A CLOSER LOOK: UNCOVERING THE REASONS SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES PARTNER AND HOW THE PARTNERSHIPS SHAPE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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ABSTRACT

School-business partnerships have existed in some form or fashion for the past couple of centuries. As recent legislation, such as the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, has pushed for increased involvement between employers and schools, many educational centers have reached out to business for resources that are needed to enhance the educational process for youth. While many schools have been, and continue to be, involved in partnering activities, relationships between schools and business have been vastly understudied. This research is an attempt to discover whether the potential for acquiring resources is the reason schools and businesses form collaborations. It also aims to uncover how business partners, particularly those who serve on advisory boards, shape curriculum and pedagogy. Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1978) was used to frame the study.

Qualitative research methods were used investigate the research questions. Two career and technical education program areas at a high school career center were studied for a 6 month period.

The findings from this study revealed that one of the reasons schools and businesses partner is to obtain resources; however, this was less the case for the businesses. Though some employers cited the possibility of recruiting human capital as a
motivator, it was not their main reason for working with schools. Overwhelmingly, employers stated that they simply had a desire to contribute to their communities by helping ensure youth were well prepared for jobs and college. While teachers and administrators cited more material reasons for partnering, those reasons were imperative for making sure students received appropriate training. Administrators and teachers believed employers could assist them with ensuring course curricula were updated and relevant. They also desired to have businesses help meet needs that their budgets could not. Often, business partners contributed equipment, supplies, and funding to help the school provide the best possible education for its students.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to MY ANCESTORS & FUTURE GENERATIONS…

To my ancestors, thank you and I love you.
To those who come after me, be encouraged and know that you are equipped to climb as high as you desire to go!
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Thank you to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

School-business partnerships have been in existence in various forms over the past two centuries. As expectations placed on schools steadily rise, schools must find creative ways—often through partnerships—to deliver a curriculum that is both rigorous and relevant. As advanced technological equipment continues to dominate places of employment and institutions of higher education, secondary schools must meet the challenge of preparing students for successful transition to college and/or the workplace where they will use such equipment. With increasing mandates on educational requirements, and decreasing funding and resources, schools must be resourceful in how they meet the needs of students. Oftentimes, schools opt to solicit help from local employers (Scales, Foster, Mannes, Horst, Pinto and Rutherford, 2005). Since employers have a vested interest in the communities where they operate, they are usually willing to assist schools in whatever capacity possible.

Background of the Problem

Historically, businesses have always had relationships with schools, especially in areas related to agricultural and industrial education (Walker, 1990). Business leaders took an interest in education because of worries such as foreign competition, shortages of skilled workers and anti-business attitudes among young people. These concerned citizens offered assistance in the form of apprenticeships for students and advice on curricular issues to make certain students were prepared for the jobs that awaited them.
Currently, many schools still form alliances with business, albeit for varying reasons. Although traditional comprehensive high schools and career/technical high schools/centers engage in partnering activities, it can be presumed that many career and technical education (CTE) programs initially form partnerships because it is a condition for receiving federal funding through the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV). Perkins IV includes a stipulation that requires career-oriented programs to work with business and industry representatives to ensure that students receive a quality education that is workforce relevant and academically satisfying so that students are prepared to enter the job market and/or college upon graduating from high school (Public Law 109-270).

Passed by the 109th Congress, Perkins IV provides more than $1.2 billion in federal support for career and technical educational programs (Public Law 109-270). Career and technical education programs are usually offered in the setting of high school career/technology centers. These centers often serve multiple high schools and allow students the option of earning both a diploma and industry recognized certification in a chosen career path.

The aim of Perkins IV legislation is to help students gain academic and technical preparation that is necessary to prepare for higher education and obtain well-paying jobs (Public Law 109-270). Perkins IV also mandates that states offer a logical sequence of academically rigorous high school and college-level courses that lead to industry certification (Public Law 109-270). The reauthorized act implemented several new provisions.
The first provision requires each agency that is eligible for funds to create at least one high school level career/technical program that prepares students for high-demand, high-wage occupations. Further, the program should lead students toward earning employer recognized credentials, postsecondary certificates, and associate’s or bachelor’s degrees.

The second provision holds states accountable for modifying existing courses and creating new courses designed to advance both academic and technical achievement (SREB, 2007a; Public Law 109-270). A major component of courses must simulate work-based projects to familiarize students with what will be expected of them in the workplace. Students should be actively engaged in a repository of planned experiences that will enhance their readiness for the workplace (SREB, 2007a).

Third, Perkins IV includes an element which requires that schools link career/technical studies with a rigorous academic core curriculum in order to add meaning and relevance to students’ academic studies. Students are to engage in courses which heavily embed mathematics, science and literacy (SREB, 2007a; Public Law 109-270). Focusing on academic as well as career courses helps ensure that students are equipped with skills that allow them to demonstrate competence in the academic areas of their career paths, as well as the physical components.

Next, a provision encourages the use of Perkins IV funds to link high-quality career and technical studies to comprehensive high school reform programs. The Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB, 2007a) suggests that career/technical centers subscribe to models such as High Schools That Work (HSTW). HSTW is compatible with the Perkins IV mandate in that HSTW recommends “a challenging
curriculum focused on preparing high school students for further education and the workplace” (SREB, 2007a). Additionally, a commitment to HSTW reaps a benefit of the HSTW organization’s collecting and providing data on students’ strengths and weaknesses, as well as creating an action plan on how schools can build upon strong areas and improve those that are frail.

Fourth, Perkins IV requires that schools expose students to career and technical education opportunities early in high school and provide helpful career guidance to ensure that students complete rigorous programs of study to meet postsecondary goals (SREB, 2007a; Public Law 109-270). Schools should create guidance and advisement systems that ensure all students, by the end of grade 9, have a high school program of study that maps out career and postsecondary goals, outlines courses that must be taken to meet the goals, and identifies an adult mentor who will annually review the student’s progress.

Last, Perkins IV provides for comprehensive, professional preparation and staff development for career and technical education teachers (Public Law 109-270; SREB, 2007a). These experiences are not limited to one-day or short-term workshops. The professional development can be ongoing. The central idea is that professional development activities should have a positive and lasting impact on classroom practices and instruction.

While Perkins IV has provisions that guide the work of career and technical centers, the legislation also supports partnerships among many stakeholder groups and organizations. These include secondary schools, postsecondary schools, bachelor’s...
degree-granting institutions, career/technical education schools, local workforce investment boards, business and industry, and intermediaries (SREB, 2007a).

Of the new provisions included in the recently reauthorized Perkins IV, supporting partnerships is the area which is most essential to this research. Forming relationships with outside entities possibly enables schools to meet tangible needs of students, as well as provide educational activities that enhance curriculum and pedagogy. For example, individuals involved in these networks provide insight to teachers on how to provide “rigorous content that is aligned with challenging academic standards and the relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare them for further education and careers in current and/or emerging professions” (SREB, 2007a, p. 2). Resources gained from these alliances, coupled with competency based learning, also enhance students’ problem-solving skills, work attitudes, general employability, technical and occupation-specific skills, and knowledge of various industry requirements.

Before Perkins IV was reauthorized, there was not a strong push for linking schools with business and industry. Perkins IV made forming these relationships a priority to help make certain students receive the knowledge and training necessary to keep the United States competitive (Public Law 109-270). Moreover, Perkins requires CTE programs to work with business and industry representatives with the goal of ensuring that course curricula are current and relevant to industry practices. It appears that since forming partnerships is a major component of the Perkins legislation, there would be a significant amount of research dedicated to determining whether partnerships are serving their intended purposes. However, this has not been the case. This research
will help determine whether Perkins IV intentions are being addressed by two program areas at Ohio Career Center (OCC).

**Statement of the Problem**

Scholarly literature that discusses the motivating factors as to why schools and businesses form partnerships is scarce. Even more difficult to find are studies that have attempted to describe how these partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy. Although many traditional schools form purposeful relationships with business and industry representatives, these relationships are particularly evident at career/technical education centers. These centers offer alternative educational programs for students who attend traditional high schools and wish to receive additional skills in specific career fields. This training affords students extensive preparation that is required to enter either college or the workforce upon graduating from high school (PL 105-332, 2006). The training also orients students to requirements of college programs so that those who opt for post-secondary education will have a strong knowledge base in the career majors they choose.

This study examines two program areas at an Ohio Career Center (OCC) that have multiple ongoing partnerships with the business community. OCC offers thirty-eight career/technical program areas and each has business partners, more specifically referred to as advisory boards. It is the responsibility of faculty in each program area to recruit business representatives to compose the advisory boards for their respective program areas. Each advisory board is expected to meet with its specific faculty member(s) and one school administrator at least twice a year. According to OCC school administrators, the major role of advisory boards at OCC is to review course curricula to ensure they are congruent with industry standards. Although each program area offered
at OCC has a state mandated curriculum, oftentimes course curricula are dated and do not address emerging and innovative practices that are being implemented in the career fields where students desire to gain employment. Hence, employers help teachers become abreast of current techniques that are required by boards that govern business operations and regulations.

Although programs at OCC are required to form advisory boards, the relationships between teachers and advisory boards have never been studied to determine if advisory boards are effectively shaping curriculum and pedagogy. Also, administrators and teachers have not ascertained what motivates business representatives to commit to serving on advisory boards. Discovering motivating factors for partnering is important because teachers are responsible for recruiting advisory board members to serve on their respective boards. Undoubtedly, if teachers are not aware of why business and industry representatives partner with schools, it becomes difficult for teachers to appeal to prospective advisory board members.

**Overview of Ohio Career Center (OCC)**

The career center studied for this research has existed for 40 years and serves sixteen area public high schools. Nearly 60% of students who enroll at Ohio Career Center attend college. The OCC Career and Technical School District is composed of two main campuses and several satellite locations at five of its associate high schools. OCC offers thirty-eight program areas with career foci such as computer programming, automotive technology, dental hygiene, law enforcement, culinary arts and financial services. Although the programs prepare students for workplace success, the required courses are designed to equip students with academic skills that are needed to excel in
college as well. The typical OCC student spends half the academic day in a career program lab and the other half in academic courses offered at OCC; however, students have the option of taking academic courses at their affiliate schools.

Students who attend Ohio Career Center are not required to pay tuition. However, some programs require students to pay small fees for uniforms or equipment. The school is funded primarily through federal funding, including contributions from each of its sixteen associate schools. Each affiliate school is required to contribute approximately 70 percent of the per pupil funding for each of its students who choose to attend OCC. Therefore, money that would be used to educate students at their affiliate schools is transferred to OCC.

Students who are interested in attending OCC must complete an application by the second day of their junior year of high school. Interested students can obtain applications from guidance counselors at their affiliated schools or on the career center’s web site. Program areas typically reach enrollment capacity quickly so students are encouraged to apply during the sophomore year. Teachers select students for program admission using a variety of criteria, including the appropriateness of a personal essay as it relates to the desired career program, past attendance records, and grades during the freshmen and sophomore years of high school. Students who are accepted into the program are notified by their guidance counselor and a letter sent via postal mail. Each program offered at OCC, except the Cisco Networking Academy (I)\(^1\), requires that students spend both their junior and senior years preparing for their chosen career paths.

\(^1\) CNA requires only one year because it is a fast-paced, satellite program for exceptionally gifted students only.
Students enrolled at OCC are officially considered students at their affiliate schools and are able to be involved in sports and other extracurricular activities at that school. Additionally, they participate in graduation commencement exercises with the affiliate school and receive its traditional diploma. Students who complete a career program at OCC also receive a career and technical certificate and a career passport that contains their résumé, attendance record, career plans, transcript, career and technical program competencies and career goals. Further, many students leave with industry recognized certifications in their career fields. For example, some business students leave with *Microsoft Office* certification. Students in health fields may earn state certification for dental assisting, x-ray licensure, or Red Cross certification in First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

Each program area at the Ohio Career Center, as Perkins IV requires, is engaged in business partnerships in the form of advisory boards. A board member represents the industry in which he or she is employed, and, in some cases, represents a specific firm. Although the commitment to serve on advisory boards is made by individuals who are interested in working with teachers, administrators and students, these representatives often help establish connections with their places of employment to secure school-to-work experiences for students. These individuals can be instrumental in helping secure funding for program areas, including supplies and equipment.

Although advisory board members (ABMs) provide the same support as traditional partnerships, in areas such as donations and guest speaking, which require less significant amounts of time, advisory boards are typically more involved on a long term basis. A noteworthy distinguishing factor is that ABMs dedicate a great deal of time
working with curricular and pedagogical issues. Each advisory board at OCC consists of between eight and twenty people who represent the industry.

For this study, the Law Enforcement and Financial Services programs at OCC were observed for data collection on partnering activities with advisory boards. Each of these programs has advisory boards that are comprised of approximately fifteen people each. The Business advisory board has been ongoing with many of the same representatives for the past 15 years. However, Law Enforcement’s advisory board was composed of many first-year members who were recruited by the novice teacher who was serving his first year as an educator.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the potential for securing resources (such as human capital, occupational and academic support, and financial donations) influences the formation and sustainability of school-business partnerships for programs at OCC and employers, and how these partnerships shape course curricula and pedagogy.

A main purpose of these partnerships, according to Perkins IV, is to get industry representatives to help monitor course curricula (Public Law 109-270). However, schools also seek relationships for other reasons such as financial assistance, donations, and the opportunity for practical work experiences for students (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986). Similarly, reports suggest that businesses agree to work with schools for reasons other than shaping course curricula (e.g., ERS, 2004). These motives may include having access to human capital or for social legitimacy (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1978).
Though there are many possible motives as to why each entity decides to partner, it is hoped that teachers and students realize a substantial benefit through improved curricula and practical teaching methods. This study is an attempt to ascertain the factors underlying alliance formation among schools and businesses, as well as to determine the influence of the shared expertise of advisory board members in shaping program curricula and teachers’ instructional methods.

**Significance of the Study**

The research undertaken in this study is intended to be beneficial on multiple levels. On a scholarly level, this study contributes to the deficient school-business partnership literature. Although some publications can be found that discuss mutual benefits of partnering activities, rare is the scholarly literature that devotes itself to the motivating factors for partnering and how these partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy. Further, while resources gained through partnerships should be “used to support and supplement activities that address school needs in such areas as staff development, student enrichment, basic skills, and career education” (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986, p. 60), few studies have evaluated whether partnerships are meeting these goals.

This study also contributes to the knowledge base of career and technical school administrators and policymakers. The recently reauthorized Perkins IV has strong implications for career and technical education (CTE) programs. According to this act, each state must develop a plan as to how it will address the new federal mandates (Public Law 109-270). Local school districts must assess the effectiveness of their current partnership activities, so they will be better able to implement the state’s new plan. The
findings from this study will assist administrators, teachers and other stakeholders with this task. More specifically, research findings from this study will assist the two programs that are its focus. The teachers of these programs and their advisory boards need to assess whether partnerships are serving their intended purposes, meeting specific collaboratively developed goals and addressing curriculum relevance.

Throughout this work, six terms will be consistently used. They are Advisory Board, Career/Technical Center, Curriculum, Pedagogy, School-Business Partnership and Resources. The definitions provided below explain the meanings of these terms in the context of this research.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Advisory Board** – a collective body of individuals representing business, industry and/or institutions of higher learning who make recommendations to teachers and administrators on how to improve the educational process for students. Advisory board members also act as agents who acquire needed resources for the program areas they advise.

2. **Career/Technical Center** – schools that offer career and technical programs, formerly known as vocational education, where students have a concentration in a specific career area and often have the option of graduating with an industry recognized certificate or credential, in addition to the high school diploma.

3. **Curriculum** – the information and experiences in which teachers are expected to engage students as they are enrolled in a specific program of study.
4. **Pedagogy** – Instructional methods that teachers use to deliver the course curriculum. These usually consist of lectures, hands-on experiences, group discussions, etc.

5. **School-Business Partnership** – Collaboration of individuals representing schools, business, and institutions of higher education who work toward a common goal or securing needed resources.

6. **Resources** – Anything of value to a receiving organization.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the topic of study, present an argument as to why the research was important to undertake and outline terms that will be consistently used throughout this document. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature, legislation, and theoretical framework—resource dependence theory—that has shaped school-business partnerships. It also outlines curricular and pedagogical issues in schools. Chapter 3 reveals the methodology and research lens—interpretivism—that was used for data collection. Chapter 4 then presents the research findings where I share the results of my data collection. To conclude, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study’s findings and recommendations for practice and future research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

School-business partnerships can be traced back as early as the 18th century (Pautler, 1999). They have a strong history although formal legislation encouraging the formation of these alliances was not prevalent until late in the 20th century. The Perkins and School-to-Work legislations are the two policies that have most recently shaped career and technical education’s efforts to work with business. The main purpose of legislation that encouraged partnerships between industry and schools is to make evident the connection between curriculum and careers in an effort to ensure students are prepared to enter the workplace and/or college.

Historically, there has been a disconnect between what students were taught in school and what they needed to know in order to be successful in the workplace. To address this problem, both Perkins and School-to-Work legislation called for employers to assist schools with developing and delivering relevant curricula and instructional methods. Overwhelmingly, employers have accepted the responsibility of working with schools, albeit in various capacities. Although any assistance is helpful, federal policies have specifically determined that assistance with curricular issues is an area where much assistance is needed (PL 105-332, 2006), and this work requires the most time (Kranberg, 1993). While the work is demanding, business has stepped to the challenge.
History of Business Involvement in Education

Collaborations between schools and the workplace are not novel. Although the Vocational Education Act of 1984 (Perkins I) and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA) encouraged employers to provide valuable work experiences for students, school-business partnership roots can most certainly be traced back to as early as 1776, the time of the American Revolution (Pautler, 1999). During this period, school was not a priority for many Americans. It is estimated that only ten percent of school-aged children attended school and they did not attend regularly. Education was viewed as a reward as opposed to a priority. More important issues such as farming and making a living from trading took precedence over schooling. Informal apprenticeships existed, however, in which children learned by imitating adults performing the skills needed to be effective in the workplace. Boys often worked with their fathers to learn the skills needed to perform daily tasks. Similarly, girls labored alongside their mothers to acquire the talents needed to be efficient homemakers (Pautler, 1999). Even centuries ago, informal experiences took place that are now referred to as job shadowing and work-based learning.

Throughout the Industrial Revolution, which occurred from about 1760-1850, people worked in deplorable conditions. Education was seen as the solution to this problem (Pautler, 1999). Public schools were asked to prepare students for the occupations that existed in society. However, schools were inconsistent in matching student preparation with workplace needs; some were more successful than others. Such discrepancies led to the Kalamazoo court decision (Fox, 1973) which established the right for states to found and regulate secondary schools that would be supported by public
taxes. These public-supported schools eventually initiated vocational education programs (Pautler, 1999) that offered courses that met workplace needs.

By the 1850’s middle and western states began to make schooling mandatory. However, those children who came from families of middle to upper socioeconomic status were those who benefited from schooling. Economically disadvantaged children were seldom able to take advantage of formalized education (Pautler, 1999). However, in 1852, when a consensus solidified around the notion that a general education should be provided for everyone, compulsory education attendance legislation was passed (Cubberly, 1919; Pautler, 1999). As a result, all school-aged children were required to attend school.

Around 1860, state school systems in America were developing alongside about 6,000 private academies. The academies that were most popular for those who sought to improve their social or economic status offered practical applications to life (Pautler, 1999). In the 1890’s and beyond, significant high school reform legislation was passed and the number of high schools throughout the country increased rapidly (Cubberly, 1919). Most of these high schools were comprehensive in that they offered college preparatory and basic courses (Pautler, 1999). However, the larger communities began to favor schools that focused on specialized purposes. Such schools are now referred to as career and technology centers (Castenallo, Stringfield, & Stone, 2003).

Growing support for vocational education emerged between 1900 and 1920. In 1905, the governor of Massachusetts, William Douglas, responded to a decision by the state legislature to re-evaluate the educational system (MCITE, 1906). The governor implemented a task force called the Commission on Industrial and Technical Education,
and he assigned its members the duty of investigating needs for education regarding preparation for the various trades in the commonwealth. The Commission’s conclusions had strong implications for the future of vocational education. One of the main conclusions was that for the majority of students who leave school and enter the workplace, usually at age 14 or 15, the first three to four years are wasted because they possess very little productive value. The jobs that they qualify for require “so little intelligence and so little manual skill that they are not educative in any sense” (MCITE, 1906, p. 18).

With an aim of improving the deficiencies in the educational system, the Commission recommended that industrial education be developed through the existing public school system and through the creation of independent industrial schools (MCITE, 1906). One way the Commission suggested this be done was by modifying the curricula in elementary schools to include instruction and practice in the elements of productive industry. It also suggested that schoolwork be of high cultural and industrial value. Additionally, high school work should emphasize the connection that math, science, and drawing have to industrial life, with a special emphasis on local industries (MCITE, 1906). For example, the Commission suggested that algebra and geometry be taught to show their relationship to construction, that chemistry be tied to domestic sciences, and botany’s relationship to horticulture and agriculture be emphasized.

Since the Commission was successful at identifying effective models for the Massachusetts schools to use in addressing workforce needs, a second commission was delegated the responsibility of developing a model that would benefit industrial leaders and educators nationally. With regard to establishing the independent industrial schools,
the Commission suggested that the governor and his council appoint five people to serve for five years (MCITE, 1906). This taskforce was charged with investigating local industrial needs and aiding in the introduction and formulation of industrial education programs. The commissioners also supervised the operation of the schools and reported on the schools’ progress. Notably, attendance at the schools for children under the age of 14 was not a substitute for attending the traditional public schools that were required by law. Underage students who wished to partake of both experiences could attend classes at the industrial schools during evening sessions (MCITE, 1906).

