A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND AND PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES WITH
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

The passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in late 2001 has led to a radical reform of education, primarily for schools with a larger proportion of low-income students. A key strategy for assisting schools in meeting the challenge of ensuring students succeed in school is a school-family-community partnership. Through these partnerships, schools can focus on academic achievement of students while parents and community organization focus on providing academic assistance and enrichment, as well as addressing the non-academic barriers to learning.

This research utilized a grounded theory approach to determine the best frameworks for developing partnerships to address NCLB. Specifically, 12 teachers from two schools that serve youth attending a Boys & Girls Club were interviewed. These teachers provided key insights related to (a) knowledge and awareness of NCLB (b) knowledge of Boys & Girls Clubs and (c) perspectives on partnerships between schools and Clubs, or other youth development agencies. Findings reveal that teachers do not necessarily think in systems theory, and therefore, partnership opportunities are not on the forefront of their mind. However, teachers understand the benefits their students receive from participating in youth development organizations and are open to the idea of partnering to enhance the academic achievement of students.
This work is dedicated to my parents, John and Phyllis Frank, who always made me believe that I could be anything and do anything I dreamed. Thanks for your unconditional love and support.

This is also dedicated in memory of my mentor, Bob Zuercher, who instilled in me not only a passion for social work, but also a passion for the Boys & Girls Clubs. Bob, you are always with me.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, over $200 billion dollars have been spent in an attempt to improve public schools (Department of Education, 2002). Upon his inauguration in 2001, President George W. Bush announced his intention to create a policy that would make certain that all children succeed in school. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was passed in late 2001, with support from both political parties.

Title I of NCLB, which targets districts and schools with the greatest needs, is the largest federal funding program supporting elementary and secondary education. In 2002, the government allocated $10.4 billion dollars for Title I, which primarily went to schools with at least 50% of their students falling below the poverty level (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). One of the key components of NCLB is that schools receiving Title I will be held accountable for the academic achievement of their students, which will be assessed annually (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). The implications for failing to meet this requirement can be serious and costly for school districts that are not meeting certain
standards, as they will be required to offer supplemental services and school choice, with the transportation costs charged to the district (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

One concern with NCLB is that it only addresses only the academic components of schools. The various non-academic barriers, or risk factors, that impact school success such as mental health issues and poverty, are not included in NCLB legislation, although schools are expected to account for these concerns. Not only does the new policy not address these challenges, it is also evident that schools are not trained to deal with these non-academic barriers (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). Thus, many students may indeed actually end up being left behind. The problem with NCLB legislation then becomes: “Who helps those students that will inevitably fall through the cracks?”

The answer to this question can be determined by using a systems theory perspective when examining students’ academic achievement. In essence, systems theory contends that a person is the sum of the parts of his or her life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). With youth, there are several microsystems at work in their lives, including school, home, neighborhood, self and peers. Systems theory states that systems interact to form a mesosystem, which involves two or more systems interacting with each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). With regard to youth and academic achievement, this theory describes that there is more than just school that constitutes a youth’s life. Therefore, more than one system working to enhance academic achievement is needed. In essence, the school cannot be held entirely responsible for the academic achievement of students. The other systems affecting a student’s life, such as families and youth development organizations, must also be held accountable (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, in press; Merseth, Schorr & Elmore, 2001).
In order to help with academic achievement, youth development organizations and other partners can assist schools. First, youth development organizations can help by working with students on their homework during the after-school hours. In addition, to enhance the educational component of the program, schools can provide youth development organizations with samples of their curriculums, which can be used to design hands-on learning activities (McLaughlin, 2006). Academic enrichment programs and field trips can also provide students with learning outside of their typical environment, which can lead to improved academic performance of students (Posner & Vandell, 1994).

As such, it is important to realize that in order for students to achieve at school, other non-academic barriers affecting their life must also be addressed. Many non-academic barriers have been identified and a few are highlighted here. Poverty, for instance, leads to students being unprepared to learn, because critical early learning prior to starting school has not taken place (Education Week, 2003). Lack of adult support due to inability of working parents to spend time with youth after school can lead to children being avoidant with teachers (Howes, Phillips & Whitebook, 1992). Likewise, underperformance at school has been shown to contribute to poor youth development (Beck, 1999). Furthermore, inner-city youth face even more non-academic barriers, as their home environments are often unsafe, which can deter youth from learning and growing at an appropriate level (Halpern, 1992).

Given these issues, it is evident that schools must not only implement effective school interventions aimed to support the academic achievement of students, but they must also look for ways to address the various non-academic barriers to learning that
affect students' success. One of the most effective methods for addressing these barriers to learning involves the development of school-family-community partnerships (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, in press). These partnerships are beneficial because they provide opportunities for parents and community members to become active in enhancing the academic success for youth. With all systems focused on academic performance and reducing the influence of non-academic barriers, students’ ability to achieve is enhanced immensely (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). These partnerships also allow schools to recruit parents to help with their child’s education, while creating an atmosphere where parents are respected for the expertise they bring to the table (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997; National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations, 2001). Effective partnerships can be those formed between schools and youth development organizations. With partnerships focusing on the non-academic barriers to learning, teachers have more time to do what they do best, which is to teach and educate children.

