Coordinator's Responsibilities

The National Center for Community Schools' guide for building a community school describes the CSC as having four core responsibilities: (a) joint planning with school staff, (b) aligning supports and services to the core instructional program, (c) recruiting and coordinating partners, and (d) connecting community resources to documented needs (Lubell, 2011). The wider body of community school literature provides insight into how CSCs enact

these responsibilities as well as the managerial and logistical functions that facilitate the daily work of a community school.

Joint Planning

CSCs take part in school planning in two main ways. CSCs work closely with school principals (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018a; Maier et al., 2017; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders et al., 2019) and work with site-based planning teams that integrate partners and community members into school governance (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2010; Coalition for Community Schools, 2018; Lubell, 2011). Through sustained collaboration with their principals and planning teams, CSCs participate in shaping school vision and influencing the core work of their respective schools.

Aligning Services and Supports

CSCs are tasked with developing coherent systems of supports and services aligned to their schools' instructional programs. Successful programming alignment requires CSCs to develop systemic understandings of the connections between various partners and programs and how they address school needs and goals (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008; Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders et al., 2019). CSCs obtain knowledge of constituents' needs and the school's academic program by conducting needs assessments (Maier et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2019), collaboratively examining school data (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016), and attending meetings with teams of teachers (Coalition for Community Schools, 2018; FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018a). Once CSCs identify unmet needs, they maintain program coherence by locating additional partners, funding, and resources to fill the gaps (Frankovich & Lewe-Brady, 2019; Galindo et al., 2017; Sanders, 2016).

Recruiting and Coordinating Partners

Because community schools require broad bases of support to provide sufficient levels of service, maintaining and expanding partner networks is one of the CSC's most important functions (Blank et al., 2006; Galindo et al., 2017). Valli (2016) observed, however, that "partnering is a relationship to be cultivated, not merely an exchange of goods" (p. 727). Therefore, the coordinator role is highly relational, requiring CSCs to forge strong connections with community members by communicating effectively (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Maier et al., 2017; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders et al., 2019), building interpersonal trust (FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018a; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders et al., 2019), and resolving conflicts when they arise (Sanders, 2018). Partner coordination is also vital to maintaining program coherence; thus, CSCs function as gate keepers, recruiting partners whose interests overlap with school interests and

dissolving partnerships that fail to support school goals (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, 2018).

Connecting Resources to Needs

Not only must CSCs develop an amply resourced menu of supports, but they also need to ensure that the supports are accessed by the students and families most likely to benefit from them. Some CSCs connect individuals with services by working with school support teams of teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and parents to develop individually tailored student support plans (Maier et al., 2017). Other CSCs facilitate access by cultural brokering and providing language assistance to bridge gaps between families and schools (Sanders, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019). Many CSCs act as “the voice of including parents” (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016, p. 14), implementing parent education initiatives, family resource centers, and family assistance programs (Maier et al., 2017; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, 2016).

Management and Logistics

In tandem with building relationships and coordinating supports, CSCs manage the logistical details of the community school strategy (Blank et al., 2003; Maier et al., 2017; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, 2018). Thus, CSCs may be responsible for hiring, training, and supervising community school program staff (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Lubell, 2011), collecting data and submitting reports (Coalition for Community Schools, 2018; Lubell, 2011; Ruffin, 2013), and attending to the day-to-day tasks that make individual programs work. The next section elaborates on this boundary-spanning role from a systems perspective.

Conceptual Framework

Highly networked community schools are well suited for analysis using dynamic systems theory. Systems theorists explain organizational functioning holistically by examining structural elements, interdependencies, purposes or functions, and behavioral patterns over time (Banathy & Jenlink, 2003; Meadows, 2008). Systems thinking is useful for revealing the root causes of problems and for identifying leverage points for intervention (Meadows, 2008).

Systems analyses can take many directions, but three concepts apply to the current work. First, social systems maintain boundaries to distinguish between what is inside and outside the system. Second, certain individuals in social systems fill boundary-spanning roles. Third, boundary-spanners experience tensions as they navigate different social systems with varying purposes and interests.

Boundaries

Organizational theorists Aldrich and Herker (1977) defined *boundaries* as the minimal defining characteristics of an organization that discriminate between factors that are endogenous and exogenous to the system. Organizations differ in the extent to which they enforce their boundaries and either resist or seek interaction with outsiders, prompting theorists to categorize organizations along a continuum from *closed* to *open* (Leifer & Huber, 1977). While organizational theorists have primarily gauged the extent of an organization's openness by considering its propensity to transfer information across boundaries, systems theorists hold a more expansive view of openness that also considers the extent that the organization cooperates with others and allows outsiders to become a part of the system (Banathy & Jenlink, 2003). By actively seeking to partner with outside organizations and allowing personnel hired by partnering organizations to fill central roles within the school, community schools position themselves toward the *open* end of the continuum.

Boundary-Spanning Individuals

Boundary maintaining and boundary spanning are vital functions in social systems. Whereas closed systems devote more attention to maintaining their boundaries, open systems dedicate resources to spanning them. Much of the literature on boundary-spanning individuals has relied on a model that envisions the organization as struggling to maintain its integrity while being buffeted by environmental pressures (e.g., Honig, 2006; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Leifer & Huber, 1977). In this conception, individuals tasked with boundary spanning operate on the edges of a system that is clearly separate from its environment, facilitating information transfer and politically representing the organization to outsiders. Although useful for explaining many contexts, the informational and political models of boundary spanning insufficiently explain organizations such as community schools that address their challenges by building relationships with outsiders around shared goals, blurring the lines between the organization and the environment.