Until around 1918, education was viewed loosely “as something that goes on for a period of time each day in school, and [the] curriculum consisted largely of discovered facts and principles communicated to the young” (Pautler, 1999, p.5). Much of what students learned was not relevant to their daily lived experiences, until years later when preparation for the actual business of living was provided in schools.

Throughout the twentieth century, numerous other movements addressed the needs of industrial America. One of the most significant was the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Act, which was first implemented in 1984. Pautler (1999) briefly summarized the act by stating:

sought to assist states [to] expand, improve, modernize, and develop quality vocational-education programs to meet needs of the nation’s future workforce and to improve productivity and promote economic growth. The act called for providing greater equity in access to quality vocational-education opportunities for women, minorities, and special-needs populations; greater cooperation between public service agencies and the private sector; improvement in academic foundations for students; and strengthening of the vocational-educational research process. The act provided for use of state-certified counselors in programs designed to
aid students in career planning, decision-making, and employability skills (Pautler, 1999, p.16).

Three years after the implementation of the Perkins Act, the U.S. Department of Labor reviewed vocational, or career and technical, research that had been devoted to the last years of the 20th century. From this analysis, a report was derived that aimed at addressing the route educators should take to ensure students were well-prepared for their careers. It indicated that:

The American economy would grow; U.S. manufacturing would comprise a much smaller share of the economy by 2000; the workforce would grow slowly, characterized by older workers with an increase in women and the disadvantaged; and much higher-level skills would be needed in service industries. The report stated that 22 percent of jobs in 1987 required a college degree and that, for new jobs created from 1984-2000, 30 percent would require a college degree, and an additional 22 percent would require between one and three years of college. It was projected that the future high-skill service economy would require a high-skilled and productive workforce (Pautler, 1999).

Thus, it was apparent that America’s schools would need to prepare the young generation to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing economy. To make certain aligned academic and workplace preparation would occur, it was inevitable that schools and business would partner.

**School-Business Partnerships**

According to Otterbourg and Timpane (1986), partnerships are “political resources, attracting allies during budget times and encouraging commitment to public funding for public schools. Through local partnership activities, business representatives gain a clearer understanding of how sound public education contributes to their own
interests as producers and employers…” (p. 60). Although these collaborative alliances are intended to support education, businesses understand that it is in their best interest to work with schools because they have a vested interest; they require well-prepared human capital. Otterbourg and Timpane further assert that the combined effort of schools and business partners produces better results for schools than if either of these entities attempted enhancing education alone.

The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships (CCSP) defines partnerships in more detail as “a mutually supportive relationship between a business and a school or school district in which the partners commit themselves to specific goals and activities intended to benefit students and schools” (CCSP, 2006). According to Kranberg (1993), there are four basic levels of school-business partnerships. Hence, school-business partnership is more of an overarching concept that encompasses a variety of activities that are carried out with the assistance of community partners.

**Kranberg’s Partnership Levels**

Kranberg (1993) states that the first level of partnerships is a relationship of “Helping Hands,” commonly referred to as Adopt-A-School. Helping Hands is a partnership activity in which businesses assist schools by helping to improve school activities that are already implemented. This aid may come in the form of money, guest speakers, equipment, and scholarships. Additionally, businesses that serve as Helping Hands partners may donate awards to students who demonstrate increased academic achievement. For example, in the past Pizza Hut restaurant managers have provided “Book It” awards to students who read a certain number of books in a specified amount
of time. Award recipients were able to exchange these certificates for personal pan pizzas at their local Pizza Hut restaurant.

The next level, Programmatic Initiatives, entails programs where schools collaborate with one specific firm in an effort to develop projects that meet curriculum objectives (Kranberg, 1993). The firm works with school personnel to “develop programs that target specific curriculum and/or student and teacher needs” (p. 20). The business partner may help address programmatic concerns such as student achievement, curriculum development and preparing students for future careers.

The third level addresses policy changes (Kranberg, 1993). Oftentimes, schools have dated procedures that are no longer relevant. For instance, in the 1990’s many schools ruled that students, including those in 12th grade, must stay on campus all day even if they had only a couple of courses. This resulted in students having multiple “study” or “free” periods where they sat idle for hours. As the school-to-work movement became prevalent, business representatives worked with schools to help students gain both paid and unpaid work experiences. Educators, business leaders and community members worked together to advocate for appropriate funding and support of new policies. Stakeholders who are involved in policy changing activities have a common goal of advocating for schools to receive needed resources to implement and sustain new educational policies. For example, business representatives may lobby for increased funding to support career and technical education programs that help students secure job opportunities while in high school.

The final level deals with alliances and community coalition efforts. At this level several businesses or agencies, as opposed to just one as with the second level, work with
school(s) to help bring about significant educational change. The restructuring that these organizations help to bring about are too comprehensive to be shaped by just one firm. Collaborative efforts between employers and schools often bring about significant curriculum and instructional changes (Kranberg, 1993). This type of restructuring is best implemented with the assistance of multiple firms to ensure ample perspectives are considered before implementing changes that will affect what students are taught and how teachers deliver lessons. According to Kranberg, involvement at this level is quite difficult to plan and execute; however, this is the level that most informs this research.

Alliances, or partnerships, between schools and businesses are a central focus of this study because this research aims to understand if partnerships between businesses and the programs that were studied have been successful at executing this sophisticated level of partnerships.

Businesses recognize that the students who are produced from local schools are the pool from which they will likely select when searching for employees (Bowman & Dawson-Jackson, 1994; Educational Research Service [ERS], 2004). Hence, it is in the best interest of employers to work closely with schools so that they have influence over the training and preparation that students receive before entering the workforce (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986). According to Woodside (1986) “The rapid proliferation of these school-business partnerships suggest just how far the business world has come in recognizing that it cannot exist as an island...” (p. 150). While attempting to work with students in a closer capacity, many employers have embraced the school-to-work initiative which allows students the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while attending high school.
Background of School-to-Work and Carl Perkins Acts

Funding for the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (Perkins I) lapsed in 1990, but was subsequently reauthorized with increased funding through 1995. The reauthorized act (Perkins II) emphasized the importance of integrating vocational and academic coursework (Davis, 2008). While Perkins II had an additional year of remaining funding, another legislation which has strong implications for career and technical education was passed, the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA). STWOA exhausted its funding in 2002. By this time, Perkins II had been reauthorized into the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Amendments of 1998 (Perkins III). Perkins III encompassed many of the same ideas covered in the STWOA and Perkins II (NCRVE, 2008). In 2006, Perkins was once again reauthorized into Perkins IV. Although these are separate legislative works, their content and purposes are complementary. Both policies encourage and support career and technical preparation, school-to-work transitions, the integrating of academic and vocational education, linking school and work-based learning in meaningful ways, and building powerful alliances between schools, the workplace and the community (NCRVE, 2008).

The major difference between Perkins legislation and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act is that the STWOA was much broader in scope and more detailed than previous Perkins legislation. Perkins legislation guides state and local agencies that govern programs designed to equip youth with the career and technical skills needed to be successful in the workforce. However, the STWOA promotes school-to-work systems that encourage partnerships of educators, employers, and businesses to work together to
create high-quality school-to-work programs for all students, as opposed to just those
who are enrolled in career/technical programs (Cunanan and Maddy-Bernstein, 1995;
Halperin, 1994). Although funding for the STWOA legislation is expired, the policy
continues to shape educational practices at both traditional and career/technical high
schools.

Passed by Congress in 1994, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA)
was designed to build a framework for a system of school-to-work (STW) programs
across the nation. The Act aimed to assist young people in obtaining formal education
and work-based training by connecting education reform, workforce development and
economic development to provide students with both the academic and career skills
required for today’s workplace (P.L. 98-524). The STWOA “set an ambitious agenda for
changing American schools. It was a response to concerns about how American schools
prepare youth for careers, the role of American industry in a competitive global economy,
falling real wages of young adults without college degrees, poor performance of
American students on international measures, and employers’ disappointment with young
labor force entrants” (Hershey, 2003, p.79).

Although it appears that the School-to-Work Opportunities Act was a natural
emergence from earlier initiatives, Hershey (2003) suggests that the school-to-work
initiative is disconnected to any of the prior political reforms. The act, in Hershey’s
view, was more of a reaction than a continuation of prior legislation.

Factors that Brought STW to the Fore

School-to-Work expands young people’s choices in life by preparing them for
high-skill careers and further training and education. This enrichment helps students
become confident that they have the skills to succeed. Students have opportunities to
learn academic subjects by watching how knowledge is applied in the real world. They
are awarded chances to learn job-specific skills with stronger academic grounding.
School-to-work also motivates students to continue learning because they experience first
hand how many desirable careers require exemplary preparatory training.

Fortunately, school-to-work programs at individual school sites have the
flexibility of adapting programs to meet the needs of their students; although there is a
particular structure the programs must adhere to. The general program requirements
were as follows:

A School-to-Work Opportunities program shall:

(a) integrate school-based learning and work-based learning, integrate
academic and occupational learning, and establish effective linkages
between secondary and postsecondary education;

(b) provide participating students with the opportunity to complete career
majors;

(c) provide participating students, to the extent practicable, with strong
experience in and understanding of all aspects of the industry the students
are preparing to enter; and

(d) provide all students with equal access to the full range of such program
components (including both school-based and work-based learning
components) and related activities, such as recruitment, enrollment, and
placement activities

(Pub. L. 103-239, Title I, Sec. 101, 1994)

A significant factor that brought STW to the fore was employers’ complaints that
high-school graduates’ poor basic skills are inadequate for them to excel in the
workplace. To address this problem, employers spend billions of dollars per year
providing basic-skills education for their employees (Rosenbaum, 2003). Evidence has
indicated that high schools have misunderstood work-entry problems by not viewing them broadly enough. High schools tend to focus on college goals, but not career goals. While high schools have emphasized academic deficiencies, they have neglected to address soft skills that need improvement such as communication techniques, manners and social skills.

High schools, moreover, have focused on the internal motivation of students but not the external factors that affect their motivation (Rosenbaum, 2003). “As a result of this narrow focus,” according to Rosenbaum, “high schools underestimate how many students are work-bound; they prevent some students from developing highly valued non-cognitive competencies, and they prevent many students from getting preparation for realistic careers” (p. 204).

Another problematic issue is that many schools have adopted implicit “college for all” policies, although not every student is equipped to attend college (Rosenbaum, 2003). Historically, teachers and school counselors have advised students to go into the workforce after high school if their grades, test scores, attendance records, etc. suggested that they may not be successful in college. Now, however, this practice has clearly changed. As a recent study found, guidance counselors encourage practically all students to go to college. Counselors do not caution students if they are likely to struggle with college based on their high school performance (Rosenbaum, 2003).

Findings from the second follow-up of the National Educational Longitudinal Study 1988–2000 revealed that 84 percent of high-school seniors planned to earn either an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree (Rosenbaum, 2003). Among this percentage were students who had not performed well in high school. Although a large number of
students aspired to obtain higher education, less than half of them had achieved this goal by the year 2000 (Rosenbaum, 2003). Similar results were found in the High School and Beyond Study a decade earlier. In this study, a sample of high school seniors was tracked up to ten years after graduation. It was found that of the seniors who had anticipated attending college, but had poor high school grades, fewer than 14 percent of them completed the degree (Rosenbaum, 2003).

Because of high failure rates among college students, encouraging all students to attend college may not be the best approach. Students would benefit from conversations with parents, teachers, and school counselors about alternative options that may be available to them. Although influential adults may be well-intentioned, they sometimes disservice students by not informing them of what it actually takes to be successful in a college program. Rosenbaum (2003, p. 206) suggests that “counselors should give students information about backup options in good, well-paid careers that do not require college,” such as construction, trades, clerical and administrative support, technical specialties, printing, graphics, financial services, and social services.

These jobs offer great ways to earn a living, but many students are never informed of them because counselors may not know the job requirements. Rosenbaum (2003) suggests that the role of career and technical education teachers be expanded to help inform counselors of positions that do not require a college education. Many teachers who are aware of the requirements for jobs refer students who lack academic achievement, but display job potential, to businesses and agencies for employment. Additionally, many career and technical education teachers have worked in corporations or small businesses at some point and have contacts that may prove valuable for students.
Although teachers are often successful at finding employment for students who have not done well in their academic subjects, it is definitely necessary for students to display strong academic skills. However, soft skills such as self-motivation and social interaction must be emphasized as well. Employers have stressed attendance, dependability, perseverance, attention to quality, and ability to work with others as the most essential characteristics their employees should possess (Rosenbaum, 2003). It is pertinent that these soft skills are learned before students enter the workforce because employers do not believe they are able to train soft skills once individuals are hired. If students do not learn these skills before entering the job market they will most likely never learn them (Rosenbaum, 2003). Moreover, the lack of soft skills could cause them to be terminated from their job positions.

Since high school is the last institution of formalized training before non-college bound students enter the workplace, it is reasonable to expect that this is where students would receive preparation for the skills they will need for workplace survival. Nevertheless, this is not reality because teachers must focus on academic skills and state mandated standards. This focus often results in the neglect of working with students on interpersonal skills. Therefore, there is a significant inconsistency between what employers view as priority and what schools provide.

School-to-Work policies are important because they provide students the opportunity to actually experience the world of work and gain a first hand understanding of what employers’ expectations are so that they will not be surprised when they enter the workforce. Rosenbaum (2003) reports that many students are absent or tardy several days during their first week of employment. Additionally, students’ work is of poor
quality and they are disobedient. These problems may be attributed to the fact that in high school many of these behaviors are ignored. Once students who exhibit undesirable behaviors enter the workforce, they are astonished when they are terminated for the exact behaviors that they exhibited in school. This is evidence that teachers, administrators and parents should make strong efforts to deter any student behavior that would not be tolerated in society and the workplace. Although some students know the importance of being well-behaved, professional and respectable, there are others who think that it is acceptable to say and do as they desire, regardless of appropriateness. Therefore, schools must adopt policies to ensure they are meeting various student needs.

In comparison with other federal initiatives that have been discussed, Erlichson (2003) suggests that the STWOA is distinctive. He states, “The act allowed states to define goals and processes for obtaining these goals” (Erlichson, 2003, p. 101). Unlike other previous educational programs and employment and training initiatives, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act did not establish another program with federal mandates to address the needs of a particular target population, nor did it require the adoption of certain strategies to build on existing education and training programs. Instead, it offered a flexible framework for communities to design career-focused educational systems for all students.

**STW Policy Implementation**

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) “drew upon theories of how students learn best, models of technical education practiced in Europe, and elements of American vocational education. It envisioned four changes in American education” (Hershey, 2003, p. 79):
• **Local partnerships of educators would play a central role.** Collaboration among schools, postsecondary education and training institutions, employers, labor, and others would help schools produce graduates with the skills for the new economy. Employers would help guide curricular changes and give students opportunities to develop and practice skills in the workplace.

• **Students’ experiences would change.** Students would gain opportunities to learn about careers and formulate goals, and engage more in “career majors” – programs that integrate academic and vocational instruction, with links to work-based learning.

• **Student outcomes would improve.** With greater focus on career goals and more opportunities to learn in a work context, students would achieve better outcomes, be more motivated, do better academically, and make smoother transitions to employment or further education.

• **STW ideas and practices would be embedded in American education.** Federal STW funds would trigger development of durable systems of policies, programs, curriculum, and opportunities for students as well as collaborative relationships that would outlive the period of federal funding.

Hershey, 2003, p. 79

School-to-Work links education reform with workforce development and economic development by engaging many stakeholders in designing and implementing a comprehensive, integrated system of education and workforce preparation that reflects local needs. It opens a variety of post-high school opportunities by merging secondary and post-secondary education. School-to-Work is also closely linked with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which provides a framework for state efforts to improve student academic achievement and establishes the National Skill Standards Board that helped develop a system of voluntary occupational skill standards.

There appears to be a lack of consistency in growth regarding STW programs that are more intensive and obligatory. For example, for STW programs to be successful it is
essential that they balance student interests, employer motivations, and school-employer agreement on program design (Hershey, 2003). Businesses are typically more eager to engage in efforts that do not require a high level of commitment or resources, such as an afternoon of job shadowing. This lower level of commitment may be preferred because working with students for extended activities compels the employer to consider associated costs and risks that are coupled with these philanthropic endeavors (Hershey, 2003).

Although employers realize that allowing students to gain experience by working with their businesses results in being viewed positively by onlookers (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986), some are still hesitant because of the time it takes to orient students. Employers must factor in the time that must be dedicated to teaching students how to properly prepare for work-related responsibilities and other tasks. One may assume that employers focus on the long-term benefits of these experiences for students, but in actuality many tend to concentrate on whether potential benefits for their business outweigh the cost and effort that goes into training students.

**Disparate Positions on School-to-Work**

Poor understanding of key school-to-work principles among some stakeholder groups and difficulty creating and sustaining collaboration among various public and private entities are two of the greatest challenges in implementing STW policies. Nonetheless, striking progress has been made in building state-level interagency collaboration and forming local partnerships with employers.

Hughes (1998) notes that employer motivation sometimes has the tendency to conflict with the goal of providing high-quality experiences for students. It is pertinent
that educator and employer goals are congruent so that students recognize the intended benefits of the STW program and are attracted to it.

Although it is sometimes difficult to get employers to commit to school-to-work initiatives, when these partnerships are fostered students and businesses benefit greatly. Students profit because they are able to experience a direct relationship between what they are learning in their core academic subjects and how that learning relates to the workplace (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986). In many instances, students are introduced to concepts but never master them because they seem irrelevant. When students are able to take advantage of long term initiatives such as internships and co-ops in areas of interest to them, they are more likely to pay more attention in class because they understand that the skills they are learning really are relevant to their chosen career fields.

Similarly, businesses benefit because they can view student internship experiences as equivalent to having six-month interview periods with future job candidates. Employers are able to observe student growth and determine whether the students would potentially be successful in that business. In addition, if employers recognize areas where students need improvement, they can speak with the school-to-work coordinator or other school personnel so that the student has the opportunity to improve upon those skills before graduating. With this type of school-to-work partnership, where businesses and teachers are serious about training students to master the skills they need to be successful, both students and employers potentially benefit (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986).
Controversy Caused by the School-to-Work Policy

One of the main concerns with the STW policy has been that it stigmatizes students as being prepared for proletarian jobs, as opposed to receiving college preparation. However, career and technical education students benefit from learning academic concepts along with practical, career-focused applications (Lerman, 2003). Students who perform well in career and technical education programs benefit from engaging in STW initiatives because they graduate with work experience and substantial knowledge of the field. Moreover, if students enroll in college and remain in their chosen career paths, they have significant advantages over their peers who did not partake of STW opportunities while in high school.

While some career and technical education students do not intend to pursue a college education, there are college-bound students who enroll in career preparatory courses. Oftentimes, however, strict enrollment criteria present barriers for students who wish to enroll in courses that lead to higher paying careers. Some courses require that students take prerequisite course(s) before enrolling in specific career preparation programs. Further, students are often required to earn a certain grade in the prerequisite(s) in order to be admitted into the program area of choice, such as marketing and accounting. However, school-to-career classes that have historically been taken by lower-achieving students (such as family and consumer sciences, cosmetology, and automotive repair) do not have a grade point average requirement. It is apparent that although all students can take advantage of STW opportunities, there is a distinction in the caliber of students who qualify to enroll in specific career majors.
Some believe that STW has been a success; however, all stakeholders do not agree that school-to-work has been beneficial. Three notions that characterize the STW initiative are school-based learning, work-based learning, and connections between school and work. However, these ideas have not been implemented equally across all schools. According to Brown (2002), it has been found that a work-related curriculum was the most widely used tactic for implementing STW, with 78 percent of schools providing it and 55 percent of students participating in its activities. Integrated academic and vocational curricula were also available at more than half of the schools (67 percent) and 39 percent of students participated in these school-based learning activities. Still, work-based education efforts were not so widely accepted. While 68 percent of schools provided job shadowing, 39 percent offered mentoring, and 46 percent afforded internships, less than 8 percent of students participated in each of these activities (Brown, 2002).

Although most stakeholders realize the benefits of authentic work-based educational experiences, according to Brown (2002), these are much more difficult to provide because they require the participation and support of community business leaders. Career and technical educators must be dedicated to STW initiatives and heavily involved in the planning and implementing of STW activities. Further, teachers must enlist the active support of employers and the community at large if the programs are to be effective and perpetuated. Much interaction needs to occur to facilitate students’ transitions to work experience programs. An extremely low percentage of students who enroll in these apprenticeship programs actually complete them (Brown, 2002). Both
teachers and employers need to develop greater knowledge and expertise regarding the
delivery of work-based learning opportunities so that they can better forge relationships
between school and workplace occurrences.

Notably, students and parents have also realized the benefits of STW as they see
first hand how its programs have led to improved academic achievement. According
Hughes et al. (2001) and Kazis and Pennington (1999), conclusions about the
effectiveness of the STW initiative include the following:

- STW has improved student attendance, academic achievement, and graduation
  rates.
- STW has served to increase academic rigor in the classroom
- STW has prepared students for college entrance and has decreased attrition rates.
- STW has helped young people become prepared for employment and obtain
  higher quality jobs with better wages than they might normally get.

Rivera-Batiz (2003) notes that before the implementation of the STW policy,
“researchers repeatedly found that lack of collaboration between employers and schools,
substitution of basic academic courses for practical job training, and tracking and
segregation of students into training for specific low-skilled jobs caused many vocational
programs to offer low-quality education to clients” (p. 170). However, after the STW
movement addressed deficiencies of prior movements by offering “innovative programs
that strengthen bonds between employers and schools and reintegrate academics with
work content” (p. 170), momentum was increased and students received a higher quality education.

**Empirical Studies Evaluating the Efficacy of STW Initiatives**

The benefits of school-to-work for students, employers, schools, and the nation have taken many years to assess. Teenagers progress from high school into the workforce with varying degrees of intervening education and training. The value of learning as a teenager, rather than as an adult, what it means and takes to become a nurse, dentist, or computer software developer in a systematic fashion is something that can only be realized years later (Rivera-Batiz, 2003). However, attempts at gathering this information from data on national and corporate output as well as individuals’ living standards and sense of career fulfillment have been made (Rivera-Batiz, 2003). Still, it is difficult to assess the full benefit of STW initiatives.