Foremost, many youth development organizations have academic assistance and support as a central part of their programming. Therefore, tutoring, homework assistance, and academic enrichment activities can further enhance students’ success in school. In addition, school and youth development partnerships also can be extremely effective at addressing the non-academic barriers to learning. These partnerships are effective because youth development organizations see themselves as sharing the responsibility with schools for the successful development of youth (Comer, 1992; Quinn, 1999). In addition, youth development organizations have the benefit of seeing youth in their environments (i.e., in their neighborhoods). This allows youth development organizations to be experts in the abundant environmental risk factors that affect youth (Heath &
McLaughlin, 1991). Thus, schools can concentrate on academics, and youth development organizations can focus on both academics and addressing the non-academic barriers to achievement. For instance, youth development organizations help combat non-academic barriers by providing, physical and social recreation, life skills training, support programs for families, a safe place for students to spend their out of school time, and an opportunity to build positive relationships with adults (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). By addressing these barriers, youth go to school more prepared to focus on their education.

In order to explore these partnerships, this study examines the role of one youth development organization, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), and its partnership with two schools. As an after-school and summer youth development organization, BGCA serves youth in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and on military bases around the world and serves approximately 3.3 million youth per year (BGCA, 2002). In addition, BGCA is designed to provide services to youth who are primarily from disadvantaged circumstances (BGCA, 1998). The Clubs are founded on a youth development philosophy that states that all activities offered to youth should instill a sense of competence, a sense of usefulness, a sense of belonging, and a sense of influence (BGCA, 1998).

To enhance the opportunity for youth to grow into productive, responsible, and caring adults, the BGCA provides programming in five core areas, which include: Character and Leadership Development; Education and Career Development; Health and Life Skills; The Arts; and Sports, Fitness, and Recreation. The programs are designed to not only focus on enhancing the academic achievement of youth through homework assistance and tutoring, but Clubs also address the non-academic barriers through
providing opportunities for youth to develop employment, social, emotional and cultural competencies (BGCA, 1998). Boys & Girls Clubs therefore can be an asset for schools.

Unfortunately, connections between Clubs and schools are often limited and underdeveloped (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome & Ferrari, 2003). Furthermore, a frustrating aspect of youth development programming is that many teachers do not see youth development programs as supportive of academic outcomes for youth (Heath & McLaughlin 1994). Educating teachers so they understand that non-academic factors impact academic achievement, and helping them to understand how what is provided at the Club is beneficial at addressing academic and non-academic needs, can enhance the ability of the two organizations to partner.

The present study aims to determine the best framework for how schools and youth development organizations, particularly BGCA, can partner to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of students. Using grounded theory techniques, the researcher interviewed teachers to understand how they view the impact of the Club on participating students, and what they viewed as the potential benefits and pitfalls of partnerships between their school and the Club. Along with this, teachers' current knowledge about the NCLB policy changes affecting their jobs and their schools was also investigated. The researcher asked teachers about their overall knowledge of the changes in education policy, as well as how they and their schools may have modified the school day in response to the policy's provisions. The intent of this research is to determine if teachers viewed partnerships as a viable solution for addressing the recent NCLB policy changes.

This research study was designed to answer two key questions: (a) What is teachers' current knowledge of NCLB and (b) Based on teachers' perceptions, what are
effective strategies for school-youth development organization partnerships? The research will determine if teachers see partnership possibilities as a possible solution to the demands of NCLB legislation changes.

Conceptual Definitions

A list of conceptual definitions for terms that are used throughout the following chapters is included here.

Youth Development Organization

"Youth development programs are programs that provide opportunities and support to help youth gain the competencies and knowledge needed to meet the increasing challenges that they will face as they mature" (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murrany & Foster, 1998, p. 423). Youth development organizations’ activities are related to physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Boys & Girls Club

A Boys & Girls Club is an after-school program that is chartered by Boys & Girls Clubs of America and meets the standards set forth by the national organization. A Boys & Girls Club provides youth with a "safe place to learn and grow, ongoing relationships with caring, adult professionals, life-enhancing programs and character development experiences, and hope and opportunity." (BGCA, 1998, p. 2). Activities take place in five Core Program Areas: Character & Leadership Development, Education and Career Development, Health & Life Skills, The Arts, & Sports, Fitness & Recreation (BGCA, 1998).
Non-Academic Barriers

These are the various home, community, peer, cultural, and individual difficulties that keep a student from being able to focus entirely on academic achievement. These barriers are also called risk factors, which “refer to the impoverishing of the child’s world so that the child lacks the basic social and psychological necessities of life” (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992, p. 35).

Protective Factor

Protective factors aim to prevent risk factors and increase and enhance the resilience of youth so that despite barriers a youth succeeds. Risk factors and protective factors are dichotomous (Lawson & Anderson-Butcher, 2001).