Adding another dimension to boundary-spanning theory, we found four qualitative studies that approached the topic from a relational perspective. In two case studies of three community schools, Sanders (2018) and Sanders et al. (2019) found that principals and CSCs acted as cross-boundary leaders, using relational leadership to build a collaborative school culture, attract partners, garner political support, and create spaces for stakeholder interaction. Miller (2008) investigated a pair of boundary-spanning individuals in a university–school–community partnership and later explained his own boundary spanning

as an advocate for the education of homeless children (Miller, 2009). Miller's (2008, 2009) boundary spanners brokered information but also functioned as well-connected bridge builders, navigating multiple organizations to build diverse coalitions around a common cause. Acknowledging the complexity of interacting with multiple organizations, Miller (2009) posited that boundary spanners are semi-outsiders with ambiguously defined roles, benefiting from freedom and flexibility to engage in intense collaboration.

Boundary-Spanning Tensions

Boundaries become complicated in open social systems, as they overlap, interconnect, and nest within other systems (Banathy & Jenlink, 2003). Recognizing that the different levels of a system may have varying purposes, Ackoff (1981) coined the terms *environmentalization* to represent the interests of the larger system, *self-directiveness* to represent the interests of constituent systems, and *humanization* to represent the interests of individuals and subsystems within the constituent systems. Open social systems face adaptive challenges when these various purposes come into conflict.

Applied to community schools, these theories suggest that each community school and partnering organization represents a unique social system with its own purposes. When the partners organize into a regional coalition, they become an entity with collective agency, a purpose, and a distinct identity beyond those of the individual member organizations (Koschmann, Kuhn, & Pfarrer, 2012). Thus, a community school coalition represents a bounded social system comprised of constituent organizations, each with its own internal hierarchies and constituent members (Firestone & Fisler, 2002; Miller, 2008). Individuals within the coalition's constituent organizations are likely to differ in the extent to which they consider themselves part of the larger system and accept the legitimacy of the collaboration as a separate, trusted entity (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015). Consequently, systems theory suggests that boundary-spanning school leaders such as CSCs will experience tensions as their positions require them to balance the identities and interests of the overall community school coalition, the partnering organizations, and the individuals within the organizations.

In light of this prior research, the current study investigates the following questions:

1. How do CSCs enact their work within the context of a lead-partner model in a community school coalition?
2. To what extent do CSCs experience tensions that are related to how their positions are structured?

Methods

This study features three schools that took part in a comparative case study of leadership in community schools over three years. The first phase of data collection commenced in 2014 as part of a wider quantitative study focused on gathering information about the daily experiences of CSCs and comparing the time use of community school and traditional school principals. The 2014 study revealed detailed information about the actions of school leaders, but the data provided insufficient context to explain the reasons behind participants' actions. Therefore, we launched a second qualitative phase of the study in 2017, gathering a wider array of data focused solely on the community schools. Consequently, the current study's design used time study responses, interviews, and documents to capture the experiences and viewpoints of school leaders involved in implementing the community school model.

Setting

The focal schools belonged to a regional coalition of around 20 community schools from four school districts in a Mid-Atlantic state. After playing an instrumental role in starting the community school coalition in 2005, the local United Way coordinated its evolution into a collective impact partnership with the shared vision of all third grade children in the region reading at grade level by 2025. The participating schools were all part of one mid-sized, urban district with about 20 schools of varying demographic profiles; six of these were community schools belonging to the regional coalition. State reports indicated that the percentage of the district's students categorized as economically disadvantaged and as English language learners were both substantially above the state averages of 40% and 3%, respectively (Snyder & Dillow, 2015).

We purposely selected three community schools to represent both a range and depth of insights (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). A demographic comparison of the three schools showed that they were all above the district average in three groups: the percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and students who identified as Hispanic (see Table 1). The schools differed in their grade level configurations, programming, community partners, and the length of tenure for key individuals on their respective leadership teams. The schools' names have been replaced with pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.

Table 1. School and District Characteristics and Outcomes

Variable	Barnett	Carver	Parks	District
Grades	K–5	6–8	PK–5	PK–12
Enrollment	330	580	520	13,700
% Economically Disadvantaged	79	92	94	58
% English Learners	10	15	18	6
% Special Education	16	27	15	17
% Gifted	<1	3	< 1	4
Race/Ethnicity				
% Hispanic	61	70	81	40
% White	24	14	6	43
% Black	13	11	11	11
% Multiple	1	4	<1	2
% Asian	<1	1	1	4
Community School				
Years Implemented	13	8	6	
Principals (consecutive)	1	5	1	
CSCs (consecutive)	5	1	1	
Partners	15	19	40	
Initiatives	24	39	33	
Student Outcomes				
% Attendance	96	94	95	
% Proficient in Math	40	9	28	
% Proficient in Reading	43	31	46	
% Proficient in Science	54	22	61	
Growth in Math*	100	57	73	
Growth in Reading*	73	56	82	
Growth in Science*	58	62	66	

Notes. CSC = Community School Coordinator; demographic and achievement data from school year 2016–17; community school information from Fall 2017.

*Indicates state growth target = 70.