Rivera-Batiz (2003) discusses the involvement of racial and ethnic minorities in STW programs. She refers to the findings of the 1996 School Administrator’s Survey, sponsored by the National School-to-Work Office and the data collected in the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) which was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. The NLSY97 documented the transition from school-to-work of 8,984 youth. Rivera-Batiz references initial interviews with students that were conducted in 1997 and the first follow-up interviews that were conducted in 1998. In this study, African-Americans and Hispanics were over-sampled to ensure adequate sample sizes for the analysis. Overall, NLSY97 included 4,096 whites, 2,204 blacks, and 1,771 Hispanics. The remaining participants belonged to Asian, Native American, and other groups whose small sample sizes did not allow for a robust analysis of their situation. Of
all the findings that emerged from the data set, according to Rivera-Batiz (2003, p. 184) the following seven were most noteworthy:

1. The involvement of high-school students in STW programs has been substantial and has increased sharply between 1997 and 1998. By 1998, close to half of the high-school students sampled in NLSY97 had participated in one or more of these programs. There were significant differences on the basis of race and ethnicity. Non-Hispanic blacks tended to have greater participation rates than both non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics. On the other hand, Hispanics tended to have lower participation rates than other groups.

2. Immigrant status appears critical in accounting for the lower rate of participation of Hispanic youth in STW programs. Immigrant status sharply reduced the likelihood of such participation. Overall, 36.1 percent of Hispanic immigrant youth had participated in a career major or STW-preparatory program before the interview in 1998. This contrasts with the much higher 47.2 percent among Hispanic non-immigrants. Indeed, once immigrant status is taken into account, the Hispanic identifier is no longer negatively related to STW participation.

3. Among the various types of STW-preparatory programs, job shadows and worksite visits are the most popular. Apprenticeships and internships have the lowest participation rates. Hence, the most popular STW programs in place are not the most comprehensive an intensive. No evidence exists in the data analyzed that minority youth or women are being channeled into less-comprehensive and less-intensive programs.

4. In terms of the consequences of participation in STW programs for student outcomes, the study considered the effects on math and science course taking, hours worked, and high school retention. The longitudinal nature of the NLSY97 data set allowed a more robust analysis of the possible causal impacts involved that previous studies have.

5. Participation in the STW transition programs undertaken by youth before their first interview in 1997 was substantially linked to greater course taking in science and math in the year after the 1997 interview. This result suggests that STW programs enhance the curriculum experience of many minority participants, not only by requiring them to take more advanced or comprehensive math and science courses, but even more importantly by motivating them to take those courses in the future.

6. A strong link was discovered between participation in STW programs and subsequent labor-market participation. For all ethnic and racial groups, a
substantial fraction of the additional hours worked during 1998 could be linked to students’ participation in STW programs in earlier years.  

7. Participation in career-majors and STW-preparatory programs also had a strongly positive impact on retention because these programs expose students to potential job opportunities. They can also increase retention by stimulating students’ interest in pursuing additional academic courses that are connected to those future careers. It was also shown that, other factors held constant, students in NLSY97 who participated in STW programs had less likelihood of dropping out of school.  

(Rivera-Batiz, 2003, p. 184)  

As is evident, STW initiatives have been quite beneficial for students. Now that federal funding for this program has exhausted, it is understandable that Perkins legislation was reauthorized into Perkins IV to aid schools with funding career pathways that provide valuable work experience. Kazis and Pennington (2003) state that as national funding for the STW program has diminished, communities that have committed to engaging students in more experiential learning have increased student enthusiasm about learning.  

Kazis and Pennington (2003) also believe that school-to-work characteristics are likely to become the norm over time as the “economy demands from schools an academically rigorous pedagogy that is active, experiential, and contextual” (p. 277). In essence, although funding may not always be provided from the federal government to assist local schools with their efforts to incorporate local partnerships, schools will still be responsible for doing so because otherwise their students will not be prepared for the world of work.  

School-to-work programs should build young people’s desire for further education by showing them that higher paying careers often require post-secondary training. In addition, research suggests that connecting the workplace and in-school
learning benefits employers and students by strengthening student motivation, improving academic and skills standards, increasing labor market awareness, and enhancing productivity.

Further, Brown (2002) notes:

The STWOA has been a driving force in uniting state legislators, employers, schools, parents, and students to enhance student learning and prepare young people for meaningful work. States are providing incentives for schools and employers to work together. Employers are providing up-to-date information about what is happening in the workplace and giving teachers as well as students opportunities to learn first hand about workplace needs. Schools are learning to target their educational practices to enhance academic achievement while connecting learning to its real-world application in the workplace. Teachers, students, and parents are learning what they can do to enhance their own educational and professional development. STW programs have inspired and supported this learning with funding from the STWOA. Now it is the job of all stakeholders in workplace readiness to take the reins and ensure that all of the work and promise that has gone into the STW effort results in improved education and enhanced employment opportunities.

The words of Brown (2002) cannot be overemphasized. The STWOA has been a benefit for young Americans. Although all employers may not initially be eager to join and support this initiative, it is the responsibility of educators and parents to inform employers of the potential benefits of endorsing such programs. For instance, youth often display a sense of excitement simply from listening to guest speakers who come in to discuss what their careers entail, what it will take to persevere in their specific industries, and, of course, average beginning salaries.
Research has shown mutual benefits of school-business partnerships (Shapiro & Iannozzi, 1998; Yan, Goubeaud, and Fry, 2005). When representatives from local businesses partner with schools as mentors, tutors, co-op/internship providers, financial supporters, etc., they will more than likely be the beneficiaries of the well-trained, competent students. Therefore, employers rely on schools to produce human capital that possess skills that are necessary for workplace survival. Similarly, schools are in need of resources businesses can provide (Otterbourg and Timpane, 1986). Two major areas where businesses can assist schools include providing input on curricular and pedagogical issues.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Curriculum and pedagogy are distinct concepts; however, they are complementary. Each of these areas is shaped by business professionals who donate their time to serve as advisory board members. Otterbourg and Timpane (1986) state that in order to “realize the country’s hopes for improvement in the curriculum and revitalization of the teaching profession, education will need business as a partner all year, every year” (p. 73). Hence, schools cannot successfully educate students without including those who bring practical experience. This notion is supported by John Dewey who was a pioneer in encouraging the implementation of “progressive educational experiments and programs” (Reed and Johnson, 2000, p. 91). Dewey believed that hands-on learning experiences which connect academic content to the real world were central to the learning processes of students.

Although course curricula are often implemented the way teachers believe is best for student learning, curricula often express more than what is written on paper (Ben-
Peretz, 1975) and can be viewed as an “embodiment of potential” (p. 151). Based on this author’s views, it is fitting for teachers, administrators, and industry representatives to collaborate in an effort to maximize course curricula.

While Dewey initiated discourse in curriculum theory, it was corporate management’s model that was followed in schools during the early twentieth century (Kliebard, 1993). During this time schools, especially those that specialized in vocational and industrial education, were expected to make certain that students met workplace needs and expectations (Wirth, 2004). Curriculum was the means of meeting this goal. Further, this movement of preparing students to meet workplace expectations inspired relationships between industry and schools. Although modern curricula is still being designed in such a way that it prepares students for work, it has the ability to be enhanced through collaborations between schools and industry. According to McNeil (1996), one of the major goals of career and technical education is to determine whether the content of these programs meet present and future economic needs.

The term curriculum was coined around 1820 (Wiles and Bondi, 2002); however, it was not used in the United states until about one hundred years later. According to Wiles and Bondi, the definition of curriculum is “the course of study” (p. 29). Sowell (1996) provides a broader definition that encompasses both intended and unintended information, skills and beliefs that are transferred to students. She defines it as “what is taught to students” (p. 5).

Harap (1953) addressed the roles that teachers and community members play in curriculum development. He recognized the need for lay participation in educational planning, such as when citizens were invited in to work with personnel on developing an
improved curriculum. This involvement reduced criticism of schools’ curricula. Including “laymen,” or those who do not have a specialization in education, in assisting schools with obtaining community support of its efforts was a move toward progressivism. Progressives “view change as inevitable, pervasive, and good. They welcome it and enlist themselves in the cause of shaping a better future” (Walker, 1990, p. 96).

Dewey, an advocate of Progressivism, viewed books as a mere component of course curricula instead of the ultimate source of knowledge (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). In *Democracy and Education* (1916) Dewey states that students should have the opportunity to actually practice the skills they learn. This belief is carried out in career and technical centers through the use of advisory boards and business partners. Though teachers possess the understanding of their content areas to teach students the knowledge that should be gained from the curriculum, it is often necessary to include professional practitioners who have more developed knowledge and experience to help create a relevant curriculum and practical learning experiences (Marsh and Willis, 1995).

No matter how great or relevant course curricula are, if teachers are not using effective teaching methods students will unlikely retain the concepts and skills needed to show mastery of the content. Pedagogy is a practice that should be informed by “methods, strategies, and skills that apply to the working world…” (Ornstein, 1995, p. 77). Ornstein believes that teaching should be viewed as instinctive and interactive, as opposed to “prescriptive and predictable” (p. 79). If this is an accurate depiction of how teaching should occur, then it may be assumed that advisory board members can have significant impact over the way teachers provide instruction to students.
McNeil (1995) asserts that curricula should be designed and delivered in such a way that it prepares students to learn, engages students in the learning activity and requires that students demonstrate their competence and extend their knowledge. Oftentimes, however, teachers struggle with actively engaging students in learning activities. This is where the utilization of advisory boards or business partners can be helpful. These stakeholders are able to suggest practical, reinforcement activities that assist teachers with connecting content with application.

Moreover, it is suggested by Lewis (1998) that career and technical curricula comprise five distinct components. They include (a) actual work experience, (b) contrived or simulated work experience, (c) study of employment trends, (d) community projects and (e) entrepreneurship. Work experience such as co-ops and internships with industry enhance the classroom learning experience by allowing students the opportunity to make a connection between theory and practice. Contrived or simulated experiences often take place in laboratories and classroom settings. Students have the opportunity to partake of teambuilding activities that assess their planning, decision making and conflict resolution skills. Furthermore, including studies of employment trends as a portion of the curriculum allows students the chance to study career trends so they will be able to better plan career paths based on industries that are growing. A fourth area of study, community projects, encompasses actions that have more of a social work focus. Activities, such as volunteering to tutor, helps teach students to view the responsibilities of work more globally. Finally, including entrepreneurial information into curricula provides students who choose to migrate directly into the workplace as independent business people the knowledge to operate their own businesses (Lewis, 1998).
Clearly, teachers are unable to offer each of these elements without consulting those who have experience and expertise in each of these areas. Advisory boards, or business partners, provide opportunities for curricula to be maximized in ways that classroom teachers solely cannot. Through these alliances, organizations have the ability to “show that vocational education does not have to be narrowly constricted, that is, premised on specific preparation for a single job. It can be conceived in ways that allow for the fullest development of students…” (p. 305).

Since the School-to-Work and Perkins legislation emphasizes the importance of advisory board influence on curricula, it is important to determine whether that goal is being accomplished. Additionally, it takes dedication and time for advisory board members to work with schools in hopes of shaping curriculum and pedagogy. All things considered, naturally one might wonder what motivates firms and industry representatives to work with schools. Resource Dependence Theory lends itself as a useful framework for analyzing why these partnerships are formed and sustained.

**Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)**

Pfeffer & Salancick (1978) define dependence as “the product of the importance of a given input or output to the organization and the extent to which it is controlled by a relatively few organizations” (p. 51). If a particular resource is not important to the receiving organization, a situation of dependence does not exist. Resource dependence theory (RDT) is an open-systems perspective that suggests that organizations exchange resources with entities in the environment as a condition for survival. RDT operates from the following assumptions: (a) organizations depend on their environments for survival in that the survivability of an organization depends on its ability to acquire resources; (b)
organizations need social legitimacy; (c) organizations should diversify their dependencies with the expectation of reducing uncertainty; and (d) organizational managers operate in three managerial roles: symbolic, responsive, and discretionary (Pfeffer & Salancick, 2003).

The basic logic of resource dependence theory is that organizations survive based on their ability to acquire resources in an uncertain environment (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1978). Effectiveness in managing the various demands of groups that provide resources to the organization is also a major component of resource dependence. Within this theoretical framework, environmental uncertainty is inevitable and this uncertainty is increased by organizational interdependency.

Resource dependence theory proposes that organizations lacking essential resources make efforts to establish relationships with others in order to obtain needed possessions (Pfeffer & Salancick, 2003). For example, many non-profit organizations utilize boards of directors, or advisory boards, as vehicles to attract necessary items (Provan, 1980). Often, organizations attempt to attract well-known, powerful, community-respected individuals to serve on their boards (Pfeffer & Salancick, 2003). This tactic helps ensure that awareness of organizational needs will be made known throughout the community, which will probably result in increased resources such as funding. Hence, powerful boards are important for organizational effectiveness.

In the case of schools, the majority of funding is generated through federal, state, and local tax dollars. Funding from the local level is garnered primarily from property taxes, which fluctuate from year to year (King, Swanson & Sweetland, 2003). Therefore,
schools seek other means of gaining funds and other necessary resources. Advisory boards are generally a major source for securing needed items.

According to Pfeffer & Salancick (1978), the effective organization is one that “satisfies the demands of those in its environment from whom it requires support for its continued existence” (p. 60). Inevitably, schools that rely on businesses have to adhere to certain requests, such as allowing only a certain brand of soft drink to be sold on school grounds. This is a potential downside of depending on the environment for resources. As Provan (1982) found, the amount of dependence that one organization has on another effects the degree of influence, or power, that the resource-providing organization will have over the resource-dependent organization.

Resource dependence theory places strong emphasis on power when explaining organizational outcomes (Williamson, 1981). Although power is a vague concept, it is easily understood in relation to obtaining environmental assets. Those actors that possess essential resources will ultimately be in control. As a result, the same actors will have access to critical information that others do not. If agents who have resources and information are willing to assist those who do not, the receiving organizations will most likely have longevity.

Although organizations such as schools have something of value to offer their communities, they are unlikely to gain needed resources if their goals are not articulated to and understood by community members, hence the importance of school vision and mission statements. If organizations are not viewed as providing important community services, they will not gain needed resources from that community (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1978). Fortunately, most businesses view schools as providing an important
service, which is educating youth who will eventually enter the workforce. Thus, schools are considered socially legitimate.

According to resource dependence theory, one of the main goals of managers is to acquire resources without creating difficult dependencies. Pfeffer & Salancick (1978) state that two ways of decreasing the complexity of resource dependency situations is by diversifying the suppliers from whom resources are received and by developing interdependent relationships. Therefore, diversifying advisory board members is imperative for schools because when there are multiple providers of needed resources there is no one power source. In a situation where there are multiple resource providers, schools are in a more powerful position because they do not have to fear the loss of all resources if a partnership fails. Alternatively, when there is just one main provider of services, then it controls access to the resource and can make rules that regulate usage of the resources (Huang, Miranda & Lee, 2004; Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978).

As organizations struggle to survive, resource stability is essential. The key to survival is obtaining resources from other organizations that form the environment. For schools, this often means seeking businesses to assist them with curricula, funding, student co-ops, and mentoring (Scales, Foster, Mannes, Horst & Pinto, 2005). Schools also benefit through support for staff development, student achievement, basic skills, and career education (Otterbourg & Timpane, 1986). Further, Provan, Beyer, and Kruybosh (1980) found that increasing the number of resource suppliers reduces dependency and increases power; hence, it is advantageous for schools to have multiple partners. When an organization relies on one particular firm for resources, it is easy to be taken advantage of through monopolistic actions. Essentially, if schools desire to be treated fairly, they must
decrease reliance on individual organizations and diversify dependencies (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978). Yet, a problem arises because the environment is undependable. Because of environmental uncertainties, schools must strive to amend their dependence relationships by minimizing reliance on businesses or increasing dependence of businesses on them (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978). According to these authors, organizations that provide resources which are difficult to find, and are in high demand by other organizations, acquire a significant amount of power and may decide to behave opportunistically. When firms are dependent upon others in such a way that they might be taken advantage of, they should “seek to minimize their exposure in such asymmetric relationships” (Huang, Miranda, & Lee, 2004). Therefore, it is beneficial for schools to be in partnerships with local businesses that have a mutual reliance. Additionally, the specifics of the relationship should be articulated early on as to reduce the possibility of conflict.

McLean and Toler-Robinson (2001) state that the advantages to be gained by each stakeholder group must be plainly articulated so as to avoid unpleasant encounters that could possibly emerge. Thus, it is important for schools and businesses to have written agreements that explicitly state what duties each party is expected to perform (ERS, 2003). McLean and Toler-Robinson also assert that the most beneficial partnerships have been those that are based on collaboration and integration. Gulati and Sytch (2005) support this notion by claiming that joint dependence, which demands that actors be dependent upon each other, is a probable way of counteracting negative interactions.

Provan, Beyer and Kruytbosch (1980) studied the United Way organization and 46 of its affiliated human resource agents that had a focus of examining
interorganizational power relationships. The authors found that “different community linkages predicted enacted power rather than predictive potential power” (p. 219). Potential power refers to the ability to influence future outcomes, whereas enacted power is actually exercised (Provan, 1980). For various reasons, including resources needed to enforce power, potential power is not always exercised. Therefore, one should not assume that because a business partner can exert power to control organizational processes, it will.

Resource dependence theory offers three primary roles of the manager: symbolic, responsive, and discretionary (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978). These roles differ based on the relationship between organizational constraints and actions. In the symbolic role, actions and constraints are not related. Thus, administrator actions have little effect on school outcomes. The responsive role deviates from the symbolic in that managers develop their plans of action in response to the interdependencies they confront. From this perspective, constraint and action are directly related. Further, managers who practice the discretionary role control constraints and their environments to suit the interests of the organization. The role of administrators in this capacity is to establish negotiated environments that are more suitable to the school. Although each role of management is distinctive, all are used in organizational management.

Of the three primary managerial roles, responsive and discretionary are most appropriate when developing and sustaining effective partnering activities. In the responsive role of management, the manager serves as a “processor and responder to the demands and constraints confronting the organization” (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978, p. 265). In such a position, management must decide which environmental demands it will
address. As this relates to partnerships, administrators and teachers must conduct an internal analysis of their schools and make decisions as to what will be done about deficiencies. As a result, they often research local businesses to see who is willing to assist, and in what capacity.

Once management determines what needs to be attended to, he or she may need to seek external partners to help meet internal needs. When school principals find that there are resources they need from the environment to address certain problems, adherence to rules set by the potential resource providers is inevitable. Hence, the most critical component of responsive management is that constraints are imposed on the organization (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978).

In addition to the responsive role of management, the discretionary role is also important when studying the role of managers in organizational partnerships. With this type of management, school administrators are focused on altering the systems of constraints and dependencies confronting the school (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978). Adjusting these relationships may require that partnerships with mutual dependencies be formed. When working relationships are developed between two organizations, and the organizations are dependent upon each other, the discretionary role is being utilized.

Although the responsive and discretionary roles of management are addressed somewhat differently, the two functions are actually quite similar. Each requires accurate judgments of environmental limitations and contingencies (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978). A precise depiction is essential because an administrator’s response to environmental changes will more likely be effective if he or she truly understands the environmental
phenomenon. Additionally, both roles highlight the importance of management being able to assess what factors seem to have an impact on performing the managerial roles.

After reviewing the basic tenets of resource dependence theory, it becomes understandable as to how school-business partnerships affect educational processes and outcomes. Although schools rely on government funding to provide a quality education for students, a problem arises because they are not guaranteed a certain amount each year (King, Swanson, & Sweetland, 2003). Hence, the environment is unstable. Therefore school leaders look for other means, such as business partners, of securing needed resources and support. On the other hand, businesses rely on schools to produce quality human capital to work for their organizations (Linnehan & De Carolis, 2005). Therefore, schools and businesses have mutual dependencies.

Since businesses have resources that schools need in an effort to operate effectively, it is not surprising that educational centers would reach to businesses for support. Additionally, firms require knowledgeable workers to maintain or increase their levels of production; consequently, they choose to assist schools. Through partnering with schools in various capacities, especially by providing support for teachers and student co-op experiences, firms are able to “initiate relationships with potential employees, can assess individual abilities, and can establish community relationships to ensure future pools of capital” (Linnehan and De Carolis, 2005, p. 527). Additionally, Capelli, Shapiro & Shumanis (1998) commented that economic concerns, such as meeting staffing needs, is the most common incentive for employers to participate in partnering activities.
In essence, it appears that school-business partnerships affect the work processes of both schools and firms. According to Linnehan and DeCarolis (2005), “Processes refer to the manner in which tasks are accomplished; they are sometimes called routines or patterns of learning” (p. 527). The primary task of schools is to educate students so they are competent and skilled. Through partnerships with businesses, schools are often able to meet the various needs of students. Some students attend college upon high school graduation, but many others tend to go directly into the workforce. Although teachers have curricular standards that they must adhere to, these standards often do not address the emerging needs of students or employers. Therefore, by engaging in healthy, active relationships with firms, schools are able to garner the assistance they need with funding, curriculum, tutors, etc., as well as with preparing students for the workforce. Through the combined effort of both schools and business, the intended outcome is a better educated workforce or college-ready student.