School-Family-Community Partnership

“A school-family-community partnership is a collaborative relationship among the family, school, and community designed primarily to produce positive educational and social outcomes for children and youth, while being mutually beneficial to all parties involved” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002, p.6).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB reauthorizes Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and requires recipients to administer annual assessments, design teacher standards, establishes school accountability standards for academic achievement, and offers supplemental services or school choice for students attending schools not meeting the accountability standards (Department of Education, 2002a).
Systems Theory

Systems theory contends that each individual is made up of set of microsystems, including school, home, community, self and peers. These microsystems interact with each other through mesosystems (two or more microsystems interacting), exosystems (the larger system that a person does not participate in, but which nonetheless is affected by) and macrosystems (the culture as a whole) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Significance of the Study

The results obtained from this study will further the study of school-family-community partnership models. These models are increasingly more important due to the education policy changes that have recently occurred. Without devising new strategies for impacting the academic achievement of urban youth, many youth will in fact be left behind by NCLB. Youth development organizations are perfectly situated to deal with the non-academic barriers that so greatly impact achievement, and if schools continue to provide education alone, students' academic needs will not be completely met. Thus, the research is timely and imperative for the lives of youth today. Teachers, school administrators, youth development professionals, and others can use this information to guide their work with at-risk children in the future.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The status of our country’s schools and school districts’ ability to effectively meet the educational needs of students is bleak. There are staggering discrepancies between schools with a high proportion of low-income students and those with higher-income students (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). One of the toughest issues facing schools is the non-academic barriers that affect students. These are barriers that the school is not trained to address, but which greatly hinder a child’s ability to learn.

1. There are over 4 million youth who are growing up in neighborhoods where over 40% of the population is considered poor (Children’s Defense Fund, 1995).
2. In 1999, 18 million youth lived in households were no parents worked full-time (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002).
3. Forty percent of schoolchildren will live with a single parent before they turn 18 (Hodgkinson, 1986).
4. Twenty-two percent of children have no health insurance (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002).
5. In Ohio, 8% of children live in extreme poverty, which is 50% below the federal poverty level (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002).

Because of such staggering realities facing students and schools, President Bush reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in late 2001, which was enacted as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These changes in policy have completely altered the way that schools and districts are made to be accountable for their work. In addition, the policy alters the options that low-income youth have regarding their education, primarily if their school is not meeting their academic needs, as deemed by the NCLB policy.

NCLB

Foremost, it should be noted that the discussion provided in this section and thesis refers only to Title I, Part A of the NCLB Act. The comprehensive information presented in this section was obtained from the Department of Education’s No Child Left Behind Desktop Reference (2002a), The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002: An Executive Summary (2002b), and Public Law 107-110.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also called NCLB, has reauthorized the use of Title I funds and has changed the requirements for elementary and secondary schools. The schools affected by NCLB are primarily the urban and rural districts that have a large proportion of low-income students, and therefore, qualify as Title I schools. A school district can qualify for Title I funds by meeting one of four standards set forth in the law: (a) the number of eligible children receiving free- or reduced-priced lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act; (b) the number of children ages 5-17 in poverty as counted by census data; (c) the number of
children receiving assistance under part A, title IV of the Social Security Act; (d) or the number of children eligible for Medicaid (Public Law 107-110). In essence, Title I funds are determined by assessing needs and taking into consideration the financial situations of families.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002a), NCLB focuses its attention on what has been proven to work. Primarily, Title I funds are to be used to devise educational strategies that are empirically and scientifically based. Key components of NCLB include annual assessments, teacher standards, school accountability, school choice, supplemental services, increased parent involvement, and public dissemination of results.

**Annual Assessments.**

One key area created by NCLB is standardized assessments of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). This policy change is relevant for all public schools, not just schools receiving Title I funding. The NCLB policy mandates that all states must administer annual assessments in reading and math to all students in Grades 3 through 8, and at least one assessment for students during the 10th through 12th grades. In addition to reading and math, states must design a science assessment to be administered at least once to students in Grades 3 through 5, Grades 6 to 9, and Grades 10 to 12. The assessments must be standard for all students, and the measurement standards must include three achievement levels. The assessments must include all students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency.

According to NCLB, the data from the annual assessments must also be broken into separate categories, including gender, race, ethnicity, English proficiency, migrant
status, disability, and economic status, in order to ensure that all subpopulations of students are achieving. To ensure that schools are able to correct any measures that may be hindering the educational achievement of the students, states must also provide the school districts with the students' scores on the annual assessment prior to the start of the following school year.

While the NCLB policy changes affect all schools and districts around the country through standards-based assessments, those primarily affected are schools and school districts receiving Title I funds. The immediate concerns brought forth by NCLB policy changes are for those schools and districts that have consistently failed to meet the previous educational standards set forth by the state and federal government.

**Teacher Standards.**

Along with a greater emphasis on student performance, under NCLB states will be required to devise methods for measuring the qualifications of teachers who teach the core subjects. States must develop measurable objectives by the 2005-2006 school year that will determine whether teachers are considered “highly qualified” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, p. 13).

The minimum standards that a Title I teacher must possess according to NCLB are: a state certification, a Bachelor’s degree, and demonstrated competency in the subject area to be taught. The paraprofessionals of the school are also required to have a minimal level of training, which includes either two years of post-high school training or the successful completion of a state assessment exam. Along with this, paraprofessionals may no longer work with students by themselves, rather they must be under the “direct supervision of a teacher” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, p. 14). Finally, the
NCLB Act includes provisions related to staff training among teachers and paraprofessionals in all schools.