Each focal school had a full-time CSC and had fully implemented the community school model for at least two years at the inception of the study. To define full implementation, we relied on Maier et al.’s (2017) four community school pillars: (a) integrated student supports, (b) expanded learning opportunities, (c) family and community engagement, and (d) collaborative leadership and practice. The community schools’ structures were a hybrid of lead-partner

and university-assisted models. Local businesses supported the three CSCs' salaries, but a community-based organization was the employer of record for one CSC, and a local university employed the other two.

Barnett Elementary was the smallest school in the study and had implemented the community school model for the longest time. Although the school had the fewest partners and initiatives, it served as a pilot for an early literacy initiative that ran parallel to the three years of the study and was an exemplar in implementing the Leader in Me model of student leadership that was gradually being adopted by schools throughout the district. During its time as a community school, Barnett kept the same principal but transitioned through five CSCs. At the initiation of the study, Barnett's third CSC was reaching the end of her tenure. At the close of the study, the school's fifth CSC had been in her position for about four months.

Carver Middle School was the largest school included in the study. Carver had an academic focus on science, with both a planetarium and a greenhouse on-site. Located adjacent to a university, Carver often served as a site for research and undergraduate service projects and housed a monthly free health clinic. Carver had one CSC since becoming a community school but, during its time as a community school, was led by five consecutive principals and four consecutive assistant principals. During the three years of the study, Carver's principal left, so the district promoted the assistant principal to the principal position and hired a new assistant principal.

Parks was an elementary school and one of Carver's two feeder schools; thus, Parks and Carver shared attendance areas and families. Only three years into its implementation of the community school model at the inception of the study, some of the participants regarded Parks as an exemplar of community schools' potential to engage families and community members. As evidence, Parks had more than twice the number of partners as did the other focal schools. Among its programs, Parks housed a health clinic operated by a nonprofit organization that was open daily to meet the needs of underinsured and uninsured area residents. The leadership team at Parks was stable, with the same principal and CSC in place throughout its entire implementation of the community school model.

Participants

The study involved 11 individuals from various community school leadership roles, as shown in Table 2. The four principals and three CSCs present in 2014 participated in the first time study, and those present in 2017 took part in the second time study and interviews. We also interviewed the United Way's strategic development coordinator for community schools and the school district's chief academic officer to provide context for the study. We invited each

2017 participant to engage in follow-up focus groups in which we shared initial findings. Seven participants attended.

Table 2. Study Participants

Role	Race/ Ethnicity	Gen- der	Years in Role	2014 Time Study*	2017–18 Interview	2017 Time Study*	Follow- up Groups
Principal	Black	F	15+	68	1	72	1
Principal	Black	M	2	63	--	--	--
Principal**	White	M	1	--	1	55	1
Principal	Hispanic	F	15+	71	1	73	1
Asst. Principal**	White	M	2	51	--	--	--
Asst. Principal	White	M	1	--	1	61	--
CSC	Hispanic	F	4	64	--	--	--
CSC	White	F	1	--	1	33	1
CSC	Hispanic	F	6	70	1	75	1
CSC	White	F	8	76	1	76	1
District	White	M	9	--	1	--	1
United Way	White	F	9	--	1	--	--

Note. *Indicates number of responses. **Same person; promoted between time samples.

Data Collection

Data collection began in October 2014 and continued through January 2018. To yield a detailed description of the school leaders’ work in the three schools, we collected multiple sources of data, including interviews, documents, and time study responses (Patton, 2015; Scollon, Kim-Prieto, & Diener, 2003). The semi-structured interviews took place in summer 2017 and winter 2018, lasted from 45–70 minutes, and were audiorecorded and transcribed. The interviews were used to gather participants’ perspectives on how the community school model was implemented at each school and the leadership challenges and successes faced by the individuals tasked with formally leading the initiative.

We conducted the time studies using Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM), which accurately captures participants’ subjective experiences as they are happening, thus protecting ecological validity by eliminating retrospective bias and minimizing the risk of altered behavior due to an observer’s presence (Fisher & To, 2012; Juster, Ono, & Stafford, 2003). We used ESM to collect data representative of the principals’ and CSCs’ daily activities by asking them

to provide immediate descriptions of their current actions after receiving random text notifications on their smart phones three times each day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The data were collected on similar dates over four weeks in October and November in 2014 and 2017. The fall window avoided school breaks, snow days, and standardized testing windows but captured more holiday-related planning than might have been present in another time period.

The current study used only the CSCs’ time study data. The CSC time studies yielded 384 school-related responses. Participants’ response rates ranged from 76% to 91% in 2014 and 89% to 91% in 2017, indicating that the notifications captured a representative sample of the participants’ activities (Fisher & To, 2012). The one exception was Barnett’s CSC, who, after having been on the job only a month when the 2017 time study started, demonstrated a 39% response rate. The CSC explained that the results were due to a lack of access to technology and frequent training sessions. Therefore, we used Barnett’s 2017 time study data qualitatively but omitted it from the quantitative descriptions of CSC time use (see Table 3). Rather than completely eliminating Barnett’s time study data from the analysis, we believed the high response rate of Barnett’s 2014 CSC warranted the full inclusion of her data.

Table 3. Distribution of CSC Time Use, 2014 and 2017

School	Joint Planning (%)	Program Alignment (%)	Partner Coordination (%)	Student and Family Support (%)	Management & Logistics (%)
Barnett*	6.3	22.6	10.9	28.3	16.0
Carver	9.6	12.3	39.7	9.6	28.8
Parks	3.9	14.6	24.3	23.3	34.0
All schools	6.5	12.7	26.1	21.6	33.1

Note. *Excludes 2017 time study data due to low response rate.