Not only are the work processes of schools affected by partnership activities, the organizational tasks of firms are as well. Although the primary role of schools is to educate students, the main goal of firms is to increase productivity and profit (McNamee, 2000). In order to reach these goals, employers must have resources—namely human capital—that can adapt to sophisticated work environments with increasing skill level requirements (Linnehan and De Carolis, 2005). Therefore, if firms do not view schools as producing skilled students, they may have more of a motive for engaging in partnering activities. When firms have direct influence over curricula for students who will soon enter the workforce, they gain competitive advantage over other firms that do not have
contact with those students. Since there are often ulterior motives for engaging in partnerships, it is beneficial for all involved parties to understand what the motives are.

To understand if resource dependence theory explains the motivation for implementing and sustaining partnerships at Ohio Career Center, qualitative methods were employed. This approach is also appropriate for discovering how partnering activities shape curriculum and pedagogy in the two program areas that were studied. The research questions that informed the methodology follow. The study was guided by an overarching research question and more specific sub-questions that focused the inquiry.

**Research Questions**

Given federal and state mandates on career and technical educational programs to form business partnerships, how does the potential for resource acquisition influence the formation and sustainability of school-business partnerships and how do these partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy?

*The following sub-questions develop the inquiry:*

1. What kinds of resources do business and career centers provide each other to aid with their core functions?
2. In what ways are career centers and businesses dependent upon resources provided by the other?
3. What are the reasons cited by teachers, administrators and business partners for agreeing to partner?
4. Is the role of school administrators and business partners more symbolic, responsive, or discretionary in sustaining partnerships?
5. Is it beneficial for schools to maintain partnerships with multiple businesses simultaneously?

6. What consequences are experienced as a result of career centers and businesses partnering?

7. In what ways do school-business partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Historically, research reports on partnerships and partnering activities have entailed quantitative or mixed-methods assessments. However, these reports have not captured the experiences of various stakeholders who engage in partnering activities. A gap exists in the literature because participants in school-business partnerships have rarely been afforded opportunities to have their opinions heard and ultimately reported.

Rigorous qualitative-based research has the power to enhance the literature on school-business partnerships. Teacher, administrator, and business partner perspectives can be captured to determine what these stakeholders hope to gain from the experiences and what motivates them to stay involved. Qualitative methods can also help determine how curricula and pedagogy are shaped by the partnerships. In an effort to answer the research questions posed in this study, qualitative data were collected through multiple interviews with teachers, prolonged observations of Financial Services and Law Enforcement classes and advisory board meetings, and analyses of documents (Glesne, 1999) such as advisory board meeting agendas and teacher lesson plans. These data collection methods are consistent with interpretivist inquiry, the specific methodological approach taken in this study.

**Interpretivism**

Interpretivists view the researcher and reality as inseparable (Weber, 2004). Put another way, the object under study is interpreted in light of the researcher’s lived
experience. As a result, interpretivist researchers recognize that subjectivity plays a role in their data collection and analysis, and, as well, has additional implications for their studies (Glesne, 1999). Since researcher subjectivity is acknowledged, validity is attempted through the use of defensible knowledge claims and reliability is achieved through interpretive awareness.

According to Glesne (1999), interpretivism “portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (p. 5). The ontological belief for interpretivists is that social realities are constructed by the participants who are in the social settings being researched. In effort to understand the nature of constructed realities, researchers must interact and hold conversations with participants about their perceptions (Glesne, 1999).

“Interpretivists attempt to understand situations from the point of view of those experiencing the situations and are concerned with what will assist them in doing so…” (Sipe and Constable, 1996, p. 158). For example, in *Dissin’ “the Standard”: Ebonics as Guerilla Warfare at Capital High*, Fordham (1999) discusses the prominent use of Ebonics, or vernacular, among African American students. For these students, Ebonics was the norm, and proficiency in Standard English was only demonstrated at critical times, such as on written assessments. The author notes that most members of the dominant group view those who use Ebonics as “lacking civility, cultural graces, or good taste” (p.276). However, it is the duty of interpretivists to look beyond the dominant position and try to understand what this language means to those who practice its use. For the students at Capital High, the use of Ebonics was a way to “cling to a Black identity” (p. 277).
Moreover, interpretivists believe that in order to understand a particular social action, such as engaging in school-business partnerships, the researcher must “grasp the meanings that constitute the action” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191). This can be accomplished by observing and engaging in purposive dialogue with those who are involved in the behavior (Geertz, 1976). It is beneficial to use an interpretive research lens when evaluating school-business partnerships.

Stakeholders, such as policy-makers and community members, may believe that the partnering of schools and businesses is motivated by certain reasons. However, those who are actually involved in the daily implementation of these partnering activities may have significantly different views of their motivations. Outsiders may believe that partnerships are forged for a certain purpose, but those who live the partnership experience, such as administrators, teachers and business people, may have a totally different outlook. Hence, it is important to interview and observe those who are directly involved to understand the experience from their perspective. According to Glesne (1999), the purpose of using this research lens is to contextualize, understand, and interpret the social situation.

There are several variations of interpretivist inquiry. These include fieldwork, participant-observation techniques and phenomenology (Glesne, 1999). These variations, moreover, can be complementary. According to Wolcott (1999), fieldwork is “a way of looking” (p. 42) that is highly embraced by qualitative researchers. Moreover, Glesne (2006) asserts that researchers are a bit uneasy during their initial days of fieldwork because they are often unfamiliar with the people and the setting, and are hoping to gain
acceptance. This acceptance is often achieved through gatekeepers, or those who have influence over a particular group.

For example, in schools, administrators have authority to grant access to a researcher who wishes to conduct a study, but that does not mean the administrators are the gatekeepers. The person with greatest influence over teachers may be a veteran teacher or department chairperson. Therefore, just because someone has the authority to grant access to a research setting it does not necessarily mean they have the power to help the researcher gain acceptance from and access to the people or information he or she needs for data collection. Therefore, when conducting any level of fieldwork, it is beneficial to have approval of gatekeepers, especially when the researcher needs to engage in participant observations.

Participant observation is a deliberate and systematic sharing of life activities and interests of a particular group of people (Kluckhohn, 1940). Its techniques can range from conducting mostly observations with little participation or, conversely, observing minimally and participating abundantly (Glesne, 2006). However, the roles may be combined and the researcher can take the position of “observer as participant” (Glesne, 2006, p. 50). Glesne (1999) suggests that the role the researcher plays depends upon the question being investigated, the context of the study, and the theoretical perspective. Hence, the researcher must rely on his or her professional judgment.

The main purpose of participant observation is to understand the setting in which the research is being undertaken, and the behavior of the participants in that setting. Therefore, this technique provides “a method with which an attempt to transcend the epistemological gulf between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ can be made” (Jackson, 1983, p.
Often, researchers vary in the amount of participating or observing they engage in, depending on the stage of research.

When operating from an interpretive research strategy, the everyday beliefs and practices of the researched must be interpreted and articulated in a manner that can be understood by others. Understanding the lived experiences of research participants is often accomplished when the researcher gains access into the world of others through the use of qualitative techniques. When evaluating methodology, it must be emphasized that there is at least some common ground between the researcher and the researched (Glesne, 1999). Understanding begins from commonality; in particular, from shared experiences that require the researcher to empathize with something from his or her own lived experiences. The commonality between the researched and myself is that I have also served in the capacity of a career and technical education teacher and have worked in collaboration with advisory boards in an effort to create more meaningful and enhanced learning opportunities for students.

When operating from an interpretive theoretical perspective, the researcher must understand that the research design must be appropriate for this particular paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). For example, interpretivists must operate with a certain “openness” (Glesne, 1999) so that inductive processes can be utilized. Therefore, the researcher begins the study with loose research questions and develops them more tightly during data collection as understanding of the phenomena is gradually gained. The strategy of inquiry that the researcher uses will lead the researcher to specific methods of data collection and analysis.
Interpretivists prefer to use qualitative methods, particularly case studies, open-ended interviews, observations, document reviews and dialectics (Stake, 1995) so that understanding can be gained through multiple avenues. These methods assist the researcher with the descriptive write-up that will be used for the analysis (Glesne, 1999). Typical evaluation questions are asked in such a way that the researcher can gain understanding as to how various stakeholders experience the phenomenon that is being studied and to find out in what way the program, such as a school-business partnership, is meaningful.

The Qualitative Paradigm

Given the aim of the study as captured in the research questions presented in the preceding chapter, the most appropriate research methodology is qualitative. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to conduct in-depth analyses of specific cases while engaging as participant-observer (Glesne, 1999). Through interviews and observation the researcher is able to uncover motivating factors for engaging in partnerships as well as how stakeholders believe partnerships contribute to curricula and teaching practices. The qualitative researcher attempts to gain various viewpoints about the phenomena under study (Glesne, 1999) and to search for patterns of consistency through a comparison of these views.

Because I studied two cases in this investigation, I was able to observe the specific details of each one, encapsulate the experiences, and compare occurrences between the cases (Schram, 2006). Through the use of these data collection methods, I utilized “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) which is imperative for understanding how people in a particular group construct meaning. Geertz views thick description as going
beyond basic observations. He believes that observations should be described and receive in-depth investigation. Geertz’ (1973) discussion of thick description was specific to ethnography; however, it is relevant to this study because I employ the tactics of observing, recording and analyzing. Further, I interpreted signs and actions to gain their meanings in the classroom context. For example, when students in the Law Enforcement course engaged in certain rituals, I took note of them and later asked the Law Enforcement teacher the meanings of what had taken place.

With qualitative inquiry, especially case studies, the researcher is the main research instrument. Therefore, most of the data were interpreted based on what I saw and heard. As the main research instrument, I worked with teachers, administrators and advisory boards over an extended period of time to observe, interact with and ask questions of research participants.

Research Setting and Participants

For the research undertaken in this study, I studied two program areas at Ohio Career Center (OCC). The site was chosen on the advisement of graduate committee members at the university and teachers who are employed by OCC. Both groups advised that OCC had a reputation for sustaining meaningful school-business partnerships. Thirty-eight program areas operate at this career center and each has business partners, which the school refers to as advisory boards. OCC administrators identified program areas that have strong, average, and poor partnerships. The following criteria were used to assess partnership levels.

1) Advisory board members were involved with curriculum planning.

2) Advisory board members provided experiential learning for students.
3) Advisory board members donated supplies and equipment for free or reduced cost.

4) Advisory board members provided financial support for program areas.

5) Advisory board members assisted, taught, co-taught, or made presentations to students.

6) Advisory boards met at least twice per year.

The first two criteria are central to the focus of the research and both program areas that were studied met those criteria. Programs that met 5-6 of the criteria listed above were rated strong. Those that met 3-4 were considered average and all others were rated poor. I studied one program area from the strong (Financial Services) and average (Law Enforcement) categories in effort to determine how the advisory boards for those specific programs shape teaching practices and curriculum.

**Gaining Access to Ohio Career Center (OCC) for Data Collection**

In order to conduct the research, I needed to recruit teachers to participate in the study. I have taken graduate courses with two teachers who work at OCC and have formed professional relationships with both of them. Each spoke highly of OCC’s partnering experiences and highly recommended the school as a prospective site for data collection. Additionally, after researching seven other career centers in the area (via school web sites and phone calls), I decided OCC was the best place to conduct this study because it has multiple ongoing partnerships that were experiencing varying levels of success. The other schools had few viable partnerships.
After deciding on OCC as a data collection site, I had the opportunity to work with OCC staff over a four-month period before beginning data collection for this research. I used the school as a site for implementing an action research project that was required for my principal licensure.

During this time, I had the opportunity to work collaboratively with all school administrators, as well as some faculty and staff. Additionally, I was introduced to all of the faculty, staff, and the school superintendent during a faculty meeting. After the meeting, I had the opportunity to speak with the superintendent about the proposed research and he stated that he would support my request to collect data at OCC.

Once the research was approved, I presented it to the OCC administrators so all members of the administrative team would have a formal introduction to the study. Additionally, administrators had the opportunity to ask questions and verbalize any concerns. Working with OCC allowed me the opportunity to form relationships with the school administrators and staff before undertaking this research. Having already established a relationship with the school director made it easier to gain access to the school for this study because the administrators and staff were already comfortable with my presence in the school building.

The final phase of gaining access was appealing to teachers who were identified by the school administrators as having strong, average and weak partnerships, in hopes that one from each category would agree to participate as well as introduce me to their advisory boards. Teachers did not know how they were categorized, so it was interesting that no one from the “poor” group agreed to participate. Once teachers from the strong
and average partnerships agreed to take part in the study, they also assisted with gaining access to their advisory boards.

**Unit of Analysis**

Time constraints and limited resources did not allow me to study every program area at Ohio Career Center (OCC). Therefore, I sampled the population using stratified purposeful sampling (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006) so that a comparison could be drawn among the findings from each case that was studied. Although cases are not intended to be generalized or compared (Glesne, 1999), I was interested in whether findings would be similar among groups that were experiencing different levels of partnerships success.

**Timeline for the Conduct of the Study**

I conducted the study over a 6-month period because I did not have ample data after four months. Therefore, I extended the data collection process to total six months. By the end of month four, only 3 interviews had been conducted with advisory board members and none of the administrators had been interviewed. Additional time needed to be scheduled to allow for these important components of data collection to occur. Additionally, follow-up interviews and observations needed to take place so that sufficient data could be gathered. Realizing that with qualitative research timeframes must be flexible because issues may arise that were not previously considered (Glesne, 1999), I had already factored in additional time for data collection if I found it necessary to extend the process.
Primary and Secondary Data Collection Methods

Three teachers agreed to participate in the study; however, I could only work with two because advisory board meetings had already been held for the third prior to my starting the data collection process. Additionally, the third area was also identified as having strong partnerships and I needed only one program area for each category. I studied the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs and their advisory boards to uncover whether the potential for acquiring resources motivates program area teachers to select their respective advisory board members, and if the advisory board members agree to serve in effort to receive specific resources. Additionally, I sought to discover how the advisory boards shape pedagogy and curriculum.

The methods of data collection that I employed include observing, interviewing, and document analysis. I also kept field notes during each observation to ensure a reliable point of reference to draw upon in case I could not rely on memory. Triangulation, or using multiple data collection methods and sources, aid in making findings more valid (Glesne, 1999). Furthermore, according to Pelto and Pelto (1978), the etic, or outsider perspective, can be gained by observations. However, the emic, or insider, perspective is acquired through interviewing. It was important, therefore, that both perspectives were captured, mine and the research participants, to ensure research findings were accurate and reliable.

Observations

Over the course of the 6-month study I observed each class an average of 2-3 times per week. For the first couple of weeks, I had a broad focus in an effort to absorb any actions and information that may further inform the study. Then, I narrowed my
focus to specifically determine how curriculum and pedagogy were shaped by partnerships. Each program area is required to teach a state-mandated curriculum; however, classroom teachers have the option of implementing additional skills that will help students stay abreast of new and emerging workplace competencies. Furthermore, teachers based their instruction on their individual preferences and what they deemed worked best for students. Through observing the Financial Services and Law Enforcement classrooms, I could discover whether teachers were implementing recommendations from the advisory boards. I was also able to witness interactions between advisory board members, teachers and students. After the first couple of months of data collection, I became more interested in how advisory boards help connect curricula to current industry standards. Additionally, I sought to determine if the advisory boards make recommendations as to how the teachers might actually deliver their lessons.

Each program area meets with its advisory board at least twice per academic year. I observed one advisory board meeting for Financial Services and two for Law Enforcement in effort to gain a better understanding of recommendations that advisory boards make to the program area teachers. I observed only one meeting for Financial Services because the final meeting for all advisory boards was held on the same day and time. This scheduling resulted from the school director’s desire to have advisory board members attend the Hall of Fame ceremony where school alumni are honored for exemplary professional accomplishments and community service.² I decided to attend

² In fact, one of the Law Enforcement advisory board members was inducted; he was nominated for outstanding contributions to the community and for his professional achievements.
the Law Enforcement meeting, as opposed to the Financial Services, because that was the program I needed more information on with regard to curriculum influence.

**Interviews**

Over the course of the six-month study, I conducted 48 observations, 14 structured interviews with advisory board members, 3 with administrators, and 4 with teachers. (See Appendices A, B and C for interview questions). I compared what I learned from these methods with documents such as lesson plans and state standards. Studying various documents aided me in confirming preliminary findings.

Interviewing is another form of data collection I used during this study. In addition to asking questions that were informed by the literature review, interviews allowed me the opportunity to ask about events I observed during classroom visits and advisory board meetings.

I interviewed program teachers, school administrators, and advisory board members. Program area teachers are responsible for implementing the state-mandated curricula and any suggestions that are agreed upon between them and advisory boards. School administrators are members of each advisory board along with the program area teacher(s). Advisory board members provided information on why they are interested in sustaining their partnerships with OCC program areas, as well as how they attempt to shape curriculum and pedagogy.

While the teachers and school administrators were interviewed individually, the advisory board members were interviewed in either focus group or individual settings. I used focus groups in the hopes that an interactive setting would encourage conversation that would yield useful information for the study (Glesne, 1999). Focus groups are also
useful for developing questions that could be asked in follow-up interviews. However, some advisory board members were unable to participate in the focus groups because of scheduling conflicts; therefore, I interviewed them individually in an effort to maximize the number of research participants.

**Document Analysis**

In addition to conducting observations and interviewing, documents were also analyzed in an effort to gather data on the partnership experiences for the Law Enforcement and Financial Services programs. The documents selected included lesson plans, meeting agendas, state mandated teaching standards, and other documents such as scheduled events that were given to advisory board members. These documents were chosen to supplement my observations and interviews, hence making findings more trustworthy (Glesne, 1999). To aid with validity, I juxtaposed the program area standards with lesson plans, previous advisory meeting minutes and field notes. Further, document analysis helped clarify any misunderstandings I had. Reviewing various documents also led me to develop supplementary interview questions. For example, if a particular lesson appeared to be workplace-specific, I asked the teacher how the lesson was derived. I found that oftentimes advisory board members had created the lessons.

**Data Management**

To manage the voluminous qualitative data, I used *Microsoft Word*. Initially, I planned to use NUD*IST qualitative research software because I was experienced in using this program and it is designed to handle large amounts of qualitative data. However, the University no longer supports this program. After this discovery, I decided to use *Microsoft Word* even though it took more effort to organize files. Nonetheless,
Microsoft Word served as an effective and efficient means for typing, searching, sorting, organizing and coding data.

After each interview and observation, I transcribed the conversation and typed field notes. While typing, I made mental notes of emerging themes and jotted them down on paper. I then maintained a separate file titled “emerging nodes” to keep track of the recurring themes, or ideas, that emerged throughout interviews and observations. As I came across a statement, document, or field note that either validated or negated an emerging theme, I referenced it underneath the node. Each month, I reviewed the nodes and developed sub-codes for those that had ample support to be declared a theme.

In addition, I used file folders to manage hard copies of transcripts, field notes, and other documents as a back-up system. Having dual systems to manage data ensured that if an unforeseen event occurred, an alternative means of accessing the data was available.

Data Analysis

According to Glesne (1999) “Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p. 130). In an effort to analyze data, maximizing the capabilities of Microsoft Word was essential. Word processing software was used to organize the data into emerging themes and codes. From these themes, I synthesized the data and developed assertions, or themes. These themes were supported by recurring findings from the collected data and are reported in Chapter 4.

After each data collection procedure, I typed and reviewed the information that was collected. For example, after conducting interviews, I transcribed the tape
recordings. Each time I observed an event, I typed the field notes that were taken during the observation. While reviewing documents such as meeting agendas, lesson plans and e-mails, I highlighted issues that informed the research. As I read through documents, I highlighted areas that would later be developed into codes. The resulting coding schema that was developed can be found in Appendix D.

According to Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 41) “Being explicit about processes is the best way to ensure careful data collection, and avoid costly distractions. It also improves your chances of getting to a new and better set of constructs as you get deeper into data collection.” The coding schema displayed in Appendix B was used to categorize data that was collected from interviews, documents and observations. The list was developed during preliminary and final data analysis. Each time I identified possible answers to the research questions or sub-questions, I made note of it and developed a code. As I read through transcriptions, field notes and documents, in the side margins I notated each time I found support for a code. Once I coded each document, I developed a heading with each code and listed the supporting items underneath it.

Miles and Huberman (1984), state that data analysis should be interactive and cyclical. The authors suggest that time should be allotted between field visits to reduce data, draw conclusions and test conclusions. During preliminary data analysis, any piece of verbal or written communication that provided a possible answer for the research question or sub-questions was given a code (Glesne, 1999). Those codes that had substantial support would later be developed into themes. For this research, substantial support means that a coded item was mentioned by at least half of the respondents and
was observed during interviews or on documents. Ultimately, each theme was reported as a research finding.

In addition to coding, writing two-page monthly reports proved beneficial because the process forced me to reflect on the topic of study. This monthly reflection informed the progression of the research and led me to extend the data collection period from four to six months because I realized I had not collected ample data to answer the research questions confidently. At the end of data collection, I compared the six memos to determine whether there was consistency between findings among reports. There was consistency; however, toward the last 2 months new themes emerged because that is when the bulk of interviewing took place. For example, during the first and second months of data collection, the information that I collected, primarily through observations and teacher interviews, revealed that the program areas did heavily rely on advisory board members to enhance course curricula and teaching methods. In the final months, when the bulk of advisory board interviews took place, more themes emerged from the employer perspective. Creating monthly memos made the final data analysis process less overwhelming because I coded and analyzed each month. I also created a diagram (see table 3.2) that made it easy to ascertain whether each theme had support from various data sources. Validity was increased by taking this measure (Miles and Huberman, 1984).
Table 3.1 – Ensuring Themes Have Ample Support Across Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>Mrs. Wise’s Interviews</th>
<th>Mr. Smart’s Interviews</th>
<th>Observations of classes and AB meetings</th>
<th>ABM Interview</th>
<th>Administrator Interview</th>
<th>Documents (i.e., agendas, lesson plans, standards, e-mails)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/14 ABMs stated that they wanted to ensure curriculum was not dated and current methods/techniques were being taught</td>
<td>3/3 administrators mentioned that curriculum was important area where ABMs assist. This is one of the primary reasons that partnerships exist at the school.</td>
<td>Agendas for AB meetings allotted time where teachers and ABMs could discuss curricular issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Teaching Methods (Pedagogy)</td>
<td>Encouraged school-to-work opportunities to enhance the learning experience.</td>
<td>Heavily embraced team teaching, guest lecturing, co-teaching, field trips as perceived</td>
<td>FS teacher used a lecture/hands-on approach to ensure students had the practical skills that</td>
<td>ABMs from both boards shared that they provide suggestions as to how lessons might be taught. FS ABMs stated</td>
<td>2/3 administrators shared that pedagogy is an area where they hoped advisory boards would</td>
<td>LE agenda included an item of discussion for using OPOTA teaching methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students were taught in a classroom set up that modeled the workplace. (kinesthetic learning experiences)

**Effective methods of instructional delivery**

LE teachers used lots of mock simulations, team teaching, co teaching, and guest lecturing. ABMs were often visible in the classroom and very involved with enhancing teaching methods.