**School Accountability.**

Title I schools also are held accountable for the academic performance of their students. Any school that receives Title I funds will be required to make adequate yearly performance on the state-designed assessments. Primarily, schools that have not made adequate academic improvements for two straight years may face corrective action, which includes the following tactics: replacement of teachers and school staff, new curriculum, and possible restructuring of school administration (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, p. 14). In particular, a school that fails to meet the academic standards for four or more years may face having its administration turned over to the state or a private company, or being restructured as a charter school.

The NCLB policy allows states and school districts more autonomy, compared to what was given to them through the earlier Elementary and Secondary Schools Act legislation, in devising the assessments and curriculums that they feel will work best with their students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Along with this freedom, however, comes more accountability. The following accountability standards were put into place with the passage of the NCLB. First, states must develop an accountability system that all school districts and schools will be required to follow. Specifically, states must devise measures that will be used to determine if schools are making adequate yearly progress in ensuring that all students attain reading proficiency by the 12th grade. For Ohio, this standard is a 2.5% increase in reading and mathematics scores (Columbus Public Schools, 2002). Per NCLB regulations, states are required to annually determine adequate
yearly progress for school districts and schools, and must subsequently provide this information to the general public. If a school fails to meet the adequate yearly improvement standards for two consecutive years, the school will officially be considered a school improvement school.

If a school is identified as a school improvement school for three consecutive years, the school is required to provide supplemental educational services to low-income students, or offer the students the choice of attending a higher-performing school in the district. These supplemental services should have measurable means, such as objective-based curriculum and materials, for increasing the academic performance of youth, and all service providers must be approved by the state.

If a school fails to make adequate yearly progress for a fourth year, the school district will be required to make changes in the school administration and personnel. The changes include one or more of the following options: completely replacing school staff, implementing new curriculum, overtaking school management, selecting a consultant to suggest possible changes, making the school day or school year longer, and reorganizing the internal operations of the school (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). While the schools are held accountable for student achievement, school districts are also accountable for the academic performance of the students. Each state is required to make changes in the school district operations, which include any of the following: reducing administrative funds for a district, implementing new curriculum, conducting an overhaul of school district personnel, electing a new means for governing the district, eliminating the superintendent and/or school board, and dissolving the district altogether. In addition to these actions, the state may authorize low-income students from a low-performing
district to attend higher-performing schools in other districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

The ultimate changes in administration of schools and school districts, however, will come about when schools and districts fail to meet adequate yearly performance for a fifth consecutive year. Under the NCLB Act, the ramifications of this status will result in a complete restructuring of the school. Options that school districts have for restructuring the school include: turning the school into a charter school, replacing possibly all of the personnel within the school, and turning over the operations of the school to the state or an outside entity (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

**School Choice.**

School choice is offered to low-income students who are attending schools that have failed to meet the academic standards set forth by the state for two consecutive years. This policy provision allows parents to select a higher-performing school in the district for their children to attend. If a parent or guardian chooses to have his or her child attend another school, the school district is required to spend the amount equal to 20% of its Title I, Part A allocation funds to provide transportation to those families that meet the income requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, p. 15).

**Supplemental Services.**

Supplemental service providers are selected by the state and must fulfill criteria determined by the state. These criteria include: (a) “demonstrated record of effectiveness in improving academic achievement” (b) documentation that the strategies used are based upon research (c) services must be compatible with the curriculum of the school district.
(d) must be financially stable, and (e) must follow all federal, state and local laws (U.S. Department of Education, 2002c, p. 11).

Increased Parent Involvement.

An important part of NCLB is that it requires schools to focus more on parents, and engage parents as active participants in their child’s education. Parents become involved if their child is attending a low-performing school. Parents are given the option of transferring their child or accepting supplemental services. Finally, schools and school districts must inform parents and guardians that they have a right to learn about the qualifications of his or her child’s teacher. This is formally called the “Right to Know” provision (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a, p. 15).

Public Dissemination.

Under NCLB, schools must provide documentation about students’ skill attainment, and the data must be broken down by race, economic status, disability, and limited English proficiency status, for the purpose of examining achievement gaps between certain subpopulations. This new provision requires that all states develop an academic accountability system, and that districts and states report their students’ academic achievement to the public each year.

Table 2.1 highlights the important information described in the section above. In particular, the table can be used as a quick reference for understanding the numerous parts of the law.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Category</th>
<th>Policy Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Assessments</td>
<td>Students in the 3rd through 8th grades must take annual assessments on core subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Standards</td>
<td>States must develop measurable objectives to determine if teachers are “highly qualified” to teach core subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Accountability</td>
<td>Schools and districts must meet “adequate yearly performance” standards. If they fail to meet the standards for two straight years, they are placed on “improvement needed” status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Choice</td>
<td>Low-income students that are attending low-performing schools have the option of transferring to a higher-performing school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Services</td>
<td>Parents may choose to access supplemental services in lieu of changing schools. Districts must provide parents with stipends for services and transportation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement</td>
<td>Parents are offered more decision-making power in their child’s education. This includes allowing parents to choose between having their child attend another school, or supplemental services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Dissemination</td>
<td>States must develop academic standards and report annually the academic achievement of each district.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The information provided in the text and table related to NCLB policy changes is a summary of Public Law 107-110, as well as information provided by the U.S. Department of Education (2002b), including information found in the NCLB: A Desktop Reference Guide (2002a).