Data collection also included 29 documents related to the coalition’s implementation of the community school model. We used document data to determine each school’s partners and programs and to understand the coalition’s expectations for CSCs. The documents were publicly available on the United Way and school websites and included such information as responsibility flow charts, role descriptions, program documents, and lists of community partners.

Analytic Procedures

Our analytic process was iterative (Creswell, 2012). During each wave of data collection, we uploaded interview notes, transcripts, time study responses,

and documents into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, for hand coding and matrix analyses. We generated a detailed account of leadership practices and activities within each school by triangulating data sources and methods. The analysis employed three levels: (a) initial deductive coding, (b) inductive coding and identifying patterns within cases, and (c) finally analyzing the data across cases to highlight emerging overarching themes and divergent patterns (Patton, 2015). We developed the primary level of codes from the literature review.

Initial time study data codes included the five responsibilities of CSCs (Lubell, 2011): joint planning, program alignment, partner coordination, student and family support, and management and logistics. Secondary inductive codes for the time study data identified the CSCs' coalition and lead partner activities. Initial interview data codes included Ackoff's (1981) categories: environmentalization (interests of the coalition), humanization (interests of the CSCs), and self-directiveness (interests of the schools and lead partners). Within those categories, 15 codes emerged at the secondary level to distinguish between the interests of subgroups (building, district, partner) and to group similar concerns (e.g., authority, capacity building, compensation, work demands).

During coding and analysis, we read the data with a focus on understanding the various perspectives of the participants, particularly as they related to the roles of the CSCs. Throughout the process, we considered how our personalities, extensive prior interactions with two of the schools, and identities as academic researchers influenced our relationships with the participants and our emerging understandings. We also acknowledged the limitations of the research design. Like other case studies with small sample sizes, our findings have limited external validity. Because the community school model is tailored to each site, we cannot interpret the schools that we studied as representative of all community schools, particularly because a high school context was unavailable to us. Moreover, restricting our analysis to formal community school leaders prevented us from incorporating the perspectives of informal leaders and other stakeholders. Recognizing these limitations and the need to capture the authentic perspectives of the participants, we shared our findings with the community school leaders in follow-up, face-to-face meetings that lasted from 55–75 minutes. We used participant feedback to affirm the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and validity of our descriptions and conclusions (Patton, 2015). The following section contains the results of this collective and iterative process.

Results

As hypothesized in the literature review, our analysis revealed that the CSCs distributed their time between working with school colleagues, students, families, and community partners. As the CSCs navigated these boundaries, we found that they experienced both benefits and tensions related to the way their positions were structured. These benefits and tensions were revealed in the relationships between the various CSCs and the community school coalition, their lead partners, and their schools.

Overall CSC Time Distribution

Each CSC engaged in the five types of activities outlined in the literature review, as shown in Table 3. Collectively, the CSCs spent a third of their time on managerial and logistical tasks, such as data entry for monthly reports, managing budgets, distributing fliers, and calling parents to pick up their children. About half of the CSCs' activities were devoted to communicating or working with community partners and connecting families and students with services. CSCs appeared to spend the least amount of time engaged in the more systematically focused categories of program alignment (12.7%) and joint planning (6.5%). Each CSC, however, interacted regularly with her school's principal and site-based leadership team.

In addition to working with families, students, and school colleagues, CSCs submitted time study entries that specifically mentioned their lead partners and the coalition's coordinating organization, the United Way. Parks (3%) showed the lowest proportion of United Way interaction, and Carver (8%) and Barnett (9%) showed the greatest. Complicating the coalition's model, each school had two lead partners. One lead partner was a business that financially supported the CSC position. The other lead partner was the employer of the CSC—a social service agency at Barnett and the same university at Carver and Parks. Each CSC engaged regularly with the employing lead partner, but only Carver's CSC interacted with the financial lead partner during the time study window. Carver's CSC interacted most frequently with the lead partner (15%), Barnett's CSC was in the middle (7%), and Parks' CSC appeared to have the least amount of contact with the school's lead partners (3%). Parks' CSC, however, submitted several responses that referred to unspecified emails and phone calls; thus, it was possible that the analysis overlooked some of the CSC's lead partner communications. When we combined the time study responses related to the United Way and the schools' leader partners, the CSCs averaged 15% of their overall time in interacting with these support organizations—the equivalent of six hours in a 40-hour work week.

CSCs and the Community School Coalition

The interview and document analyses indicated that United Way's relationship with CSCs was normative and supportive. To that end, the United Way established expectations for how the coalition's community schools and CSCs should function and provided assistance to help the CSCs carry out their work.

Norms

United Way personnel clarified expectations for the coalition's community schools by developing job descriptions, establishing routines, and creating planning templates. The United Way transmitted and reinforced coalition norms through professional development, representation on site teams, and required quarterly data reports. In their interviews, the CSCs expressed appreciation for the United Way's efforts in providing resources and information to clarify their work. For example, Carvers' CSC described her initial implementation of the community school model as "very wishy washy." After the United Way refined their operational norms, however, the CSC explained, "There's [sic] now clear outlines and responsibilities for community school principals, CSCs, lead partners, and corporate partners that were not available when we first became a community school."