That advice is often given during AB mtgs, while a LE ABM stated that he and others meet regularly with the teacher individually to discuss teaching methods.

Provide assistance. They were not certain how often boards were fulfilling this role.

| Avenue for Securing Material Resources | Mentioned that ABMs sometimes assist the program by providing supplies that the program may have otherwise done without (ex. Supplemental books) | Spoke of donations and heavily discounted goods such as police car, training equipment, etc. | During mtg heard ABM speak of providing training films for LE classes | 4 LE ABMs spoke of donating supplies and money | 3/3 administrators spoke of ABMs providing equipment, money and supplies |

73
| Desire to Give Back & Help Youth Become Prepared for Workplace | Said many ABMs are graduates of CTE programs and want to work with youth who have interests similar to theirs. ABMs can serve as role models, especially those who host STW students. Said ABMs are supporters of career/tech ed because they see the relevance in what students are learning. Want to make sure students understand how their skills will be needed in the workplace and how they can improve upon skills. Stated that ABMs have been successful in their career fields and want to work with and encourage young people so they can do the same. On many occasions I witnessed ABMs working with students in the classroom setting (crime scene inv., traffic stops, self defense, etc.) Also heard one ABM offer to participate in physical training with students. 9/14 ABMs stated that they want to help students because they have been fortunate and wanted to give back. Some ABMs serve on boards at other schools as well. In essence, they believe that once a person makes it through, it is a personal responsibility to show others the way. It was mentioned that many career center students are those who have behavioral issues-want to work with those students. 3/3 administrators mentioned that ABMs generally have a desire to work with students who attend OCC. It was noted by 1 that a small # ABMs may have ulterior motives for serving. Mtg agendas and sign-up forms were provided to FS ABMs so that they could volunteer to work with students in various capacities such as public speaking, interviewing, desktop publishing, etc. Most of the LE solicitations for assistance were sent via e-mail. ABMs signed up for areas where they felt they had greatest expertise. (ex. HR rep signed up for interviewing) |
| Recruitment of Human Capital | Would like to see students who are interested in full-time employment Likes for students to have the option of working for LE ABMs often made students aware of career When asked about recruitment being a benefit of partnering, most 3/14 ABMs mentioned they would like to recruit directly |
Some students have been offered employment by employers who served as STW sites. Employers that are represented on the board. The nature of the class is such that it prepares students for entry into military/LE careers. Also pushes for students to attend college. Military men/women serve on board but do not engage in heavy recruitment of students. Opportunities in their specific places of employment, as well as in the general LE field. It was always presented as more of an information session so students could make informed career decisions. Never seemed “pushy.”

Mentioned that recruitment was not a reason for working with the program areas, but if the possibility of hiring good students is an unanticipated benefit, then they are happy about that. Some ABMs stated that employment at their companies required at least an associate’s degree so they cannot immediately hire students. From the program areas that they advise. 5/14 stated that if they did get students as a result of partnering, that would be great but recruiting human capital is not a reason that they partner. It would just be an added benefit if it did happen.
To support the findings in Chapter 4, which are briefly presented in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, I provided instances that were encompassing or representative of what others revealed or what was learned through observation and document analysis. For instance, if eight of the fourteen advisory board members (ABMs) that were interviewed reported that they partnered with OCC because they wanted to make sure students were well-prepared for college and/or the workforce, I used at least one key quote from the transcribed interviews that was encompassing of what others had expressed. I often supplemented the quote(s) with a description of occurrences that I observed while collecting data.

In addition to the previous display that ensured themes had ample support across data sources, I also used tables 3.2 and 3.3 to determine whether at least half of the respondents shared a particular view. If at least 50% of respondents shared a specific sentiment, it was reported in the findings.
Table 3.2 – Ensuring Ample Support Among Teachers and Administrators

**Teacher/Administrator Motives for Partnering**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons/Motives for Partnering</th>
<th>Number of Respondents Mentioning Item (N=5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help Ensure Curriculum is Current and Relevant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape Teaching Methods (Pedagogy)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Enhanced Student Learning Experiences</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Teaching</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guest Lecturing</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mock Simulations</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field Trips</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Shadowing Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-to-Work Placement</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenue for Securing Material Resources</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required by Perkins Act</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 - Ensuring Ample Support Among Advisory Board Members

**Advisory Board Motives for Partnering**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons/Motives for Partnering</th>
<th>Number of Respondents Mentioning Item (N=14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help Ensure Curriculum is Current and Relevant</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Enhanced Student Learning Experiences</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Give Back to Youth</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Youth Become Well-Prepared for the Workplace</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit Human Capital (mentioned without being asked)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although organizing the data is imperative, analysis begins before the data are ever formally organized (Glesne, 1999). As data were collected through interviews and observations, I reflected on what I saw and heard by writing memos and developing preliminary coding schemes. The coding, memos and themes were shared verbally with
research participants to ensure accuracy. Moreover, I wanted to make certain that the assertions I made based on the data were congruent with what participants were experiencing. This process, referred to as member checking (Glesne, 1999), is controversial particularly because respondents may disagree with the researcher’s interpretations (Angen, 2000). Then, an issue arises as to whose viewpoint is accurate. Fortunately, no discrepancies arose between my interpretations and the way participants’ viewed situations. Therefore, I am confident that my analyses and findings are representative of the partnership experiences of the two program areas that were studied.

After engaging in all of the processes that were described in this section, I believe the findings accurately reflect the relationships between Ohio Career Center (OCC) and advisory boards. Engaging in preliminary data analysis, coding, memo writing, member checking (Glesne, 1999), and ensuring consistency among data sources (Miles and Huberman, 1984) aided me in drawing conclusions that can be confidently reported in the next chapter.

**Role of the Researcher**

While using a qualitative approach for studying partnerships is beneficial, as with any approach to inquiry, the researcher must exhibit caution. For instance, participant observation is a major component of conducting qualitative research (Glesne, 1999; Wolcott, 1999). However, this approach can be limiting in that “…although people may become accustomed to having an observer present, that does not mean they ever become oblivious to that presence, especially if the researcher makes an effort to remind them of his or her presence and purpose” (Glesne, 1999, p. 49). Therefore, the researcher runs the risk of participants altering their behaviors because of the researcher’s presence. This
may happen even if the participants attempt to behave as if they believe they would have if the researcher was not present. Although this is a legitimate concern, it should not be overly emphasized because I conducted observations over a 6-month period and the “newness” of my presence appeared to fade after the first month. This is congruent with Wolcott’s (1999) claim that participants become comfortable with the researcher after a while and begin to behave as they normally would.

Another constraint lies in researcher subjectivity. According to Glesne (2006), qualitative researchers realize that “subjectivity is always a part of research from deciding on the research topic to selecting frames of interpretation…” (p. 119). Although subjectivity is inherent, it can be monitored in an effort to produce more trustworthy research. One way a researcher can manage subjectivity is by being aware of his or her emotions. Once the researcher is aware that strong feelings are developing, he or she should try to understand why those feelings are surfacing as well as how they may be hindering him or her from learning more about the subject under study (Peshkin, 1988).

This point is expounded upon by Erickson (1973) who discussed the conduct of research by those who are a part of the society in which the research is being carried out. Although I am not an employee of Ohio Career Center (OCC), prior to conducting research there I formed relationships with the staff while working with the school’s director on an action research project. Additionally, I have a background in career and technical education and had preconceived notions of how career programs and partnerships should operate. In cases such as mine, the researcher already has strong opinions about the topic under study. When researchers are familiar with the subject of the inquiry, they must strive to make the “familiar strange” (p. 16). A qualitative
researcher who is examining an institution that is part of his or her own society, must repeatedly question:

…the grounds of the conventional, examining the ‘obvious’ which is so taken-for-granted by cultural ‘insiders’ that it becomes invisible to them. Often it is the taken-for-granted aspects of an institution that in the final analysis turn out to be most significant (p. 16).

Therefore, it is imperative that researchers not underestimate the value of seemingly-meaningless events that take place in the field.

When using qualitative methods, particularly case studies, to study any phenomenon qualitative researchers are often hesitant about making generalizations (Peshkin, 1988). However, triangulation, or the use of multiple of data collection methods, can assist with this skepticism (Glesne, 1999). The most common methods for gathering data in qualitative research include interviewing, participant observation and document analysis. Utilizing multiple data collection methods and sources assists the researcher with increasing the level of confidence in the findings. Glesne further asserts that more believable findings can be drawn from the richer data that tend to be collected when using a variety of methods. Although triangulation helps researchers feel more certain about their findings, Wehlage (1981) claims that it is not the responsibility of qualitative researchers to assert that findings from their studies are generalizable to other cases. The consumer of the research should decide which components of the case are applicable to new contexts.

According to Glesne (1999), a final responsibility of the researcher relates to ethics, especially when the researcher uses interpretive approaches where “the researcher interacts with participants in order to understand their social constructions” (p. 113).
Since the researcher is a participant observer, there are two roles that he or she is constantly negotiating. The first is actual participation in the analysis and reconstruction of the world of the subjects. The second is collaboration in the processes and products of inquiries (Lincoln, 1990). The ethics of playing both roles simultaneously is dependent upon the context of the study. In essence, it is sometimes risky for the researcher to join research participants while simultaneously analyzing the phenomenon because the researcher’s participation could actually be affecting what is taking place.

**Ethical Considerations**

An additional ethical dilemma relates to acquiring information that can be harmful to others (Glesne, 1999). For example, when participants trust the researcher they may reveal information about illegal activities such as underage drinking. The ethical dilemma for the researcher is whether to report the information he or she has gained to the proper authorities, which will ultimately result in revealing the identity of research participants and the demise of the research project. According to Glesne, each individual researcher must decide whether he or she has a moral or legal obligation to report harmful activities even though it may halt data collection.

In qualitative research, more specifically interpretive approaches, what constitutes unethical behavior is extremely contextual (Glesne, 1999). For instance, the rationale behind choosing a specific research topic can be viewed as unethical. In an effort to ensure that I would not harm or jeopardize the integrity of research participants, I complied with Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations. Additionally, as advised by Diener and Crandall (1978), I obtained informed consent from the research participants, letting them know (1) that participation is voluntary, (2) whether any aspects of the
research might affect their well-being, and (3) that they may freely choose to stop participating in the study at any time.

In addition to informed consent, other ethical dilemmas may arise during the data collection process. For instance, Glesne (1999) discusses roles that researchers sometimes experience while conducting their studies, such as those of exploiter, intervener/reformer, advocate and friend. Researchers often find themselves confronted with assuming one or more of these roles because they develop relationships with the research participants and feel obligated to assist in an effort to show their gratitude for being able to conduct their studies.

Since this research takes place in a school, I had to ensure teachers that they would not be singled out if administrators asked how the study was progressing or what was being learned. Instead of discussing what took place in specific classrooms, I would share emergent themes that did not expose any specific teacher.

**Ensuring Trustworthiness of the Study**

To ensure trustworthiness of the study’s findings, I used triangulation among data collection methods, as well as member checking where I shared interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and drafts of reports with research participants to ensure they were properly represented (Glesne, 1999). Additionally, using stratified purposeful sampling, I was able to compare the results to help determine if findings were specific to one group or common among both.

**Summary of Research Design and Methods**

Historically, state departments of education found it difficult to evaluate school-partnerships using typical evaluation strategies and instruments (Otterbourg and
Timpane, 1986). New evaluation strategies are needed that “reflect the variety of interests and objectives held by both business and education in each locality. Another possibility is formative evaluation of specific programs at the school or district level solely for purposes of program refinement, extension, or elimination” (p. 71). Although this recommendation for future research was made a couple decades ago, few published works reflect the suggestions of these authors.

This study focuses on two Ohio Career Center program areas with varying levels of partnership experience—Financial Services and Law Enforcement. Each program serves 11th and 12th grade cohorts; however, only 11th grade classes were observed for this study. Data were collected during a six-month period through classroom observations, attendance at advisory board meetings and interviews with advisory board members, school administrators and the two program area teachers. The purpose of using multiple data collection methods was to ensure that findings were reliable and valid (Glesne, 1999). For example, listening to statements made during advisory board meetings and cross referencing them with classroom actions proved beneficial. Further, being able to ask follow-up questions about what was heard and seen during observations ensured that my observations were accurate.

The methodology used to gather data was appropriate and proved beneficial in addressing the research questions. Observations, interviews and document analysis yielded an abundance of information to assist me with examining the motivation behind partnerships between the Law Enforcement and Financial Services departments at Ohio Career Center, and how the partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy. The findings are presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Ohio Career Center (OCC) is located in an industrial area of Ohio and serves students from 16 area schools. The modern school facilities are clean and extremely well-kept. The lawn is nicely manicured. Upon entering the building, I stepped into a spacious foyer and saw a main office enclosed by glass windows. The walls of the foyer displayed pictures of everyone who has been inducted into the school’s Hall of Fame. The hallways were adorned with student work and projects. Anyone who visits the school would become immediately aware that the school is student-centered.

A first time visitor at the school could easily understand what type of work takes place in each classroom. Outside each door, a picture of the instructor, his or her name, and the content area that he or she teaches are displayed. Inside the classrooms, student projects decorated the spaces. Whether it was an automotive, dental services or graphics design class, the equipment was cutting edge and both students and teachers were skilled at using it. Upon a first visit, the school was impressive.

After numerous visits, I feel confident asserting that the first impression is lasting and well deserved. Students, staff, parents, and business partners take pride in ensuring that OCC is living up to its mission statement of being a recognized leader in preparing youth and adults to become lifelong learners and productive members of society who excel as they enter either the workforce or transition to post-secondary training. In accordance with this mission, OCC teachers and administrators work closely with the business community to ensure students are receiving adequate preparation in their chosen
career fields so that they will be ready to enter the workforce and/or college. Many business representatives partner with the school by serving on advisory boards.

Throughout my 6-month data collection period at OCC, I interviewed and observed the three school administrators, the Financial Services and Law Enforcement teachers, and the advisory boards for the teachers’ program areas. The purpose of this prolonged interaction was to collect data that would provide insight into the topic of study. Including each of those groups was important for this research because each had valuable knowledge and unique perspectives to contribute. For instance, administrators viewed the partnerships from more of a policy perspective that had direct, positive implications for student learning experiences. Advisory board members spoke of partnerships as a means of contributing to younger generations and a possible avenue for recruitment. Teachers saw partnership experiences as an opportunity for curriculum enhancement and workplace preparation for students. During data collection, I consistently worked with two teachers. Each teacher had traveled a different path to his or her current position in education.

**Mrs. Wise: Financial Services Teacher**

The Financial Services teacher, Mrs. Wise, has nearly three decades of teaching experience and has been an educator the majority of her adult life. Mrs. Wise is a short, middle-aged, Caucasian woman who wears a short, sporty haircut. Each day that I observed her classroom her attire was very professional; she provided a daily example of how a career woman should dress. Mrs. Wise alternated between skirts that were knee length or longer and trousers. She often complemented these pieces with colorful sweaters or sleeved shirts that buttoned vertically along the front.
Mrs. Wise is the chairperson of the Business department at Ohio Career Center (OCC), co-advisor for the Business Professionals of America (BPA) student organization, a full-time doctoral student (she successfully defended her dissertation after the data collection period ended), and adjunct university faculty. She appeared very comfortable with all of her demanding responsibilities.

Mrs. Wise was extremely courteous toward her students. I never heard her yell at them, even if they were off task. She would simply ask them to resume working on the assignment and they would do so. She smiled often and her vocal tone and facial expressions were encouraging and friendly. Mrs. Wise was also thoughtful; on one occasion she brought chocolate treats to share with students as they worked on their assignments. Students had the opportunity to talk with Mrs. Wise about concerns they had with assignments. While students worked independently, she would sometimes sit at the back of the room so that students could come to her individually and discuss errors from their papers. She wanted to ensure each student had the opportunity to clarify any area that had not been mastered.

Mrs. Wise’s 11th grade Financial Services class was comprised of twenty students. The majority of her students were females, primarily African American. No African American males were present in the class. The student makeup was not very diverse; everyone was either Caucasian or African American. Students were required to dress professionally each day. No one was allowed to wear jeans. Mrs. Wise set an excellent example of what professional attire for young women should look like. The young men were able to see models of proper business attire by observing the male teachers and
school administrators. All staff at Ohio Career Center (OCC) were required to dress professionally each day.

Mrs. Wise’s classroom was designed to simulate a business environment. Students sit in cubicle-style, personal work stations that are equipped with desks, personal computers, accounting calculators, etc. There are white, dry-erase boards at the front and side of the classroom. The front board was used to write examples of financial problems and vocabulary terms that students needed to learn. The side board was use for student reminders. Students automatically knew to look at the side board each day for current information about anything relevant to the entire school, as well as their class. Even though students bore responsibility to check for current announcements, Mrs. Wise would often verbalize what was written to ensure that students received necessary information.

Mrs. Wise’s pedagogical style was lecture oriented with practical application components. For instance, she would often introduce a lesson and explain the topic for an average of thirty minutes in a class lasting two and a half hours. While teaching, Mrs. Wise explained financial concepts and stopped periodically to ask students if there were any questions. She also asked specific questions of students to ensure they grasped the concepts that were needed to apply what she was teaching. After presenting the lesson, Mrs. Wise allowed students to work independently at their work stations. As students worked, Mrs. Wise circled around the classroom to observe them and address questions as they arose. Oftentimes, students asked questions that revealed confusion about certain processes that needed to be made clearer to the entire class. When this occurred, Mrs. Smart went to the front of the classroom and, using an overhead projector, demonstrated
how to work through specific types of scenarios and financial documents. Then, students resumed working independently.

Mrs. Wise’s teaching style appeared to be effective at reaching her students. She was able to deliver the financial services curriculum without having to create hands-on activities because the nature of the course is practical application. Students spent a majority of the time learning how to use *Microsoft Office* software, especially managing spreadsheets in Excel.

**Mr. Smart: Law Enforcement Teacher**

The law enforcement instructor, Mr. Smart, chose to become an educator after working in law enforcement for approximately 20 years. He decided to change careers so that he could positively influence youth and help them realize the various opportunities that awaited them through law enforcement related careers. In effort to pursue his goal of becoming a teacher, Mr. Smart took an alternative route to gaining certification since he had not majored in education. He was still fulfilling the necessary requirements during the time I worked with him. In fact, he was required to create unit plans and he presented me with a copy within my first week of observations. Mr. Smart is an extremely organized teacher, almost to a point of perfection.

Mr. Smart is a Caucasian, slender and tall in stature. His face is clean shaven and he wears a short haircut. Each day, Mr. Smart is well-dressed, often wearing khaki-style pants and a classic long-sleeved dress shirt accented with a stylish vest. His relationship with the students was professional, but friendly. In fact, Mr. Smart’s students often invited him to participate in weekend activities with them such as bowling. Since students sought extra opportunities for fellowship with Mr. Smart, he decided to organize
events—such as cookouts—for students, parents and advisory board members. With this format, the many adults present chaperone student activities and everyone enjoys a safe and relaxing time.

Mr. Smart’s law enforcement and military background was quite evident by his demeanor. Each day that I came for an observation, he greeted me with a handshake, a smile and addressed me as “ma’am” or Ms. Stokes. He would also offer me a bottle of water or vegetable juice. If he was busy when I entered the room, he had one of the students move a chair from his office to the space where I usually sat for observations. He would also have them ask if I would like something to drink. The Law Enforcement students’ behaviors definitely reflected Mr. Smart’s expectations. After the first few visits, he did not have to ask them to accommodate me; they automatically did so.

Mr. Smart’s eleventh grade Law Enforcement class was composed only of Caucasian students, primarily males. Although the class has an emphasis on police academy training, students desired to enter various career fields such as the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, National Guard, firefighting, and paramedic services. The majority of them wanted to go directly into the workforce after graduating from high school. However, Mr. Smart frequently challenged his students, especially the young women, to consider obtaining a college degree. He could relate closely to their issues because he has a daughter who is currently in college. Mr. Smart served as a father figure to many of the girls and encouraged them to rely on their own intellect and abilities instead of rushing into marriage and depending on husbands to provide for them. Mr. Smart often told students “You know what? My wife needs me like she needs a hole in her head!” He would then transition into how she acquired her Master’s degree, works as an
accountant, and makes much more money than he ever would. He shared this personal experience to inspire the young women to pursue higher education and support themselves instead of becoming dependent upon others.

With regard to teaching, Mr. Smart utilized a very hands-on approach. He used the Ohio Department of Education’s Law and Public Safety content standards, their Integrated Technology and Academic Competencies (ITACs), and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) standards to develop lessons that were relevant to the various career fields in which students were interested. Although Mr. Smart did use lectures as an instructional delivery method, many of his lessons began with a brief overview of the topic and how objectives for the day related to the real world. He would then demonstrate the skills students needed to learn and have them attempt those skills as well. Oftentimes, Mr. Smart was accompanied by advisory board members who assisted with instructional delivery.