Table 2.1: Key Components of No Child Left Behind
Given the abundant requirements set forth by NCLB and the overall goal of effectively meeting the academic needs of students, states and school districts are under extreme pressure to adequately impact students' academic achievement. Many strategies are internal to the school, which does not push the schools to look at ways that outside agencies can help with academic support. In addition, the policy does not take into account the fact that there are many non-academic barriers that exist outside of the school and classroom, which impact students’ ability succeed in school.

The NCLB legislation places a great deal of the burden and blame for students’ academic failure on the schools. While some of the students’ academic achievement can be attributed to the school, a great deal of what keeps students from succeeding are things that are outside of the schools’ control, the non-academic barriers. There are many barriers, including poverty, mental health issues, and marginalization, which keep students from focusing on their academic needs. Due to the many non-academic barriers, it is evident that schools should not and cannot be expected to impact academic achievement on their own.

*Non-Academic Barriers*

Numerous non-academic barriers are preventing youth from developing positively. According to Maslow (1970), development is based on a hierarchy of needs. The needs are met one at a time, based on progression through the hierarchy. If a person has not successfully satisfied a need, he or she will remain at that level until that need is met. Altogether, there are five essential needs that all humans desire.

Maslow (1970) describes the foremost needs that an individual craves as physiological needs, the basic requirements needed to keep the human body functioning,
such as food and water. Once these needs are met, a person moves forward to the safety needs, which include a need for security, stability, and order. Following safety, the belongingness and love needs must be gratified. These needs are more abstract than the previous two and the person is longing for intimate relationships with others. Following the successful attainment of belongingness and love, the person must meet the esteem needs. These needs involve a person thinking positively about oneself and having a positive self-esteem. Finally, the last need on the hierarchy is the need for self-actualization. In essence, the person at this stage has become everything that he or she has wanted and desired to be (Maslow, 1970).

Given the grim realities facing many of today’s youth, progressing through such a hierarchy of needs seems almost impossible. As Garbarino (1998) explains, youth are growing up in a toxic environment that is plagued with violence, poverty, economic instability, family discord, and mental illness. Taking that view into consideration, a great number of youth are immobilized at the basic physiological needs, and cannot even begin to move throughout the rest of the hierarchy. Schools must therefore meet the student at their basic level, which in many cases is the physiological needs level. In order for students to be successful at school, the basic physiological needs need to be met first.

Researchers have identified many non-academic barriers that affect a child’s well-being and prohibit them from achieving the basic necessities of life (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992). Particularly relevant to the school day, researchers have found that youth with low self-esteem and few social skills are performing poorly in school (Barth, 1984), students performing poorly in school are less likely to have parents who are actively involved in their schooling (McNeal, 1999), and school failure is highest in those
students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (McNeal, 1999). Researchers also have identified that early school failure is associated with participation in risky behaviors (Beck, 1999; Social Development Research Group, 2002); children in inner-cities are facing daily danger in their neighborhoods (Halpern, 1992); and the number of single-parent families has reduced the amount of time youth spend with adults during non-school hours (Garbarino, 1998; Vandell & Shumow, 1999).

Non-academic barriers are present in every system of a child’s life, including self, home, schools, community, and peer groups. The good news is there are many assets that can help to contradict these non-academic barriers. These assets could be considered protective factors, because they are preventing the non-academic barriers from becoming a problem. Schools can work with other partners to address the non-academic barriers to learning by building assets among the youth that participate. These assets are listed in Table 2.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Developmental Asset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Engagement</td>
<td>The young person is engaged in learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonding to School</td>
<td>Young person cares about his or her school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring School Climate</td>
<td>School provides an encouraging environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>Young person receives high levels of love and support from home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Adult Relationships</td>
<td>Young person receives support from three or more non-parental adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Programs</td>
<td>Young person spends three or more hours per week engaged in programs within the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The categories were created by the Search Institute (1997), and listed in their publication, *40 Developmental Assets*.

Table 2.2: Developmental Assets that Combat Non-Academic Barriers
In other words, it is essential that urban educators understand the numerous non-academic barriers and risk factors that affect their students. The NCLB policy will not be effective simply through education. In order to enhance the academic achievement of students, schools need to find ways to address the non-academic barriers of youth, while still focusing on meeting the rigorous academic achievement mandates established in NCLB. Therefore, it is important to consider all systems affecting a student’s life in order to help most effectively.