The United Way detailed the CSCs' roles and responsibilities in a two-page job description. This document envisioned the CSC as a "strategic thought partner" with responsibility to "execute coordination and alignment of resources." After describing the details of the position, the United Way's role description also provides a list of prohibited roles. Specifically, coalition CSCs are proscribed from acting as direct service providers, assistant principals, primary translators of documents, or coordinators for all school field trips and from leading activities unrelated to community school priorities.

The CSC job description also detailed the complex authority structure of the coalition's lead-partner model:

Direct supervision and ongoing professional development of the CSC is provided by the lead partner. Orientation to the United Way Community School model and technical assistance is provided by United Way.... Daily direction, support, and oversight is provided by the principal of the school.

Therefore, each of the three listed entities—United Way, lead partner, and school principal—provided the CSCs with a form of direction and a form of support. The United Way directed the work of the CSCs through the establishment and transmission of coalition norms, while the employing lead partner and the school principal split the roles of supervision and daily direction.

Supports

As outlined in the CSC role description, the United Way provided the CSCs with orientation and technical assistance, which manifested in a variety of forms. The United Way helped CSCs understand how to structure a community school during the school's initial transition to the model, as Parks' CSC explained:

I had a one-on-one with the United Way where they told me, "If you want to have partners, you should look for partners in all these different areas." So, I was very focused on getting exactly what was needed to be in the school.

Similarly, the United Way helped new CSCs in established community schools to develop their conceptions of how community schools worked. Barnett's CSC recounted, "I went for an orientation training, where there were different topics each day to learn about community schools and the model." Experienced CSCs also benefited from the United Way's regular support and technical assistance, particularly when the schools were embarking on new initiatives. For example, the CSCs received information about implementing a campaign to increase student attendance. Carver's CSC offered, "Strive for less than five absences is the goal, so we're going to be marketing that, and that's all coming through the United Way."

The main shortcoming mentioned in relation to the United Way's offerings was an apparently greater focus on the elementary level, reflecting the coalition's higher proportion of elementary schools and its primary goal of proficiency of third-grade children in the region reading at grade level by 2025. As Carver's CSC explained, "When they were funding for programming, a lot of academic literacy-based component-type programming went to elementary schools"; and "so much is geared toward elementary, it's hard sometimes to find best practices for middle school."

Otherwise, the CSCs revealed few tensions in having orientation, technical support, and professional development shared by the United Way and their lead partners. According to Barnett's CSC:

They're definitely very aligned, and their purposes are lined up, and the communication is good. If I go to the United Way, I get what I need, and if I go to [my lead partner], I get what I need, and, if one or the other isn't sure, then they can be able to direct me to who I need to talk to.

Thus, the coalition's lead-partner model seemed to add value for the CSCs by providing multiple layers of support. Yet, despite the support, the CSCs expressed a sense of being overwhelmed by their varied and numerous responsibilities. Barnett's new CSC described having difficulty grasping all of the aspects

of her job, explaining, “There’s so much involved in it. It’s not just afterschool programs. There’s social work components, and I don’t have any background in that, so it’s all this learning process.” Parks’ more experienced CSC found the job demanding, explaining, “That happens a lot—that I get overwhelmed because the amount of work; it’s a lot of work.” Carver’s CSC used the term “exhausting” to describe her efforts to keep the community school programs functioning, as principals and funding streams came and went.

CSCs and Their Lead Partners

Although the United Way provided clarity for the coalition’s CSCs and lead partners regarding their general roles and operating norms, the CSCs’ employment by differing nonschool entities introduced ambiguity. The two places in which the ambiguity most caused tension for CSCs were the perceptions of their status within the school community and their differential compensation.

Outsider Status

In keeping with Miller’s (2009) assertion that boundary spanners are semi-outsiders, two CSCs believed that having lead partners as their employers of record contributed to a lack of clarity about their positions among colleagues. Barnett’s CSC described a rough transition to her new position, which she partly attributed to an inability to connect her non-district, partner-supplied laptop to the school’s wireless network. Without network access, the CSC ventured off-site to the lead partner’s office 20 minutes from the school to complete basic tasks, such as making copies and sending emails. The CSC explained how the problem persisted for over a month before the district instructional technology department assisted her, because “I’m not a district employee. I don’t think I was necessarily top of the list.” In an organization with 2,000 employees and in which only one-fourth of the schools were community schools, the CSC’s status may have been unclear to some district personnel and perhaps to the CSC herself.

The district’s chief academic officer explained that integrating a CSC into the school community was a process that takes time:

I see that as a sign of the maturing CSC. They’re becoming school people as much as they are community people. Eventually, would people think [Parks’ CSC] is a district employee? Probably. She knows as much. Would they think the Barnett person in the first year is? Probably not. That’s a sign. When the differences are blurred enough, you can’t even see that the community school coordinator isn’t a part of the district staff.

Yet, after serving in her role for eight years, Carver’s CSC believed that her position in the school remained unclear to many of her colleagues:

When [the principals] are asked about my role in the building, they will refer to me as an administrator, which is sometimes not taken well by some teaching staff because I'm not an administrator for them... There are times when I think some of them look at me knowing that I'm a [university] employee, and that means dollars to them. So, when they need support for trips, there are some staff who think, "The community school has money, so I can go to them when I need stuff." There are other staff who really do value and understand my role as the community connector and resource provider for both them and the students.