During an observation, I watched as an advisory board member who is a self-defense expert helped Mr. Smart teach survival techniques to students. First, he and Mr. Smart explained to students the importance of survival techniques and shared stories of when specific techniques had been used. Then, the two expressed that students should be serious when practicing the drill because if done incorrectly, a nose could be broken. After learning that there was a possibility of being harmed, some students were fearful of attempting the technique. Ultimately, however, those who were leery did try the exercise with the encouragement of Mr. Smart and the advisory board member.

Although the Law Enforcement and Financial Services teachers were from varied backgrounds, each was effective at meeting student needs. Interestingly, both teachers
appeared to be experienced in their instructional deliverance, curriculum planning, and classroom management skills. Had I not asked both instructors about the length of time they had been in the education profession, I would have assumed that both were veteran teachers. Although Mr. Smart was a novice, he was exceptionally gifted at managing his students in such a way that he disciplined them without disturbing the learning process and damaging the rapport he had built with them. For example, when students offended classroom policies, Mr. Smart would sometimes have them go to the side of the classroom and complete a brief exercise routine; surprisingly, this did not disrupt the other students from paying attention to what was being taught. The student would then be allowed to come back to the main area where instruction was taking place. I thought this disciplining procedure was appropriate and effective because it is congruent with the corrective actions students would receive while training for their chosen career paths, especially law enforcement and the military.

Since Law Enforcement students at Ohio Career Center (OCC) typically enter the military upon graduation, the consequences they receive for misbehaving are similar to what would happen if they committed the same infraction in their careers. This tactic was also beneficial because the student is still able to hear what was being taught. Therefore, instructional time is not lost. Although several students were disciplined by Mr. Smart throughout the 6-month data collection period, each student still appeared to respect him tremendously. They always addressed him as “sir” and many of them spent their lunch periods in his classroom working on extra projects.

Observing and interviewing both of these highly skilled, professional educators truly benefited this research because they provided a plethora of information and
resources that assisted me in answering the research questions. Although I formally interviewed each teacher two times, I sometimes sought clarification through informal interviewing after classroom observations and advisory board meetings. On some occasions students would say or do things that I did not quite understand but I felt that their actions were somehow related to the research. After asking teachers about what I did not understand, I found that most often seemingly less relevant events were central to the research. For instance, during an observation Financial Services students spent much of a class period editing documents and I knew this was a standard that had to be addressed. When I asked Mrs. Wise why she devoted so much class time to editing and proofing documents, she commented that advisory board members often cite this as a weakness they see with students when they enter college and the workplace. I would not have been aware of this had I not asked follow-up questions. Hence, informal conversations provided just as much meaningful data as did the structured interviews.

Advisory Boards

In addition to allowing me total access to their classrooms, the teachers also helped me gain access to their advisory boards. Both Mr. Smart and Mrs. Wise allowed me to speak to their advisory boards during the first advisory board meeting. I explained my research topic and methodology to the boards and mentioned that I would be contacting each of them in hopes that they would be willing to participate in the study by allowing me to interview them. Each advisory board was very receptive to the proposed research.

Both advisory boards were comprised of people who represented a variety of areas within their respective fields. For instance, the Law Enforcement Advisory Board
had representatives from the military, police department, retail, alcohol control and insurance. The Financial Services program had representatives from higher education, banking, public utilities, city offices and law firms. Each of these individuals offered unique experiences, perspectives, and resources that benefited the various program areas. Moreover, at least half of the advisory board members from each program area either graduated from Ohio Career Center (OCC) or the other career center that is part of OCC’s school district.

In an effort to get an initial overview of the partnership experiences of the two program areas that I was studying, I thought it important to conduct structured preliminary and follow-up interviews with the teachers. After interviewing Mrs. Wise and Mr. Smart I also interviewed the three school administrators. I transcribed and coded the interviews to discover whether the potential for resource acquisition influenced the formation and sustainability of school-business partnerships, and how these partnerships shaped curriculum and pedagogy. I found that acquiring needed materials and equipment was a factor in deciding to partner. However, intangible resources were those most sought after and valued. The most common reasons the programs at OCC desired to form alliances with business representatives were to maximize the experiential learning opportunities for students and to ensure relevance of curriculum and teaching techniques.

At the beginning of my data collection, each teacher provided valuable resources that would assist with the research. The Law Enforcement teacher, Mr. Smart, presented me with a binder that included all of his lesson plans and student worksheets that would
be used for the entire 2007-2008 academic year. This was helpful because I was able to compare what he was teaching with the state standards.

Both the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs are considered by the Ohio Department of Education as Career Pathway programs. Career Pathways is “a series of academic and technical career-focused course work and other learning experiences leading to a career specialty and employment in a career field. Pathways facilitate a seamless transition from high school to postsecondary education (including apprenticeships, adult education, two- and four-year colleges, and graduate school) and from postsecondary education to the workplace” (CFTCS, 2008, p. xxi).

Career Pathways

Each career pathway comprises career fields. A career field is a group of occupational options and industries that are similar (CFTCS, 2008). Career fields are the foundation for developing “both broad and specialized technical content standards that serve as a framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment and program design, addressing the needs of an entire industry and business sector” (CFTCS, 2008, xx). Ohio has 16 career fields which are aligned with national efforts to broaden career-technical education, integrate career-technical with academic study and reflect current and future workforce needs. Career Pathways subscribes to the theory that for today’s students to be adequately prepared for the constantly changing workforce, they must have an education that addresses 3 core issues (CFTCS, 2008, p. xix) which are: incorporating a broad, long-term conception of work in combination with the depth of specialization skills; emphasizing the acquisition of strong academic knowledge and skills; and facilitating high school to post secondary transitions. (see Table 4.1 below)
Table 4.1: Issues Addressed by Career Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Core Issues Addressed by Career Pathways</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incorporates a broad, long-term conception of work in combination with the depth of specialization skills:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees need a comprehensive understanding beyond a single occupational area. Occupationally focused programming needs to be provided in a larger context, so students can generalize learning, make connections between education and work, and adapt to changes in their careers. Workplace knowledge and skills are needed to prepare employees for collaborating and problem solving while contributing to the broader business process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasizes the acquisition of strong academic knowledge and skills:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic skills provide the foundation for career success. The integration of academic content standards with career field technical content standards helps to contextualize learning for students, making English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies relevant to students as a means to an important end—success at work and in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitates high-school-to-postsecondary transitions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lifetime of change means a lifetime of learning, including postsecondary education. Students need knowledge and skills for success in a variety of postsecondary options, including apprenticeships, industry credentialing through adult education, two- and four-year college degree programs and graduate school.</td>
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(CFTCS, 2008, p. xxi)

Financial Career Field Technical Content Standards

The Finance Career Field Technical Content Standards are built around three career pathways: Accounting, Financial Services and Postsecondary Corporate Finance (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). The Ohio Department of Education defines the pathways as follows (FCFTCS, 2008):

Accounting

The Accounting Pathway encompasses careers that record, classify, summarize, analyze and communicate a business’s financial information and business
transactions for use in management decision-making. Accounting includes such activities as bookkeeping, systems design, analysis and interpretation of accounting information. Sample occupations include (p. 28):

- Accounting clerk;
- Certified public accountant;
- Financial accountant;
- Management accountant;
- Auditor;
- Government accountant;
- International accountant;
- Forensic accountant;
- Controller;
- Treasurer; and
- Bookkeeper.

Financial Services

The Financial Services Pathway includes careers in banking, securities and investments and insurance. Primarily concerned with accepting deposits, lending funds and extending credit, banking services consist of cash management, short-term investments, mortgages and other loans, credit cards and bill payment. The investment industry supports the flow of funds from investors to companies and institutions, as well as offering related services such as real estate valuation and sales, financial planning, asset management, hedge fund management and custody.
services. The insurance industry, which exists to protect individuals and businesses from financial losses, delivers products that transfer risk from an individual or business to an insurance company. While these financial service arenas once operated independently of each other, they have become increasingly interrelated in recent years. Presently, most financial institutions, whether they are commercial banks, credit unions, brokerage firms or insurance companies, offer a full range of financial services rather than specialize in one type of product. Sample occupations in financial services include (p. 28):

• Loan officer;
• Credit analyst;
• Branch manager;
• Securities sales agent;
• Investment banker;
• Trader;
• Real estate broker;
• Appraiser;
• Insurance sales representative;
• Insurance underwriter;
• Claims adjuster;
• Loss control specialist;
• Personal financial advisor;
• Financial planner; and
• Bank teller.

Though components of the three areas tend to overlap, the Financial Services standards are the focus of Mrs. Wise’s course.

**Law and Public Safety Technical Content Standards:**

The Law and Public Safety Career Field Technical Content Standards combine business standards (reflecting English language arts, mathematics, science and technology), academic content standards (English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies) and the business process framework to develop technical literacy in law and public safety. The Law and Public Safety Career Field includes occupations that focus on law enforcement, fire-fighting and emergency medical technologies. The Law and Public Safety Career Field is comprised of five pathways leading to technically-based careers in (CFTCS, 2008, p. 4):

• Criminal Justice;

• Forensic Science;

• Fire Science;

• Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic; and

• Legal Careers.

After reviewing the Financial Services and Law Enforcement curriculum standards, as well as data from the research study, it became apparent that the academic program areas and businesses partner for a variety of reasons. The same themes emerged for both the Law Enforcement and Financial Services programs. This was interesting because one would think that motives would differ amongst career fields and content areas; however, this was not the case for the two program areas that were the focus of this study. I found that the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs at OCC were motivated to partner because they believe working with industry representatives (1) helps to ensure a current curriculum and relevant teaching practices, (2) enhances the student
learning experience and (3) helps secure needed resources such as supplies, equipment and additional funding. Additionally, I learned that the business partners, also referred to as advisory board members, shape curriculum and pedagogy in a multiple ways.

Industry representatives partner for a variety of reasons, but most of their motives appear to be more intrinsic than OCC’s. Advisory board members most commonly cite reasons such as (1) wanting to “give back” to the school because many of them are graduates of career centers, (2) desiring to see youth well-prepared for the workforce and (3) hoping to recruit students into their places of employment or institutions of higher learning. Since both entities have specific reasons for partnering, each must use criteria for selecting partners that will assist them in meeting their goals.

Criteria for Selecting Advisory Board Members

According to teachers and administrators, each program area teacher has the autonomy to select advisory board members that reflect the industry. No specific area should be overly represented to ensure discussions about curricular improvements are not skewed to benefit a particular career field. For instance, the financial services teacher should not have an advisory board that is composed solely of bankers because banking is not the only possible career choice for financial services students. The teacher should attempt to include accountants, entrepreneurs, auditors, tax preparers, cash flow analysts, foreign exchange traders, etc. Furthermore, teachers must have a real understanding of what it is they hope to gain by working with industry representatives. When asked what criteria is used when recruiting advisory board members, teachers and administrators commented that they prefer to partner with individuals who are (1) local employers, (2) graduates of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and (3) in a related career
field with whom they have developed relationships. Using these selection methods is beneficial because individuals who meet these criteria are more likely to have a true interest in helping students who attend the career center receive the best preparation possible.

**Ohio Career Center Motives for Partnering**

While collecting data at Ohio Career Center (OCC), I discovered several reasons why the two program areas are motivated to engage in partnering activities. Of course, the mandate to receive Perkins funding was one that administrators mentioned. I was informed that career and technical schools must form an advisory board for each program area and hold at least two advisory board meetings per academic year in order to receive money through Perkins. In addition to the funding that is received through this legislation, many advisory board members are able to secure needed tangible resources for their respective program areas. However, the most prominent reason stated by both administrators and teachers was to enhance curriculum and pedagogy for the Law Enforcement and Financial Services program areas.

**Current Curriculum and Relevant Teaching Practices**

According to teachers and administrators at the career center, the main motive for partnering is to ensure course curricula and teaching practices are current and relevant. Moreover, school administrators believe that all teachers should have curricular and pedagogical improvement as priority. Since this study focused only on two program areas at Ohio Career Center (OCC), curricular issues for Financial Services and Law Enforcement, were the focal points. While course standards are created at the state level, materials and textbooks used in the schools are dated. It is through the assistance of
industry representatives and current research reported in journals that teachers remain abreast of emerging practices in their respective fields. For example, Mr. Smart, the Law Enforcement instructor, shared during an interview that he relies heavily on his advisory board members because all of them are experts in their fields. Also, several of them serve on boards that create standards and regulations for the Law Enforcement profession. Mr. Smart said that board members help ensure that what he teaches is accurate and current. An OCC staff member, who also serves on the Financial Services advisory board, shared:

We rely heavily on the advisory committee to keep us updated…From what I see it is very updated because it does give them [students] a wide range of things that they can be involved in as opposed to just the police department and highway patrol… I think they get more direction and information about careers that are out there because of the advisory committee and other people that are willing to come in and give us their expertise and experiences.

Since Mr. Smart is no longer serves as a full-time law enforcement officer, he is not always made aware of OPOTA changes in a timely manner. Having those who work in the profession partner with the Law Enforcement program assists Mr. Smart with teaching students the most current information. I actually observed evidence of how business partners influence both curriculum and pedagogy. During the first Law Enforcement advisory board meeting, Mr. Smart commented that when teaching students about possible careers in law enforcement, he would inform them that they had to be twenty-one years of age in order to be employed. An advisory board member, who is a police officer, informed Mr. Smart that there were two law enforcement careers that students could enter at the age of 18. They can work as jail guards or highway patrol
dispatchers. Had Mr. Smart not been discussing curricular issues with the advisory board, he may have taught his students inaccurate information about career options.

At the first advisory board meeting of the year, each representative is provided a copy of the course curriculum. However, teachers also e-mail the curriculum to advisory board members (ABMs) before the meeting so everyone is prepared to discuss it. Once industry representatives have the opportunity to review the curricula for a couple weeks, they are asked to provide suggestions for improvement either at the advisory board meeting or in writing. Teachers, ABMs and administrators review the suggestions and determine which ones will be used after discussing which would be most practical and beneficial to students. When asked about how differences are settled, an ABM shared:

He [Mr. Smart] gave me the OPOTA sheet and asked what he thought should be changed, and our ideas were close to identical. The things I did not agree with, he [Mr. Smart] would say, “You know what you’re doing, you do that.” But on the same token, when I do the class, I also have him out there with me. Because I wouldn’t expect him to give me a two week block and not know what I’m teaching….. We usually sit down and weigh it out… Do they need it, is it relevant to what they can do until they turn 21 [and become police officers]. If it’s not, then we can just drop it.

Though teachers and administrators appreciate all feedback and suggestions, everyone’s ideas cannot be implemented. This lack of inclusion of some ideas has presented a problem for one Financial Services advisory board member who commented that he believes schools have advisory boards because it is a requirement and they really are not interested in making curricular improvements. He was a bit disgruntled because he often makes suggestions that he does not believe are utilized. His view may or may not be accurate because he does not have many opportunities to observe to see whether his ideas are being implemented.
In addition to curricula, advisory board members assist teachers with deciding on the most effective ways to deliver instruction. For example, the Financial Services teacher may be instructing a class on calculating advanced computations using spreadsheets in Microsoft 2003, but Microsoft 2007 may have a feature that simplifies the process. Or, conversely, the teacher may be aware of current programs that are more effective, but business may not have made the switch. At a Financial Services advisory board meeting, an instructor asked the advisory board if its companies were using the newest version of Microsoft Office because she was thinking of upgrading. The industry representatives suggested that it was better to wait a couple years before switching because most companies would not make an immediate transfer to the newer software. Although the teacher thought it was urgent to be on the cutting edge of technology, advisory board members suggested that money would be better spent elsewhere for the time being. Mrs. Wise agreed that if companies were not expecting new hires to be trained in the newer software in the next few years that resources could be used to address other immediate needs such as computer hardware.

Teachers, administrators and advisory board members from both program areas commented that modifying core curricular issues is a task that can readily be handled. Most often, soft skills are the areas of concern. Teachers and ABMs believe that it is difficult to teach students skills such as professionalism, proper manners, promptness and e-mail etiquette.

Several industry representatives remarked that students write unprofessional e-mails and address their superiors casually. One representative from higher education griped that students must learn that Standard English should be used when writing to
people in a professional environment. He shared how students entering his program use slang, fragments and broken grammar when sending correspondence. Other industry representatives shared similar sentiments. Advisory board members (ABMs) also spoke of how students participating in school-to-work assume it is acceptable to address supervisors by their first names. ABMs believe students should use titles such as Mrs. Or Mr. when speaking to those in authority.

Interestingly, only the Business advisory board shared issues of students not showing respect. The Law Enforcement advisory board did not mention this problem. This may have been due to the Law Enforcement teacher requiring students to always use titles and other military and law enforcement procedures since the beginning of the academic year. The instructor’s students are required to address all adults as “sir” and “ma’am” and must stand at attention anytime an adult enters the classroom. This was consistently done every time I conducted an observation.

Mr. Smart indicated that students were required to exhibit these behaviors because he was preparing them for their future career paths. In the law enforcement and the military it is appropriate to address others, especially superiors, as sir and ma’am. It is also customary for soldiers to stand at attention when someone of higher rank enters the room. As with the military, the first student who saw me or another adult enter the room was to exclaim “attention!” Then, all students would stand until Mr. Smart gave the command to sit down. He would say “at ease” or “as you were.”

Curriculum Standards versus Industry Standards

High school financial services programs in Ohio, as I have indicated, are governed by state standards that are provided through the Ohio Department of Education
(ODE). Although advisory board members are often experts in their areas, problems can arise when they are not familiar with the educational standards that teachers must adhere to. One Financial Services advisory board member commented that she has been apart of several discussions where other advisory board members thought certain skills should not be taught at all because they were not relevant to the workplace. However, the instructor could not delete those areas from the curriculum because the state mandated they be taught and students would be tested on them. Hence, a dilemma arises because the teacher is left with a decision of teaching what is mandated by the state or including skills that will benefit students in their careers. The advisory board member shared that she respects Mrs. Wise and trusts that her decisions will be made based on what she is required to do and what most meets student needs.

Similar issues have arisen with the Law Enforcement advisory board. Many of Mr. Smart’s advisory board members are police officers who are governed by Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) standards. Therefore, many of the recommendations they make are based on OPOTA standards. Although the skills required through OPOTA are relevant to the Law Enforcement course, Mr. Smart is sometimes unable to implement recommendations because of the age and maturity level of the students. For example, when teaching students how to use firearms, which is component of the OPOTA curriculum, Mr. Smart had to use plastic guns. Although students are able to get the gist of how to handle firearms, the experience would be much different with real weapons. Given limited time and interaction with students and the nature of where most learning takes place, oftentimes all valuable topics cannot be appropriately addressed and a few are neglected. Both Mrs. Wise and Mr. Smart shared
that, whenever possible, they combine advisory recommendations with their content area standards so that students get a standards-based lesson that is workforce relevant.

A similar situation arose with the Law Enforcement program. One advisory board member recommended the instructor no longer teach manual fingerprinting procedures because it was obsolete. He stated that law enforcement agencies were now using computerized fingerprinting machines and there was no use in teaching the antiquated method. The instructor was strongly considering this request until he took the students on a field trip and noticed that the law enforcement officers at the jail they visited were using the old method, although they had the computerized machines. The instructor asked why the paper method was being used and the officer explained that the fingerprinting machine was often broken and that many agencies had been experiencing problems with their fingerprinting machines. After hearing this explanation, the instructor decided that he would not omit the manual fingerprinting from the curriculum. From this experience, the instructor learned that although industry representatives are well-meaning and provide excellent advice, it is still necessary for the teacher to make the final decision as to what is in the best interest of students.

**Enhanced Student Learning Experience**

Experiential, or practical, learning experiences are provided by advisory board members in a variety of ways. Advisory board members assist by team teaching, guest lecturing, sponsoring field trips and shadowing opportunities, and providing school-to-work opportunities.
Team Teaching, Guest Lecturing and Mock Simulations

Teachers are knowledgeable of their content areas generally, but are not necessarily proficient in each area that must be covered. For example, a mathematics teacher can be extremely gifted at instructing students in algebra and calculus, but less talented in communicating geometry. At Ohio Career Center (OCC), when a lesson is to be delivered that covers an area where an advisory board member has expertise, teachers often invite that person in to help effectively deliver the lesson. For example, in the Law Enforcement program, self defense tactics is an area where students must show proficiency. Although the instructor is knowledgeable of these procedures, he has an advisory board member who works in that field and is considered an expert. The advisory board member worked with the students for two weeks. He was able to demonstrate several approaches with the students, as well as allow them to practice with each other to ensure they had mastered the competencies. Additionally, students were able to hear first hand how each of the tactics they learned was beneficial and could save their lives. They were interested because the person who was teaching shared actual experiences where he was required to use the skills he was teaching.

Similarly, on other occasions I observed advisory board members (ABMs) work with students in the Law Enforcement Program. On one instance, two ABMs who serve as police officers came in to work with students on crime scene investigations. The instructor and ABMs used the male and female locker rooms to simulate mock crime scenes. Students were required to come in and assess the scene, describe the process they used to evaluate the area, find fingerprints and write a report that would be reviewed and graded by the police officers. As a former police officer, the instructor would have been
able to work with the students on crime scene investigations, but not as effectively as the advisory board members who are veterans in this area. Additionally, the teacher would not have been able to split the class up and monitor behavior and accurately evaluate the students without the help of advisory board members. The students appeared to enjoy the experience and were appreciative of the opportunity to have volunteers who were well trained in this area to work with them.