*Systems Theory*

Systems theory is based on the belief that a person is more than the sum of the parts affected by his or her environment. This theory contends that in order for a person to be successful in life, the other systems (home, school, work, community, etc.) in that person’s life must also be supportive. These systems interact continually and are constantly affecting one another. In regards to NCLB policy changes, schools and districts can more effectively meet the academic needs of youth if these institutions think systemically (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Schools and districts can meet the academic needs of youth by taking a systems perspective and partnering with other systems that a youth interacts with, including the home and the community.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 21).

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

In essence, Bronfenbrenner suggests that a person is more than just his or her immediate surroundings, and the person must examine the larger aspects of society that
are at work within his or her life. According to Bronfenbrenner, a person and his or her environment are involved in an interaction that involves the two working together. The ecological environment, therefore, is “a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

Bronfenbrenner’s concentric circles are made up of four structures: micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-. Table 2.3 highlights these four structures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microsystem</td>
<td>A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics (p. 22).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesosystem</td>
<td>A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school and neighborhood peer group) (p. 25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exosystem</td>
<td>An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person (p. 25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrosystem</td>
<td>The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and context of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies (p. 26).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.3: Bronfenbrenner’s Concentric Circles
The four systems described by Bronfenbrenner are often at work simultaneously. For instance, a youth has several microsystems at work within his or her life, including home, school and community. Within each of these three microsystems, the youth has distinct roles and characteristics that are common for his or her participation in that system. However, the youth cannot interact in just one microsystem without the other microsystems being impacted. For instance, if a child is having difficulties at home, these difficulties carry over into other parts of his or her life, such as school. Thus, when there is more than one microsystem affecting a youth, these microsystems compose the youth’s mesosystem. In relation to helping youth to increase academic achievement, developmentally, it would be more appropriate if more than just the school were actively working with youth. For example, a youth’s mesosystem may consist of school, home and a youth development organization. With all parts of the mesosystem working together for a common goal, academic achievement, the likelihood of academic achievement occurring is enhanced.

However, the mesosystem must work together in order to assure that positive development will occur. As Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 214) states, “

The developmental potential of settings in a mesosystem is enhanced if the roles, activities, and dyads in which the linking person engages in the two settings encourage the growth of mutual trust, positive orientation, goal consensus between settings and an evolving balance of power responsive to action in behalf of the developing person.

Thus, in regards to academic achievement, the mesosystem can only be effective if all parts of the system view academic achievement as a goal.
Along with being affected by the microsystem and mesosystem, a youth’s academic achievement can also be affected by the exosystem and macrosystem. For instance, the NCLB policy changes were made on a macrosystem level, but all students and teachers around the country will feel the effects of that decision. Thus, while the student is not a direct participant in these two larger systems, they are nonetheless being affected by the decisions being made.

The NCLB policy has a trickle down effect. It started at the macrosystem level, when the federal government designed the law for all schools around the country. Next, the law becomes the responsibility of the states (macrosystem), which are responsible for making sure that the school districts follow the mandates put forth in the policy. The school districts (exosystem) then make sure that all schools are following the NCLB policy changes put in place by the federal government. The schools (mesosystem) are then responsible for making sure that students (microsystem) perform well on the tests of academic achievement. Thus, all systems are affected by the NCLB policy.

The most important philosophy explained by social systems theory is that individuals and their environments are working together, each changing and each responding to the other’s changes (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992). This belief is especially important given the recent NCLB policy changes. The federal government is changing and requiring that schools offer supplemental services to low-income youth who are not achieving academically, which is a macrosystem level decision. When taken in the context of social systems theory, the schools must change to meet this policy change, which will require the community to change to help the schools meet these changes.
The most effective way for schools to meet the NCLB policy changes is to enlist the help from other systems, such as parents and guardians, youth development organizations, faith-based organizations and businesses. These partners are beneficial because they also have a stake in the future success of the community and its youth (Allen-Meares, Washington & Welsch, 2000). Because all systems are affected by the policy changes, by working together to solve the problem the students will benefit from the cohesive and collaborative nature of the community addressing the problem. This idea is based on the premise that the student is the sum of the “parts” affecting his or her environment; therefore, one part, the school, cannot impact the student’s academic achievement on its own. However, the school can partner with others to not only provide additional educational supports to youth, but also to address the various non-academic barriers to learning evident in a youth’s family, community or peer group.

*School, Community, and Family Partnerships*

As stated above, schools are held accountable for impacting the academic and non-academic barriers alone, but under the NCLB policy changes, schools cannot be successful serving students alone. With so many non-academic barriers affecting a student, schoolwork often takes on less importance. Thus, school-family-community partnerships have been created and have become an ideal avenue for affecting the academic achievement and healthy development of students. Through a collaborative effort, the schools, families, and community agencies partner to provide services for children and families that help to address the academic and non-academic barriers to a student’s learning. The community entities that could potentially partner with schools, include: child protective services, health departments, courts, family services, parks,
libraries, hospitals, mental health agencies, colleges/universities, United Way, service clubs, youth development organizations, sports leagues, neighborhood associations, churches, and local businesses (The Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1996; Pardini, 2001).