The concerns expressed by Carver's CSC suggest that the United Way's clear articulation of the CSC role may not extend to the wider school community. In particular, teachers may misperceive the CSC's administrative role as implying a supervisory relationship over instructional staff, or teachers may develop simplistic understandings of the CSC's varied responsibilities.

In contrast, Parks' CSC assumed the roles of welcoming newcomers and nearly relentlessly enculturating school staff to the community school model. In her interview, the CSC described plans to greet a new nurse and guidance counselor by explaining to them, "I want you to feel comfortable here. I want you to feel you are needed, you are important." Parks' CSC also ensured that the staff understood and was invested in the community school model:

I have this PowerPoint that I prepared at the very beginning when I wanted to tell people what is a community school, and I still use it over and over and over. I go back and I say, "This is what the community school model is. This is what we do," and get them on board, because, at some point, you have so many new people that you leave them behind. Every year, I make it a point to train the new staff and tell them who I am and what I do and why we should be so proud and what is so exciting to be part of this thing.

Throughout her interview, Parks' CSC described formal and informal strategies on which she relied to "constantly" reinforce what it means to be a community school.

Compensation

Another source of structural ambiguity in the lead-partner model was the CSCs' employment by different employers, leading to inconsistent CSC compensation across schools. As the United Way's strategist explained, "It continues to be a challenge to have 'higher eds' and nonprofits and trying to stabilize salaries and calendars and benefits." Although the CSCs' job descriptions were identical, their employer's differing internal policies determined their compensation. The district administrator described the reasoning behind this practice:

Overall levels of support other than compensation are there. But since the person is an employee of the partner, that's the difference. The only way that could be removed as an issue is if the community school coordinator was an employee of United Way, but they don't want to carry them. Districts don't want to carry them all, either. So now that's the weak point.

As a result, the two participating CSCs with the longest tenure worked for a university with an attractive employment package. One CSC recounted, "I am an employee of the university and can [get a master's degree] for free. There's no challenge financially. It's just me and my commitment of my time." The school that cycled through five CSCs had a nonprofit social service agency lead partner that offered more modest compensation and fewer benefits.

CSCs and Their Schools

Because the CSCs spent the bulk of their time at the schools, school factors had the greatest influence on the CSCs' work. Three particular elements affected the CSCs: the overall school culture, the availability of school-level supports, and the relationship with the school principal.

School Culture

Although the United Way developed explicit descriptions of the CSCs' responsibilities, one CSC noted, "The disconnect is what we actually are supposed to be responsible for in a building and how much it varies." One area in which the CSCs' work varied was time spent in connecting students and families with supports. In particular, Carver Middle School's CSC spent less than half the time on these activities compared with the two elementary-level CSCs (10% vs. 23% and 28%). Although working with older students potentially influenced her work, Carver's CSC attributed the difference to a negative school culture caused by the school's frequent turnover of school principals:

There are a lot of schools where the coordinators are really focused on the students and the families. Although I do have that focus in a lot of areas—I know how important it is, and I think it's mainly because of the culture and climate issues that we may have encountered over the past years here. That's why I put a big focus on making sure that I'm hearing the staff and supporting them.

Reflecting this self-described difference in priorities, the Carver CSC's only family-related time study responses described holiday gift donation programs.

In contrast, Barnett's CSC worked directly with school staff, parents, and community partners to solve individual student problems, as detailed in this time study entry:

Working with [the] guidance counselor about a family with multiple absences. Parents do not have transportation to address children’s medical concern. Followed up with family personally and reached out to community partners to find transportation or bus voucher.

Similarly, Parks’ CSC described “working with families for food resources and coats” and “working with family development specialist on resources for families coming into the school primarily from Puerto Rico.” Moreover, both elementary CSCs conducted parent trainings, which were largely lacking in the middle school CSC’s data. Conversely, Carver’s CSC engaged more often than did the other CSCs in partner-related activities (40% vs. 10% and 23%), reflecting the school’s proximity to a university and its convenient location for student volunteer tutors and seekers of field placements.

School-Level Support

Although the CSCs received ample support from the United Way and their lead partners, they also required school-level support. Because each community school was unique, the CSCs required a general understanding of how community schools operate as well as specific information about their own community school’s partners and programs. The two long-serving CSCs had been in place since their schools adopted the model; thus, their school-level needs were met by participating in teacher professional development activities to boost their knowledge of school initiatives and academic programs. In contrast, Barnett’s newly hired CSC demonstrated an acute need for school-level community school support, but her needs were largely unmet:

I didn’t have access to any of the previous community school coordinator’s files because they were not backed up, so I had nothing to go from. So, the contacts—just everything—was like, “Okay, where do we even start?” and even the supports, like the Backpack Buddies, I didn’t know what that was. I didn’t know when deliveries were. I didn’t know how it was distributed because not every school does it, and some schools do it differently.

Without the previous CSC’s files, Barnett’s CSC struggled to understand how to keep the community school’s programs operating. Although she found the professional development offered by the United Way and the school’s lead partner helpful, there were school-level gaps in the CSC’s knowledge. Barnett’s long-serving principal was knowledgeable but explained that there was limited time to train a new CSC, particularly during the school year:

I introduce them to the calendar. I introduce them to the staff. They always get a tour. I am busy, but I have to take the time to be able to do

that. That's why it would be ideal if we could get them in the summer, so we could have plenty of time to sit, chat, talk, plan.