On another occasion, students had the chance to apply the techniques they learned on conducting routine traffic stops. Two advisory board members, one retired and one active member of the police force, came to evaluate the students on conducting traffic stops. The students used a police cruiser, which was donated by the city through the help of an advisory board member, and the instructor’s car to simulate the experience. They were each expected to know the proper procedures to follow. The researcher observed the instructor teaching the steps on multiple occasions and heard him tell the students that they would be assessed on how well they followed the procedures. The advisory board members were able to work with the students and address possible negative consequences of not performing each procedure correctly. Although the instructor has served as a police officer, there were many scenarios the advisory board members were able to point out that the instructor had not considered because he had not worked in that capacity for quite a while. These are just a few of many experiences I observed while in the field that demonstrated how advisory board members enhanced the preparation students received.

While I did not see any evidence of team teaching or guest lecturing in the Financial Service program, during an interview the instructor did share an instance of an attempt that did not work well. An advisory board member, who also hosts school-to-
work students, spoke with the instructor about the need for students to improve their soft
skills such as workplace etiquette. The ABM sent two of her employees to work with the
business students in the classroom setting. Students were not receptive to the
representatives and began passing notes to each other and demonstrating other signs of
boredom. As might be expected, the presenters were insulted and the instructor was
embarrassed. Mrs. Wise explained to her students that their conduct was inappropriate
and they should always show respect to anyone visiting the classroom, especially those
who volunteer their time to help students develop academically, professionally and
socially. Even though this attempt was a failed one, the instructor revealed that she
thinks these opportunities are valuable and is open to hosting other volunteers in the
future.

A final area where most advisory boards for both program areas are extremely
active is in the area of conducting mock employment interviews with students. Advisory
board members interview students as if they are actually seeking employment with the
agency the ABM represents. They ask structured questions that require students to think
about their academic preparation and experiences that have prepared them for the job
they are interviewing for. Students are graded using a rubric of skills they should display
when interviewing.

This simulated experience not only benefits students so they can prepare for their
professional careers, but also for those who are competing at state and national
conferences. Both the Law Enforcement and Business programs had students represent
them at state level conferences. Their preparation was largely due to the assistance
provided by ABMs.
Field Trips and Job Shadowing Opportunities

In addition to on-campus experiences, students also have the opportunity to experience various job sites that relate to their careers of interest. As a result of having advisory board members who are interested helping students relate classroom knowledge to real-world practices, students are able to physically explore a variety of businesses and agencies. These field trips allow students to conceptualize how the academic skills they learn are relevant, as well as how people behave, in a professional environment.

For example, the Law Enforcement students were allowed to visit a local jail to learn more about fingerprinting and how the criminal justice system operates. Before departing from the school, the instructor stressed the importance of addressing law enforcement officers properly (i.e. using “sir” and “ma’am”). Although students are required to use professional language and terminology while in the classroom, the instructor instilled in them that respectful and professional conduct was an unwavering expectation when visiting outside agencies.

Moreover, business students were encouraged to exhibit respectful manners when participating in shadowing experiences and field trips as well. Students have had the opportunity to visit several places of employment, such as law firm, as a result of partnering activities. When visiting companies, students have the opportunity to see how their classroom setup is relevant and how it is preparing them for their future work environments.

School-to-Work Placement

In addition to brief experiential learning experiences such as job shadowing and field trips, students also have the opportunity gain valuable, paid work experience.
However, they must provide their own transportation to and from work. Additionally, students are not allowed to work on any day in which they are absent from school. This policy is monitored through close contact between Mrs. Wise and the internship coordinators at each site. Students do not have to conduct job shadowing at a company before being allowed to work there. Those students that Mrs. Wise recommends for placement are dependable, self-motivated and have performed well academically in the course. Financial Services students have the opportunity to work in organizations during their senior year. However, Law Enforcement students have few opportunities. One experience that Law Enforcement students have participated in for the past seven years is the annual horse show in one of the neighboring suburban areas. An ABM shared:

I know they have done some field trips. We have used them [students] for the past 7 years, out at the horse show [for parking patrol]. And so that was kind of my way of paying back to OCC, because I mean they gave me a lot…. So everything falls into place. So, when the Mrs. started the horse show, we didn’t have as many people in attendance as we do now. But, OCC used to do parking for another festival. So, when we were like we need people to help park cars, so I was like I have an idea. I went to [the former Law Enforcement instructor at OCC], and said “Hey, I got an idea. I said one day, eight hours, and I’ll give you this much.” And we always give them $500, well last year, we upped it. We gave them $1000. And it’s good for them because, one, OCC is put out into the public because they are put into the brochure. Two, the public sees them in their uniforms and it gives them good exposure to the public and let’s them see how the public treats, and doesn’t treat, law enforcement individuals. But, it also lets them as a school recruit also. Because there were a lot of kids who see them in their uniforms who were impressed… So yeah, it’s worked out really well. It’s worked out well.

According to teachers, administrators, and advisory board members, school-to-work experiences often result into full-time hire offers upon graduation.

The Financial Services teacher shared that many students choose the school-to-work option during their senior year. The students express interest and begin the
application process as juniors. While conducting a classroom observation, I witnessed the Financial Services teacher asking students if they were interested in job placement. Many of them were; however, some were skeptical because they wanted to play sports and engage in other extracurricular activities that would not agree with their school-to-work schedule. Although it is possible that students could do both, it is rare that work schedules allow time for students to attend practices for sports and other activities. Mrs. Wise cautioned students that it was unlikely that both activities could coexist because of the demanding schedules that each has.

Law Enforcement students do not have the opportunity to participate in school-to-work experiences as often as the Financial Services students because of the nature of the work. For most law enforcement positions, students have to be at least 21 years of age and much of the work is unsafe. There are also many confidential matters that are handled that cannot be shared with student interns. Although Law Enforcement students are not able to become as heavily involved in the workplace as Financial Services students, they have participated in job shadowing where they spend a couple hours or a full workday with a law enforcement agent to observe how the agent performs his or her job duties.

When Financial Services students are involved in school-to-work experiences, the career teacher and employer work together very closely in hopes that students will have positive work-based learning environments. The students’ grades are even determined partly by their workplace evaluations. Most of the students have positive school-to-work experiences although a few have been terminated for workplace policy infractions such as repeated tardies. Employers attempt to deter any negative behaviors by contacting the
career teacher whenever they sense problems arising. The teacher then intervenes and counsels the student, although this is not always effective.

While interviewing an advisory board member for the Financial Services program, I was informed that oftentimes there are issues with employees at her organization who are assigned as mentors to school-to-work students. She mentioned that some of the mentors forget what is like to be a teenager and they expect students to be extremely mature, dependent and efficient. These mentors have a difficult time accepting that the workplace is where many of the students will learn these skills, hence the concept work-based learning. In these situations, the site supervisor works with the mentors and tries to help them empathize with students’ experiences.

Financial Services students are placed in corporate offices such as law firms and local banking centers so they can apply the skills they have learned in the classroom, while gaining additional knowledge working in the field. For instance, students working at financial centers are often required to be proficient at creating and manipulating spreadsheets, a skill that is mastered in the financial services course, in order to complete job assignments. Although most of the job placement sites have representation on the advisory boards, there are some sites that do not. However, the industry of which the job placement sites are a part is represented. Ideally, it would be beneficial to have a representative for all placement sites as advisory board members because they would have a better understanding of the curriculum students learn. However, Mrs. Wise shared that there have been no issues as a result of a school-to-work host not serving on advisory boards because she is frequently at the job sites assessing student performance and employer needs.
Avenues for Securing Material Resources

The ability to secure funding, supplies and free or drastically discounted equipment, according to the teachers and administrators interviewed, was a secondary motive for engaging in partnering activities. Although individuals make the commitment to serve on the advisory boards, most of them have the support of the agency they represent as well as industry support. Advisory board members have secured funding for professional development activities for teachers and for monetary gifts for students who place at state-wide competitions in their career fields. ABMs also inspire their companies to donate both money and supplies to ensure they are properly equipped to best serve students. For example, when the diesel mechanic program needed a large piece of machinery that the school could not afford, through the assistance of an advisory representative, the program was able to purchase the equipment at a drastically reduced and affordable price.

Industry representatives, or advisory board members, offer many intangible resources that the students and teachers would otherwise have to go without. They offer time to work with students and teachers, experiential learning experiences, and advice on how to improve course curricula and pedagogy to maximize student preparation. The program areas at Ohio Career Center have many measurable outcomes that are possible as a result of partnerships. While industry representatives also have motives for working with schools as well, their reasons are more altruistic. In the next section, I explain that business partners view partnering experiences as a human and corporate responsibility to prepare youth; however, some also hope that their places of employment will benefit by hiring competent students.
Advisory Board Members’ Motives for Partnering

Some advisory board members (ABMs) from the Financial Services and Law Enforcement program areas agreed to be interviewed. Approximately 70 percent of the Financial Services and 50 percent of the Law Enforcement ABMs were interviewed. Three common themes emerged that explain why industry representatives committed to working with schools. Below, each is discussed in detail.

Desire to Give Back and Help Youth Become Well-Prepared

Of those advisory board members who participated in the interview process, over half shared that they were beneficiaries of career and technical education and had a desire to help others who are following the same paths they pursued as students. The advisory board members are strong advocates of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and believe this alternative educational route benefits students in multiple ways. ABMs want to ensure students are being taught a curriculum that is relevant to what the workplace expects. Therefore, they serve on advisory boards and give advice as to what students must learn in order to be successful on the job.

Not only do the programs prepare students for the workplace, but they are excellent preparation for college as well. A common opinion among ABMs was that their career paths probably would not have been as fruitful had they not been prepared at career centers. Those who graduated from the career center where the research was conducted wanted to ensure that students had the opportunity to work with people who shared a similar educational experience and became successful.

Industry representatives also partner because they know what it takes to thrive in college and the workplace. They want to make certain that students have soft skills they
need to adjust in the settings they will enter after high school. Those ABMs who serve as school-to-work site supervisors have found that students have the most difficulty with workplace etiquette. They cite issues such as tardiness, inappropriate attire, and lack of respectfulness as the main issues they struggle with when working with youth. Students often do not understand the importance of start times. One supervisor stated that students who have a start time of eight o’clock are often just pulling into the parking lot at that time. They do not recognize the importance of being at their stations and prepared to work at the start time. This type of behavior can result in lost business or dissatisfied customers. If workers are not in place at the beginning of the business day, and customers who require assistance call or visit, the business suffers.

Other issues that were discussed during advisory board meetings and interviews were students’ lack of adherence to workplace dress standards and their tendencies to address supervisors very casually. Oftentimes, students who are engaged in work experiences prefer to dress as if they are going to school. In most industries, this is not acceptable and students are required to dress according to the policies at their places of employment.

Students at the career center are required to wear uniforms that match industry standards. For instance, the Business students had to wear business attire every day. No jeans were allowed. However, some female students wore tightly fitted trousers and low-cut blouses. Even though the teacher had made her best effort to prepare students for dressing properly in business careers, she cannot be expected to go around the classroom every day and tell students that the fit of their clothing is inappropriate because subjectivism could play a role in whose clothing is deemed inappropriate. For example, a
thin student may wearing a style or fit of clothing that does not appear as unsuitable as it would if a heavier young woman were wearing it. It is easy to be inconsistent with these matters so it may be best to address the entire class as opposed to singling out individual students.

Similarly, the Law Enforcement students dressed in uniform each day. They wore polo style shirts with a law enforcement patch, black pants, and black shoes. The instructor for this program did not have many students challenge the dress code because there was less flexibility for incorporating personal style. The shirts were provided by the program, but students had to purchase their own black pants and shoes. Mandating that students at the career center wear industry approved clothing prepares students for what they will experience upon graduating.

Another skill that industry representatives would like to help students with is e-mail etiquette. Representatives commented that students often send e-mails to supervisors and college instructors that are too casual and friendly in nature. They use slang and broken English. Students fail to understand that any written and formal communication is representative of them and the company that employs them. Although the Career and Technical Education (CTE) instructors stress the importance of professional communication, students oftentimes think teachers are exaggerating or are disconnected from the real world. Having industry representatives come in and speak with students about these types of issues helps students to realize their importance. Advisory Board Members want to ensure youth are well prepared so they do not experience negative reactions upon entering college and the workforce.
Recruitment of Human Capital

A final reason that motivates advisory board members to become involved is a direct avenue for recruiting well-qualified students. An advisory board member shared, “We are interested in hiring from the program. There was a guy that I graduated with [from OCC] and he went into the Army, Special Forces, then when he got out he was hired for protective detail, and then when I got out I was hired for protective detail. And now I trained one of the cadets here [from OCC] and when he graduated he went into the military. And so we just hired him. So, there are three of us now [graduates of OCC].”

Working with schools gives employers a competitive advantage that other businesses do not have. Employers have the opportunity to work with the best students and to help other students become better. Through school-to-work experiences, job shadowing, and field trips, students receive first-hand exposure to businesses that they may have otherwise not experienced. Moreover, since advisory board members have developed relationships with teachers and school administrators, they count on these individuals to refer hardworking, dedicated students to their places of employment.

Even though ABMs would like to see a large percentage of students transferring from the career center to their colleges or businesses, they have not been experiencing large numbers of success because students do not necessarily gravitate toward the colleges and businesses that are represented on the advisory boards. It is not certain as to why recruitment numbers are not high for businesses that are represented on the advisory boards. A probable explanation is that each advisory board has approximately fifteen representatives and the career center can only house a small number of students in each program area. Even if each student goes to work full-time with a business that partners
with the school, it is unlikely that any given business would receive more than two students per year. Having multiple businesses represented on the advisory board may be a downside for employers, but beneficial for students because they have more workforce connections.

**Mutual Dependencies**

Although industry and school representatives have differing reasons for forming and sustaining partnering activities, it is clear that each is dependent upon the other for important resources. Schools must have relevant course curricula, effective teachers, equipment, and financial resources. Likewise, employers need competent human capital to support their core operations. Based on this research of the two program areas, industry is meeting the needs of OCC. The benefits for industry are not so clear. For the Financial services program, employers have no official system of tracking students who secure employment in their organizations as a result of partnering activities with their schools. Employers who work with the business program are not successful in recruiting high numbers of students.

On the other hand, the Law Enforcement program seems to have more success with recruitment. This program prepares students for careers in law enforcement, emergency response services and the military. The law enforcement instructor commented that the majority of his students enlist in the military during their senior year. Although branches of the military are represented on the advisory board, it is unknown if partnering efforts influence students’ decisions to enroll or if they had already determined to take that route before being exposed to ABMs who serve in various military capacities.
Interestingly, the instructor shared that the majority of the Law Enforcement graduates enlist in the military and he believes that less than 10 percent of students who graduate from the program ever become police officers. This may be due to the series of psychological tests that must be passed or the dangerous nature of the work. Or, it could be because most law enforcement positions require hires to be at least 21 years of age. During an interview, one Law Enforcement ABM stated, “…Even though half of them [students] graduate out of here at 18, they can’t become police officers in the state of Ohio until they are 21. So a lot of them go into the military…” If students do not become police officers, they leave the program knowing that there are numerous career routes they can take with the preparation they received from the law enforcement programs. They are aware of these options because advisory board members who come in and speak with the students about various career possibilities that relate to law enforcement. One ABM shared:

So, what I try to do is let them know that they can go into my field and still be a police officer. I was a police officer for 7 years full-time and I like what I do now much better. A lot of kids get into the program and think that’s it. But I tell them they can get into retail, or work for hotels. When you keep that environment, you can say this is happening…. Now there is a wide variety. They get pretty good choices of what they want to do.

Moreover, an ABM came in to speak with students about possible careers with insurance providers. He said that many of the claims they receive result in felony charges because people make fraudulent claims. The ABM said that the insurance agency he works for hires many retired police officers and encouraged students to keep their credentials active so they would not limit their opportunities. Additionally, I observed ABMs speak with students about careers as highway patrolmen and crime scene
investigators. Hence, having multiple partners reduces the dependency on one industry representative to provide information, knowledge and skills to diverse groups of students. As resource dependence theory suggests, it is beneficial to have various resource providers.

**Collaborating With Multiple Partners**

According to resource dependence theory, it is better to diversify dependencies so that no one organization will have too much power over the program area it advises (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1978). Administrators, teachers, and advisory board members were asked how they thought the partnership experience would be different if there were one or very few members on each advisory board. Most participants commented on how the experiences for students would be limited and how course curricula could be skewed in such a way that it focused heavily on the specific area(s) that were represented, as opposed to the entire industry. Stakeholders generally believe that having a larger group of business partners is best in that multiple perspectives better represent the industry at large.

Many advisory board members also reported serving on boards at other career centers throughout the state, including other counties outside the one where OCC is located. Hence, they have diversified their dependencies as well. Such diversification is wise, according to RDT, because no one school has the power to determine what those employers’ work force will look like. For instance, a teacher of a specific program area and an advisory board member may have a large disagreement and decide it is best to sever their relationship. If that employer was relying on this one teacher to recommend students for employment, the disassociation could negatively impact the employer’s
recruitment efforts. However, if the employer is serving on boards at other schools, he or she still has a direct source for human capital.

With regard to RDT, it is difficult for the program areas and advisory boards that were studied to exert power over the other because each possesses resources that the other needs. Further, each has made certain to diversify dependencies so there is no one power source. Both administrators and industry representatives have taken on roles to ensure the partnerships are healthy, viable and productive. However, the positive results that the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs have encountered many not be the typical experiences of OCC programs. My sampling technique was stratified purposeful; however, I was unable to sample a program from the bottom stratum that was having poor partnering experiences.

**Role of Administrators and Business Partners**

According to Pfeffer and Salancick (2003), managers operate in any of three distinct roles: symbolic, responsive, and discretionary. Based on my observations and interview responses, it appears that employers function in a symbolic role, whereas administrators tend to operate in responsive and discretionary roles. The symbolic role suggests that actions do not significantly affect outcomes. This is true for the employers who were interviewed for this study. Although they work with schools and students, they have not reaped the outcome of recruiting students to work for their companies. The responsive and discretionary functions require those who are in charge to accurately assess situations and determine the best course of action to take for the organization.

At least one school administrator attends each advisory board meeting. When administrators were asked why they attend, they responded so that they could be of
support and accurately assess the urgency and sincerity of suggestions that are made by advisory board members. Administrators have occasionally sensed that advisory board members have been coerced by the teacher to request that certain equipment be purchased or specific curricular changes be made. By participating in meetings, administrators are able to better determine which requests are legitimate and how to proceed properly. By taking on responsive and discretionary roles, administrators have been able to ensure the needs and interests of the school are met.

**Increase in Social Legitimacy**

Industry and schools can increase each other’s social legitimacy (Pfeffer and Salancick, 1978). Administrators rely on advisory board members for larger scale issues such as meeting with elected state officials and other governing bodies to ensure representatives at government agencies have an accurate understanding of the role of career and technical education. CTE centers are expensive to operate and are vulnerable since there are so many alternative educational routes that students can take. Having business representatives speak to legislators and education officials on behalf of these centers helps to validate the work of career centers.

Since many advisory board members host students as interns, they are able to experience their work ethic and skill levels directly. Most often, employees are impressed with the skills students have learned at the career center and speak highly of their capacity to assimilate into the workplace. Many citizens are not aware of the benefits that career centers offer. Once the community finds out, some people actually call and ask if they can serve on advisory boards and others show interest in enrolling their children at OCC.
As for business, several representatives commented that their places of employment desire to form strong community relations. Because schools are integral parts of all communities, businesses often want to support them in whatever capacity possible. Often, business involvement begins with one or two employees showing initial interest. Then, others see the benefit and want to assist as well. During interviews, advisory board members revealed that even though their true desire is to assist schools, oftentimes their goodwill is reciprocated because becoming involved with schools sheds positive light on businesses.

Summary

School-business partnerships for the Financial Services and Law Enforcement Programs at Ohio Career Center (OCC) have proved to be fruitful for both employers and schools. The findings from this study partially support the logic of my theoretical framework, resource dependence theory (RDT). The theory suggests that organizations rely on each other for survival and places strong emphasis on power and control (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Although I found that schools and businesses do rely upon each other, the need for material resources is not always the motivating factor in developing alliances. As for power struggles, the programs at OCC and their advisory boards did not have difficulty in this area. Based on observations and interviews, neither entity attempted to exert control over the other. The collaborations were diplomatic and both sides appeared to be genuinely interested in assisting the other in whatever magnitude possible.

Another assumption of resource dependence theory is that the environment contains scarce and valuable resources that are imperative for organizations to survive
which is problematic because the environment is uncertain (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). For my study, this proved to be true. The programs at OCC relied on businesses to help them stay abreast of industry changes, for school-to-work placement and experiential learning opportunities for students. However, employers who serve as advisory board members are not always able to provide the resources that schools desire. School-to-work opportunities may or may not exist from year to year, employer budget cuts sometimes disable them from donating to schools, and increased workloads may hinder partners from contributing quality input into the school’s curriculum. In turn, businesses rely on schools for human capital. Although there is no guarantee that firms which partner with a specific school or program area will be the beneficiaries of that school’s talented students, business representatives still work with schools because just being able to help prepare youth for wherever they choose to obtain employment is satisfaction enough.

While my findings revealed that partnerships were effective for the programs that were studied, had I been able to study more program areas and advisory boards, results may have been different. In Chapter 5, I discuss the limitations of the study and recommendations for future practice and research.
CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research study, discusses the study’s limitations, and recommends direction for future research and practice. Schools and businesses partner for a variety of reasons. Although each hopes to gain something beneficial from the alliances, the common thread that keeps them connected is that each entity wants students to excel while in high school, college and the workforce. Teachers and administrators realize that schools alone cannot offer everything students need to be successful in school and competitive in the workplace. Similarly, industry representatives recognize that they must work with schools to help ensure students are being taught information and skills that are relevant to their careers of interest.