These partnerships are based on the social systems theory, and school-family-community partnerships can be used to bring all parts of a student's environment together to work towards helping that student achieve academically. Numerous researchers have found that these partnerships are effective for addressing the many issues that face students and their families (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2000; Surko, Lawson & Muse-Lindeman, 1999; Wynn, Meyer & Richards-Schuster, 2001). However, partnerships are something that is relatively new to schools, as they are used to working independently. Therefore, the partnerships must be concerned most with how to redesign the infrastructure of the systems affecting the schools (Kagan, 1997).

The school-family-community partnership model was initiated because schools realized that they could not increase student achievement alone (Pardini, 2001). Students are coming to school unprepared to learn, and teachers do not have enough time to deal with academics and non-academic barriers. Therefore, the use of partnerships helps schools address both the academic and non-academic barriers of learning during the out-of-school hours, which allows children to focus on academics while at school (Anderson-Butcher, Ashton, & Western, in press; Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997; WestEd, 2002). Partnerships are especially important because teachers have not been trained to meet the specific non-academic barriers to learning, whereas agencies like youth development organizations have (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). To summarize, academic
achievement is limited, at best, if non-academic barriers are not also addressed (McLaughlin, 2001).

Successful school-community partnerships have been conducted around the country and while many have their own framework for the process of the partnership, they all have a similar understanding of the benefits. Table 2.4 highlights some of the benefits that students and families receive from the schools, families, and community organizations partnering to effectively address academic barriers. All parts of the system are contributing and are receiving from the partnerships; thus, all systems in the student’s environment are affected.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Addressed</th>
<th>Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attitudes</td>
<td>When partnerships are implemented, teachers view their students more holistically (Heath &amp; McLaughlin, 1994a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Roles/Responsibilities</td>
<td>Partnerships allow community organizations to address non-academic barriers, while allowing teachers to focus on the academics (Merseth, Schorr &amp; Elmore, 2001; WestEd, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>Parents have come to realize that the school can be a source of support (Anderson-Butcher &amp; Ashton, in press; Lawson &amp; Briar-Lawson, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>Schools can offer adult education classes as a strategy for helping parents with their own educational enhancement, while engaging them to support their child’s education (Sanders &amp; Epstein, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Professional Relationships</td>
<td>Because of the increased involvement in the academic lives of their children, parents are working more collaboratively and effectively with school/community professionals (Lawson &amp; Briar-Lawson, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Network</td>
<td>Parents have a network of other parents and community organizations that can help them effectively meet the needs of their children (Anderson-Butcher &amp; Ashton, in press; Wynn, Meyer &amp; Richards-Schuster, 2001).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Benefits of School-Family-Community Partnerships
Through systems theory models, schools and community organizations can partner to increase the likelihood that students and families succeed. While great strides have been made to develop partnerships with great efficacy, barriers still exist that prevent partnerships from performing at their optimal level. Through continued work, those involved in the partnerships will become more comfortable with letting go of some duties and assuming other duties that they are most qualified to perform. Thus, rather than having teachers remain accountable for the non-academic barriers of learning, other partners, such as school social workers or youth development organizations, can fulfill this role.

A natural partnership opportunity for schools is with youth development organizations. As part of the community where students live, the youth development organizations have an understanding of the various non-academic barriers and risks facing youth everyday. In addition, youth development organizations are seen as places where youth can receive positive support from adults.

*School and Youth Development Organization Partnerships*

One very important strategy involves partnerships between schools and youth development organizations. With these partnerships, schools are able to focus on the academic achievement of youth, while youth development organizations can assume the responsibility for supporting the schools with academic skills, while also addressing the non-academic barriers to learning. Youth development organizations can focus a great deal of time focusing on the social and emotional abilities of students, which are two areas that schools no longer have time to address. Through the partnership, all academic and non-academic developmental needs are effectively addressed.
Schools and youth development organizations can combine their skills to provide services to students in low-performing schools, such as tutoring and homework help, recreation, and leadership development. Youth development organizations and schools share a common goal of improving student academic achievement, while youth development agencies can help schools to understand the out-of-class methods that lead to learning (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2002). Youth development organizations have made an effort to understand what students learn during the school day, and they have attempted to build upon those skills in the after-school hours (Wynn, Meyer, & Richards-Schuster, 1999). When schools and youth development agencies are effectively partnering, the programs become great assets for schools and lead to students’ increased enjoyment of school (Heath & McLaughlin, 1996). Thus, youth development organizations can be effective partners for helping schools increase academic achievement.

Youth development organizations can also assist schools in providing activities that lead to the positive development of their students. Youth development organizations often offer tutoring, homework assistance and enrichment opportunities, as well as programs that focus a great deal of attention on social, emotional and physical developmental needs, which are known to be predictive of academic outcomes (BGCA, 1998). Youth development organizations help youth to develop skills that, although not directly academic, will assist them in succeeding in school, including decreased problem behavior and improved social competencies (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1999). To summarize, while youth development organizations focus a portion of their time on academic achievement, strengthening the social, emotional and
behavioral competencies of participating youth also will lead to positive youth development and academic achievement (Chung 2000; Gootman, 2000).

Partnerships between schools and youth development organizations are still in the early stage of development. The two systems can function together, but conversations need to take place regarding the most effective way to proceed with this task. Both organizations have a key strategy of providing academic support to students; the schools do this during the school day and the youth development programs do this during the after-school hours. More information is highlighted here in relation to how youth development organizations support youth.