Unfortunately, Barnett's CSC started in September, when the principal's attention was diverted by competing demands. As a result, the CSC spent her first year patching together information to understand how her community school functioned.

School Principals

Each CSC believed that she had a positive relationship with her current school principal and identified the principal as a key factor in her success and the success of the community school strategy. Similarly, the district administrator explained the determinative role of school principals in the work of a CSC:

Principals, some of them are laissez faire, like, "You go ahead and handle it," and it's too much, and then there's [sic] some principals that are more "ta ta ta ta" [chopping gesture] and you don't have as much creativity, and all points in between....The community school coordinator really has no authority other than what the principal gives them.

Illustrating the district administrator's points, the principals we interviewed varied in how they positioned their CSCs. An empowering principal explained:

This is an administrative role, so I'm looking for someone who has initiative that they can take charge, that they're resourceful....I need to allow the community school coordinator to lead and to do their jobs, and then we all need to come together for a meeting of the minds.

Another principal took a more directive approach:

Where we have met some bumps in the road, and there are not many, because she has learned how I do things and how I require things to be done, and she respects that....It has happened once or twice only, where [the CSC] made a decision that I later on brought her in and let her know that will never happen again. That is not a decision that I would have made, and you cannot make decisions without clearing it with me.

Despite the differences in working styles, the participating CSCs managed to develop successful working relationships with both empowering and more directive principals.

As the only CSC who had experienced multiple community school principals, Carver's CSC previously worked with leaders who, she believed, were less invested in the community school strategy. She explained:

It becomes very difficult to keep the momentum going if you don't have the buy-in from the principal, and with so much turnover, it's been very

difficult to get a principal that's on board and supporting the effort in the time that they have been here. So, I think that has been difficult, and I don't think it's something a coordinator can do alone. I think there has to be a support system in place, primarily with the principal, to work as a team to keep the model going.

Carver's CSC attributed some of the school's prior difficulty in meeting its goals to former principals' minimal understanding of the community school model. Compared with the extensive support that the coalition and lead partners offered to CSCs, the principals in our study received little training in leading a community school. Although the district administrator noted that principals had "a network of other community school principals to work with," the coalition lacked a structured system of professional development to facilitate principals' understanding of community school leadership. The United Way strategist described her dilemma regarding the training of principals:

I'm not an educational leader. I'm not an expert in educational leadership, and neither is my colleague. I think that's one of the reasons why we don't have anything solidly down on paper on how we are going to train a principal to be a community school principal.

The United Way supplied district leaders with a role description for community school principals, but the strategist was unsure "how well it's been incorporated actually into their processes." Therefore, the enculturation of school principals into the community school model was largely incidental, occurring in daily interactions with CSCs, site team meetings, and informal mentoring by other community school principals.

Discussion and Implications

At the inception of this study, we set out to better understand the daily work of CSCs and the challenges associated with their boundary-spanning positions. Given the complexity and the promise of community-based school reforms, we believed that researchers and practitioners would benefit from additional empirical information about this central figure in the increasingly popular community school model. While we examined individual experiences in the particular contexts of three community schools, our employment of a systems perspective allowed us to look beyond individual actions and characteristics to reveal how the structures of the CSC role and the community school coalition influenced the CSCs' work in positive and negative ways. Our findings revealed both new knowledge and confirmed existing knowledge about the role of CSCs as cross-boundary actors.

This study is significant in its use of time study data across three years to empirically capture the CSCs' daily work. Although one CSC's data insufficiently depicted her daily activities, a representative sample of the remaining three CSCs' time use indicated that they spent two-thirds of their time engaged in the four main CSC responsibilities discussed in Lubell's (2011) guide for community schools: joint planning, program alignment, partner coordination, and supporting students and families. In addition, the time studies revealed that the remaining one-third of CSCs' time was spent on managerial and logistical tasks, affirming that management and logistics should represent a fifth category of CSC responsibilities. Supporting Sanders et al.'s findings (2019), the time studies showed CSCs working at both the micro- and macro-system levels, collaborating with partners and providing services to students and families while maintaining a focus on program alignment. CSCs also frequently interacted with their lead partners and the coalition's coordinating agency, reflecting the regional coalition structure of their local community school initiative and documenting their influence on the CSCs' professional activities. As a group, the current study's CSCs exemplified Ruffin's (2013) and Sanders et al.'s (2019) characterization of CSCs as cross-boundary leaders and Miller's (2008, 2009) conception of boundary spanners as individuals who navigate multiple organizations to build diverse coalitions around a common cause.

The wide array of tasks required to maintain the schools' respective networks of 15–40 partners and 24–39 initiatives supports Blank et al.'s (2006) and Jean-Marie et al.'s (2010) claims that school principals require substantial assistance to develop and sustain comprehensive community-based reforms. The CSCs' myriad responsibilities and the difficult transition of Barnett's novice CSC, despite the presence of a comprehensive support system, raise questions regarding the preparation and background necessary for success in this demanding position. The novice CSC reflected on this topic, noting her lack of background for the social work components of the job. Notably, one of the CSCs in the current study and several CSCs in the literature had backgrounds in social work (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2017; Fitzgerald & Quiñonez, 2018a; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders et al., 2019). Many CSCs, however, come to their work from other backgrounds, such as the current study's novice CSC who previously served as a community programs manager for an arts-based organization. As community-based reforms become more popular, formal pathways may emerge to explicitly prepare leaders for these contexts. One recent example is Binghamton University's online advanced certificate program, launched in 2018, aimed at professionals who work with or in community schools. Nevertheless, the field would benefit from more empirical information about how to successfully select and prepare individuals to flourish in these positions.