The goal of this research was to discover whether the potential for resource acquisition influenced the formation and sustainability of school-business partnerships for two program areas at Ohio Career Center. It had a secondary purpose of determining if and how the partnerships shaped curriculum and pedagogy. I found that the potential for resource acquisition is a motivating factor; however, industry representatives mainly aspire to help young people excel through helping teachers become aware of new workplace practices so that course curricula and teaching practices are relevant. It was quite impressive to find that self-serving, ulterior motives are not the primary reasons that businesses chose to support the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs at Ohio Career Center (OCC). After conducting this research, it became quite evident that a
person with those motives would not remain active on the boards anyway. Developing and sustaining partnerships is challenging work that requires a significant commitment of time, resources, and patience.

Below, I have listed each of the seven research sub-questions and have briefly summarized the findings for each.

1. **What kinds of resources do business and career centers provide each other to aid with their core functions?**

The research findings revealed that the Ohio Career Center (OCC) program areas that were studied for this research do not contribute greatly to the internal operations of the businesses that work with them. Although some employers desire to recruit students from the OCC program areas, there has not been a significant number of students who graduate from the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs and begin working with employers who partnered with the schools.

As for employers contributing to the core function -- educating youth from the Ohio Career Center, they have contributed time, talent, and treasure. Employers help the program areas they advise through funding, working with students, and advising teachers on curricular and pedagogical issues.

2. **In what ways are career centers and businesses dependent upon resources provided by the other?**

Ohio Career Center is dependent upon employers for both material and immaterial resources. Schools require equipment, supplies, and assistance from subject area experts that the schools would go without if advisory board members did not assist.
Without these resources, schools would not be able to equip students with the knowledge and abilities they need to be successful in college and the workplace.

Although employers are dependent upon resources, primarily the well-trained, human capital that schools provide, based on the results of this study, they do not directly reap those benefits. None of the advisory board members or teachers have kept official records of how many students are hired as a result of partnering activities; however, they were all convinced that the numbers are extremely low. Fortunately, the potential for recruiting students is not a primary reason that employers serve on the advisory boards at Ohio Career Center. According to advisory board members, they assist for philanthropic reasons. Therefore, they continue to help although they are not reaping a quantitative benefit. Serving as advisors just makes them feel good!

3. What are the reasons cited by teachers, administrators and business partners for agreeing to partner?

Because of Perkins IV legislation, teachers and administrators are required to partner because it is a mandate to receive federal funding (Public Law 109-270). However, these educators would opt to do so regardless because they are convinced that working with employers has helped increase the level of education and rigor that schools can provide for students. All administrators and program teachers commented that these relationships are beneficial and said that the aid advisory board members provide is tremendous. These employers give of their time and resources to help Ohio Career Center operate as effectively and efficiently as possible.

As mentioned, business partners basically have a desire to see students succeed while in school and upon graduation. Many of them attended career centers while in high
school and found that they were extremely prepared for both college and the workplace. They were beneficiaries of others who contributed their time and resources. As one Law Enforcement advisory board member stated, they just want to “pay it forward.”

4. **Is the role of school administrators and business partners more symbolic, responsive, or discretionary in sustaining partnerships?**

Pfeffer and Salancick (1978) discuss three roles of management with regard to dependence relationships. It appears that role of employers is more symbolic because their actions have not had a great affect on their organizational outcomes. Although business partners feel good about helping students, their companies are not reaping any significant benefits by them working with schools.

On the other hand, administrators seem to be more responsive and discretionary in their roles. Administrators acknowledge that they need business partners. Therefore, they have teachers pursue those who may be of greatest help to the school’s program areas. They also navigate the environment to suit the interests of the schools. Hence, they pursue and attract noteworthy people to assist them with accomplishing their mission.

5. **Is it beneficial for schools to maintain partnerships with multiple businesses simultaneously?**

According to teachers and administrators, it is beneficial for Ohio Career Center to partner with various organizations. I found that employers each offer unique skill sets that benefit the students, teachers, and school. Additionally, no one employer becomes overwhelmed by requests from the school. The Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs have also been able to offer experiential learning experiences for students in a
variety of career fields, as opposed to just a few, which would be the case if the programs
did not partner with multiple employers.

6. **What consequences are experienced as a result of career centers and
   businesses partnering?**

A positive result of partnering experiences is that career centers are able to
provide instruction to students that is congruent with workplace and college expectations.
Although teachers are equipped with the knowledge to help students be productive, they
are not always abreast of the latest techniques and technologies that are being used.
Working directly with employers allows teachers the opportunities to work with those
who are actually involved in policy development that shape business practices. Since
employers are actively engaged with curriculum planning and classroom activities, they
are able to ensure that teachers and students are knowledgeable of latest developments.

A downside is that oftentimes the experiential learning in which students are
involved offer limited career opportunities. Students who receive school-to-work
placement are often working in local branches of big corporations or small businesses
that offer few opportunities to engage with senior management. Most often, they do not
have the opportunity to work directly with those who are in charge and make policies that
directly shape organizational practices. Instead, they are employed to fill positions such
as bank tellers or telemarketers. Although these jobs provide students with opportunities
to learn in a work environment, they do not offer direct insight into careers that require
higher levels of education and training. This is ironic since many of the advisory board
representatives are senior level managers; however, they are not the ones who work
directly with students who are placed at their sites. This type of limited opportunity is
what causes some observers to criticize career and technical education because they perceive it as a social reproductive system that is designed to funnel students into low paying jobs instead of providing exposure to higher salaried careers that are obtainable after earning a college degree.

7. **In what ways do school-business partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy?**

Advisory board members review lesson plans, submit lesson plans, teach lessons and provide experiential learning experiences for students. They provide school-to-work opportunities for students and serve as guest speakers. On occasion, advisory board members have provided funding for teachers to attend professional development conferences. Advisory board members (ABMs) who serve as partners to the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs are committed to helping students at Ohio Career Center obtain a superior education. These employers go beyond the expectations of a business partner who simply donates resources and/or a few hours of time. Financial Services ABMs tend to work more closely with students in school-to-work settings, whereas Law Enforcement ABMs tend to work with students at the school. Either way, both boards appear to be heavily engaged in the teaching and learning process.

Surprisingly, neither teachers nor administrators could recall situations where partnering attempts had failed although they did acknowledge that some needed to be improved. Teachers are mandated to formulate advisory boards; however, no one can make them take the work seriously. There has to be some internal motivation from all parties involved to make the partnerships work. Based on many observations, interviews, and lesson plan reviewing, I feel confident that curriculum and pedagogy at Ohio Career
Center have been positively shaped by collaborations between OCC program areas and industry representatives.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although the research study produced rich data to answer the research questions, in some ways the study was limited. A more comprehensive picture could have been gained had I been able to interview all advisory board members for both program areas. It would also have been beneficial to study a program area that has a lower level of advisory board participation than the two that were studied. Additionally, partnership experiences may have been skewed because one of the teachers who participated in the study was a veteran of more than 20 years. The other was a first-year novice.

While a single case study is sufficient to carry out rigorous qualitative research, I planned initially to study three individual cases within the same career center. Researching three areas would have allowed me to triangulate the findings between program areas that were experiencing high, average, and poor levels of partnership success. Since I was unable to gain consent from any of the teachers who were experiencing low levels of partnership experience, it was not possible to evaluate a partnership that was not thriving. However, studying two partnerships, instead of three, allowed me to conduct a more in depth analysis of the programs because I was able to dedicate more time to working with teachers and advisory board members for the two program areas that were studied.

Another limitation is that each of the two program areas of study has one teacher and each is responsible for teaching a junior and senior level lab. All observations were conducted while participants taught junior level labs. Therefore, I never observed
whether the teachers’ instructional techniques varied between the two lab levels. However, questions about pedagogical differences between 11th and 12th grade labs were asked during teacher interviews.

I was able to interview half of the advisory board members from one program and seventy percent from the other. Although these are high participation rates, findings would be more reliable if there were 100% participation. It is rare that a researcher gets everyone in a population to take part in a study, but the more voices that are heard the more confident he or she can be in the findings. Although everyone did not interview, it is believed that the findings are representative of the entire group because interviews were triangulated with comments that were made during advisory board meetings and teacher interviews.

An additional limitation is that there was a major difference in teaching experience for the two instructors who participated in the study. One is a veteran teacher and the other is a first year teacher who formerly worked in law enforcement. Perhaps, the veteran teacher’s success is a result of working with virtually the same group of industry representatives over an extended period of time. Similarly, the novice teacher’s board is comprised of people he has known through the industry over the past twenty or so years. Hence, both of them have established relationships with those who serve as industry representatives for their program areas. Had I been able to study a teacher with around six years of teaching experience and few industry contacts, findings may not have been as affirmative.

Finally, the bulk of the data that was collected for this research took place in the setting of Ohio Career Center’s school building. While I did visit three work sites to
conduct interviews with advisory board members (ABMs), I was at each no longer than 90 minutes. Therefore, I was not able to triangulate data collection methods for the business perspective. While ABMs shared their experiences during interviews, I did not have the opportunity to observe daily operations to determine whether what they revealed verbally was congruent with their daily practices. Moreover, I did not have access to any documents that were produced by those who served on advisory boards. Although I am confident in the finding that ABMs serve primarily for selfless reasons because this sentiment was shared by the majority of advisory board members, I cannot be as assured as I am about the findings from the school’s perspective since the school served as the primary data collection ground.

As with all research, limitations were unavoidable for this study. More could have been done and other avenues could have been considered. Since, no researcher can cover all possibilities in a single study, those things that could have enhanced this study or produced further knowledge make excellent suggestions for future research.

**Recommendations for Future Practice**

I recommend that Ohio Career Center (OCC) undergo a comprehensive evaluation of school-business partnerships for each program area. Findings from the two program areas that were investigated provide some initial insight into whether partnering activities are meeting their intended purposes; however, both programs have committed teachers and partners who are dedicated to meeting student needs. These encouraging results may not be indicative of what the school as a whole is experiencing.

Since Perkins funding is contingent upon career and technical education (CTE) programs adhering to its policies, school administrators must make certain they are in
total compliance. Even if funding were not attached to the sustaining of partnerships, it is evident that administrators at OCC would still require teachers to work with industry representatives because they see value in it. Working with advisory boards is only worthwhile if all stakeholders are committed and everyone is candid about what each stakeholder intends to gain by participating. A thorough review of all partnering activities would help teachers and administrators reveal weak and strong areas. It is only through an internal assessment of the roles business partners play in contributing to the success of students that the career center will realize what actions it should take with regard to partnerships.

**Directions for Future Research**

Career and technical education, more specifically school-business partnerships at career/technical centers, is vastly understudied. Many “how to” guides that explain the process of starting business partnerships are available, but little scholarly research exists that discusses what motivates stakeholders to become involved and whether the partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy. Scholarly literature can be enhanced by research that focuses on the factors must be present for partnerships to be vital and productive. Simply knowing how to start a partnership is not enough.

Additionally, it would be useful to discover what factors motivate both teachers and employers to commit the time and energy it takes to work together for the betterment of students. “How to” guides would lead us to believe that the potential for tangible resources is what motivates others to serve. Although this may be a component, there has to be something intrinsic and pure that keeps industry representatives working with schools. As this study has revealed, oftentimes businesses do not reap the human capital
that they hope for as a result of working with schools. However, they continue to commit to the work. Once researchers uncover what internal motives or value systems help industry representatives stay committed to working with schools, then teachers and administrators will have a sound base for understanding what it truly takes to implement and sustain healthy, productive partnerships.

**Final Summary**

The purpose of the research was to discover whether the potential for resource acquisition influences the formation and sustainability of school-business partnerships at Ohio Career Center, and how these partnerships shape curriculum and pedagogy. It was found that partnering benefits the Financial Services and Law Enforcement programs at OCC in more ways than it does business, with regard to material resources. Even though the career center needs substantial resources from business, teacher and administrator motives are not selfish in nature. The assistance that schools require is needed to help maximize the student learning experience. None of the administrators or teachers who were interviewed desired items that were self-serving, such as a renovated teachers’ lounge or the latest model copier machine. They all wanted resources that would directly benefit students. When industry representatives can see the passion that teachers and administrators have for serving students, it does not seem to matter if they are reaping quantitative benefits. They, too, want to support students and assist the career center with producing the best graduates possible.
APPENDIX A
ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) How long has OCC been involved in partnerships?

2) What was the reason for forming these partnerships? Were you involved in the process of forming partnerships? [If administrator answers affirmatively: How were you involved? If administrator answers negatively: Were teachers or community members involved in forming the partnerships?]

3) What is your role in helping to sustain the partnerships?

4) Do you think the school-business partnerships have contributed to teaching practices? [If administrator answers affirmatively: In what ways have the school-business partnerships contributed?]

5) Do you think the school-business partnerships have shaped curriculum? [If administrator answers affirmatively: How have the school-business partnerships influenced curriculum?]

6) Have there been any disadvantages of your school engaging in school-business partnerships? [If administrator answers affirmatively: What have been the disadvantages of partnerships?]

7) Have you encountered any difficulties while trying to sustain partnerships? [If administrator answers affirmatively: Explain the difficulties you have encountered as a result of engaging in partnerships?]

8) If at all, in what ways has partnering with local businesses helped to increase the social and/or political legitimacy of the career center?

9) What criteria do you use to assess whether partnering activities are shaping the course curricula of the career/technical programs that are offered at OCC?

10) What advice would you give students who prefer to fill entry level positions in their career area upon high school graduation as opposed to going to college?

11) What kinds of resources do your business partners contribute that aid OCC in meeting its core function of educating students?

12) Would you agree that stakeholders, such as parents, citizens, and business owners, view OCC as a better alternative to traditional comprehensive high schools? Explain.
13) What organizational efforts led to the creation of networks and formal relationships between OCC and its business partners?

14) If at all, in what ways have the demands placed on OCC by business partners complicated the relationship between the partners and the school?

15) If at all, in what ways have public perceptions of career centers prevented or increased the willingness of businesses to partner with OCC?

16) Career centers receive a certain percentage of each of its feeder schools’ budgets. The survivability of schools is largely dependent on the voting public who may or may not view local schools as worthy of increased financial support. In what ways have engaging in partnering activities increased taxpayer support?

17) What are the main reasons that students choose to attend OCC instead of their home schools?

18) In order of priority, explain the primary resources that OCC is able to gain through its partnerships.

19) In your opinion, how would OCC’s partnership experience be different if you had only one partner as opposed to multiple partners?

20) What have been the key challenges to sustaining your partnering activities?

21) Are you able to recall any failed or negative partnership experiences? If so, please elaborate.

22) Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX B

ADVISORY BOARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) What is the name of the organization [business, firm] you represent?

2) How long has your organization been partnering with Ohio Career Center?

3) Why did your organization enter into partnership with OCC?

4) In order of importance, talk about what your organization hopes to gain as a result of engaging in this partnership experience.

5) What kinds of issues did you have to negotiate prior to beginning the partnership?

6) In what ways does your organization contribute to OCC or the specific area that you advise?

7) If at all, how does your partnership with OCC benefit your organization?

8) If any, does your organization place any conditions or requirements on OCC as a provision for continued partnership with the career center? [If answer is affirmative: What are these conditions and why do you consider them important?]

9) If any, has OCC placed any stipulations on your business as a condition for continued partnership? If so, what are they?

10) In what ways are you, or other employees from your place of business, directly engaged with OCC students?

11) What role do you play in sustaining the partnership?

12) In your opinion, how relevant is [state name of OCC program area] current curriculum to current and emerging industry standards?

13) If at all, how has your company’s relationship with Ohio Career Center shaped [state name of CTE program] curriculum?

14) If at all, how has your relationship with Ohio Career Center shaped teaching methods?
15) How are differences in opinions, regarding curriculum and teaching methods, resolved between teachers and employers (business partners)?

16) What types of activities have students had the opportunity to participate in as a result of the partnership?

17) In your view is student learning enhanced because of your company’s partnership with OCC? [If answer is affirmative: In what ways? If negative: Why do you think that is?]

18) If at all, how does partnering with OCC assist your business with its internal operations?

19) If at all, in what ways are your partnering activities with OCC publicized to the local community? [If partnering activities are publicized, what is the benefit of doing so?]

20) If any, what gains in the local community does your place of employment incur as a result of its partnership with OCC?

21) What criteria does your firm use to assess the benefits to your place of employment from partnering with OCC?

22) It is a goal of your partnership to recruit students to work for your organization? (or enroll?—for college representatives)

23) How would your partnership experience be different if (state the name of OCC program area) had only one partner as opposed to multiple partners?

24) What role do the school administrators play in the partnerships?

25) If any, what have been the key challenges to sustaining your partnering activities?

26) If any, what are the disadvantages of partnering with Ohio Career Center?

27) Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX C
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Interview #1)

1) Which courses do you currently teach in the (state name of CTE) program?

2) Why do students choose to enroll in (state name of CTE program)?

3) What are the typical post-secondary plans of students who enroll in this program?

4) Is it important for your program area to have business partnerships? [If yes, explain why. If no, why isn’t it?]

5) What role do the school administrators play in the partnership?

6) Specifically, what roles do your business partners play (e.g. Curriculum, structured learning, guest speakers, and internships)?

7) As a teacher, what resources can you offer business partners to assist them with business operations?

8) Which businesses are represented on your advisory board?

9) If any, what demands do employers place on teachers as a condition for continued partnering?

10) How often do you have contact with the employer advisor board members that work with your program? What is this communication often regarding?

11) If at all, in what ways have the school-business partnerships shaped to your teaching methods?

12) If at all, in what ways have the school-business partnerships shaped your course curricula?

13) If at all, in what ways have the school-business partnerships contributed to student learning?
14) What is the most important contribution your business partners make to influence student learning?

15) Do your students receive any opportunities that they may not have had if your school had no business partners?

16) Are there any particular partners that you consider to be more influential in shaping curriculum and pedagogy than others? Please elaborate.

17) How would your partnership experience be different if OCC had only one partner as opposed to multiple partners?

18) What criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership experience?

19) If any, what are the disadvantages of partnering with business?

20) If any, what challenges have you encountered as a result of engaging in business partnerships?

21) If any, what expectations of your business partnership remain unmet?

22) Is there anything else you would like to add?
Teacher Interview Questions
(Interview #2)

1. How many years have you been teaching at Ohio Career Center (OCC)?

2. How would you describe your teaching style? (lecture, hands-on, etc.)

3. What inspired the set-up of your classroom?

4. Does your teaching style differ between your junior and senior labs? If so, how?

5. How much influence do advisory board members (ABMs) have over your curriculum?

6. Do any of your ABMs serve on other boards as well? (standards, other schools, etc.)

7. How did you go about selecting members to serve on your advisory board?

8. What is the purpose of having advisory boards?

9. What do you hope your ABMs will be able to provide for you as a teacher and/or for your program area?

10. Do ABMs provide any resources for your program area that OCC will not or cannot?

11. Do you partner with any organizations that are not represented on your advisory board?

12. Is there anything to be gained by co-teaching/team teaching with ABMs?

13. Earlier in your career, were ABMs more or less involved in your program? Do you feel like you need them less because you are more experienced? [for Financial Services teacher only]

14. Is there a high turnover rate among ABMS? If so, what do you think causes this?

15. Have you ever been involved in a failed partnership experience? Explain.
16. I know your lesson plans are derived from state standards/ITACs. Are any of them created based on suggestions from ABMs?

17. Do students in your program area have the option of leaving with any licenses/certifications?

18. Do advisory board members typically recruit your students into full-time employment positions?

19. How do your students who engage in school-to-work in place of senior labs receive grades? Do you, their supervisor, or both, grade?
APPENDIX D

CODING SCHEMA

Data Analysis Coding Schema

CODES
ABM  - ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS
ASST - ASSISTANCE IN CLASSROOM
BPA  - BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS OF AMERICA
BSR  - BUSINESS RESOURCES (PROVIDED BY SCHOOLS)
CERTS - CERTIFICATIONS STUDENTS CAN EARN
CLS  - CLASSROOM SET UP
CMTSO - COMPETITIONS FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS
CRDT - CONFIRMED THEORY (RESOURCE DEPENDENCE THEORY)
CTGHT - CO-TAUGHT CLASSES
CURR - CURRICULUM ASSISTANCE
DISR - DISCRETIONARY ROLE (ADMINISTRATORS)
EQU  - EQUIPMENT
EXP  - EXPERTS
EXP  - EXPLORATORY TEACHING
EXPL - EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
FIN ST - FINANCIAL SERVICES STATE STANDARDS (OHIO)
FINSP - FINANCIAL SUPPORT/DONATIONS
GW  - GOODWILL
HC  - HUMAN CAPITAL
INFCUR - INFLUENCE ON CURRICULUM
INSTD - INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERANCE (PEDAGOGY)
ITACS - INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES
KIN  - KINESTHETIC (HANDS-ON) TEACHING
LAWST - LAW ENFORCEMENT STATE STANDARDS (OHIO)
LEC  - LECTURE BASED TEACHING
LIC  - LICENSES STUDENTS CAN EARN
LP  - LESSON PLANS
MTG  - MEETINGS WITH ADVISORY BOARD
OBRD - OTHER BOARDS (ABS SERVE ON MULTIPLE BOARDS)
OPOTA - OHIO PEACE OFFICERS TRAINING ACADEMY
ORDT - OPPOSED THEORY (RESOURCE DEPENDENCE THEORY)
PRES - CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS
RESPR - RESPONSIVE ROLE (ADMINISTRATORS)
RFP  - REASONS FOR PARTNERING
SCHR - SCHOOL RESOURCES (PROVIDED BY BUSINESS)
SFTSL - SOFT SKILLS
SKLV  - SKILL LEVEL
SL    - SOCIAL LEGITIMACY
SLCABM- SELECTION OF ABMs
STSTAN- STATE STADARDS
SUPPD - SUPPLIES DONATED
SUPPN - SUPPLIES NEEDED
SYMR  - SYMBOLIC ROLE (ADMINISTRATORS)
TCHST - TEACHING STYLE
TGHT  - TAUGHT CLASSES
TT    - TEAM TEACHING
VO    - VALUES OPINIONS OF ABMs
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