Our conceptual framework, based on systems theory, suggested that CSCs would experience tensions when balancing their own interests with those of the community school coalition, their partners, and their schools. Our results indicated the CSCs experienced both benefits and tensions related to the structure of their positions. The first major tension involved the tradeoffs inherent in the coalition's lead-partner model. In the participating schools, three entities—the United Way, the employing lead partner, and the school principal—shared responsibility for the CSC, offering three levels of support and subjecting them to three levels of direction. The CSCs claimed that they profited from the United Way's development of coalition norms, orientation to the model, and practical information for implementing new initiatives. These findings are similar to Henig et al.'s (2015) conclusion that successful collective impact collaborations require a designated coordinating agency or similar structure.

One drawback of the lead-partner model was a complicated structure that left some colleagues unsure where the CSCs fit within their organizations, despite the clear definition of the role within the community school coalition. Although Miller (2009) suggested that semioutsider status and role ambiguity were positive qualities that provided boundary spanners flexibility for collaboration, two CSCs viewed being a semioutsider from a deficit perspective. Our findings were more aligned with Bryson et al.'s (2015) claim that constituents within a coalition's suborganizations may differ in the extent to which they identify themselves as members of a larger initiative. Although a full sense of belonging may take time to develop, one CSC's attention to enculturating her colleagues into the community school model suggests that CSCs can influence how much other members of the school community perceive themselves as engaged in an important collective endeavor. These findings indicate that there may be a need to address issues of individual and collective identity in some community school contexts.

The second major tension was the oversight of the CSC as a key area in which coalition, lead partner, and school purposes could come into conflict. Ruffin (2013) similarly documented a conflict between the coordinating organization, a funding partner, and school personnel over accountability and the supervision of the CSC at one of the study's focal schools. From a systems perspective, apportioning the direction and supervision of CSCs between the principals and the lead partners introduced a self-directive tension into the lead-partner model (Ackoff, 1981), which may become particularly acute in schools for which the principal demonstrates little investment in the community school model. The principal's central role in guiding the daily work of the CSC and ultimate responsibility for the functioning of the school places CSCs in a position where a principal could limit a CSC's ability to fulfill his or her employer-mandated responsibilities. Although the CSCs at each focal school

claimed that their current principals were strong supporters of the community school strategy, one CSC believed that her school's development was hindered by at least one former principal's limited understanding of the community school model.

These findings add to what we see as an emerging consensus in the literature—that the school principal is a key determining factor in the progress of a community school (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2010; Fitzgerald & Quiñonez, 2018b; Green, 2018; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019). This consensus prompts the following questions: (a) Which factors should be considered when selecting community school principals? (b) How can community school principals best be developed and supported? and (c) Can the community school model be implemented with fidelity without a fully supportive principal? Although these questions are not yet evident in the literature, their answers would have relevance for school districts, coordinating organizations, community partners, and principal preparation program faculty.

The CSCs' working conditions and compensation represented a third point of tension that was only marginally related to the CSCs' work as boundary spanners. Although each of the CSCs described a sense of being overwhelmed by her various responsibilities, compensation was inequitable across schools. Consequently, the lower pay and benefits at one school seem to have prompted a high turnover of CSCs. To remedy these problems, the lead partners could have directed more resources to existing community schools to increase CSC compensation or hire additional community school staff. Several of the coalition's schools, however, were only partially implementing the community school model because they could not yet afford the salaries of full-time CSCs. Thus, without locating substantial new funding sources, the coalition and its lead partners faced a choice between stabilizing and improving the CSCs' working conditions in current schools or expanding to new schools with increased services for more children. Although Ruffin (2013) called on the school district to systematize the CSC role and affirm its funding commitment, the prevalence of community schools in high-poverty communities suggests that increased district investment is unlikely to serve as a widespread solution for financing this strategy. We believe that state and federal policymakers must devote sufficient resources to fully fund this promising strategy if community schools are to transcend their current limitation of patchwork funding sources (Blank et al., 2003, 2010; McMahan et al., 2000).

Conclusion

Although our analysis revealed challenges related to the lead-partner community school structure, we do not mean to imply that it is an inferior way

to organize community schools. We currently do not have enough information to make judgments about the various types of community schools. To this end, we encourage future researchers to be more diligent about recording the structure of the community schools that they study to enable us to begin documenting the influences of the various models on individual and school functioning. The more salient conclusion to draw from this work is that systems thinking is useful for revealing how complexities and interdependencies contribute to unintended consequences in organizations (Banathy & Jenlink, 2003; Meadows, 2008).

In our descriptions of CSC leadership in three community schools, we aspired to provide sufficient detail for readers to determine for themselves the extent to which our findings have value and relevance for the contexts with which they are familiar. Community schools represent just one model of community-based school reform, but this study of CSCs from a systemic perspective highlighted some elements necessary to comprehensively support students in collaboration with families and communities. Helping all students to move past the barriers placed in the way of their learning requires full-time personnel who can build networks and manage menus of services and supports. The successful implementation of a community-based strategy depends on a widespread recognition that the individuals who coordinate community work are important and worthy of sufficient resource investments to be effective in their roles.

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