Youth Development Literature

Youth development organizations have long provided positive and engaging programs for urban youth. These organizations have very distinct features and offer youth a place where they feel they belong and are valued. At the forefront of youth development organizations is the belief that a youth is the product of the systems affecting him or her. Thus, youth development organizations make an effort to provide youth with various growth opportunities, both academic and non-academic barriers, which will lead to youth becoming successful adults. In addition, supportive relationships with the adults that staff youth development organizations are a key component of what keeps youth coming back (McLaughlin, 2000). The grim reality is that without these youth development organizations, many youth would fall through the cracks.

According to Quinn (1999), youth development organizations are seen on a continuum of youth services, with youth development organizations on one end and incarceration on the other. Thus, society views youth development organizations as
integral for enhancing and promoting the successful rearing of the next generation. In essence, youth development organizations are different from other youth serving organizations because they view youth as an individual to be developed, not a problem to be solved (Barnes-O’Connor, 1999; Connell, Gambone & Smith, 2001). Youth development organizations serve a preventative role, rather than a rehabilitative role.

Youth development organizations can be broken into several different categories. These categories include national youth development programs (e.g. BGCA, 4-H), programs supported by the public (e.g. parks and recreation), national youth sports organizations (e.g. Little League), and private organizations (Quinn, 1999). There are several characteristics that qualify an organization as a youth development organization. For instance, youth development organizations offer physical and psychological safety (Connell, Gambone & Smith, 2001), structured activities (Eccles & Gootman, 2002), supportive relationships with adult staff (Dworkin, Larson & Hansen, 2003), a sense of belonging (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) and opportunities to build skills (Anderson-Butcher, Lawson, Fallara & Furano, 2002).

Youth development organizations are able to address both the academic and non-academic needs of youth. For instance many youth development programs provide homework help and tutoring (Beck, 1999; McLaughlin, 2000). Homework help is an important component of the youth development organizations because it helps youth to feel more connected to their school performance (Castillo & Winchester, 2001). This emphasis on academics is important to help schools meet the NCLB accountability standards, as youth development organizations can provide hands-on activities that enhance learning outside of school (National Research Council, 2000). According to
McLaughlin (2000), youth who participated in youth development programs after school were 26% more likely to have received recognition for good grades and nearly 20% more likely to view their chances of graduating from high school as high. Thus, youth development organizations are important in helping youth value and appreciate the importance of staying in school and doing well.

Youth development organizations also impact the non-academic barriers to learning. In fact, many believe that this is what youth development organizations do best. At the forefront of these non-academic barriers is neighborhood safety. Most urban youth live in neighborhoods that are dangerously high in crime, which does not allow youth the ability to spend time outside. Youth development organizations provide a place where youth can be safe after school (Beck, 1999; National Research Council, 2000). These organizations also provide an opportunity for youth to work at learning new skills, which leads to enhanced self-esteem. Important to meeting these non-academic barriers is that programs should be challenging and engaging (Connell, Gambone & Smith, 2001), respond to diverse skills and talents (McLaughlin, 2000), and engage youth in new roles and responsibilities (Roth et al., 1998). As McLaughlin (2000) states, youth who participated in youth development organizations were significantly more likely to report feeling good about themselves than those youth that did not participate in these programs.

Many youth spend their time after school alone due to parents working outside of the home and the increase in single-parent families. Thus, the supportive relationships with adults that are provided in youth development organizations are integral for positive development. These relationships provide youth with an opportunity to interact with community members (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003), an opportunity to interact with
supportive adults outside of school (Kahne, Nagaoka, Brown, O’Brien, Quinn, & Thiede, 2001), and an opportunity to receive emotional and motivational supports from the adults they interact with at the organizations (Roth et al., 1998).

The actuality is that youth development organizations provide youth with opportunities to grow and succeed in an environment that is often full of challenges and hurdles. Without these organizations, many youth would not have the necessary supports in place to help them achieve academically, while also dealing with the numerous non-academic barriers that affect their lives. Thus, these organizations are integral for a youth’s success at school. One organization that is rooted in assisting with the successful development of youth is Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA).

*Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

To help schools meet the NCLB policy changes, youth development organizations can become partners for addressing the non-academic barriers preventing youth from learning. With an emphasis on providing youth with positive activities that lead to youth becoming “productive, responsible and caring adults,” (BGCA, 1998), BGCA is also concerned with the possibility that some children may be left behind. BGCA is a national organization, with affiliate organizations in all 50 states and on military bases around the world. Each affiliate organization of BGCA is required to offer the same Core Program Areas for youth. The affiliate organizations must adhere to the core characteristics of the BGCA organization, but all Clubs are different, and each Club has its own distinct atmosphere.

Boys & Girls Clubs are frequently found in low-income, disadvantaged areas around the country. A Boys & Girls Club is a place where for just a few dollars a year,
usually around five dollars, a youth can become a member. Membership in the Boys & Girls Club entails having a safe place to go every day after school and often on Saturdays, where youth can participate in activities with their peers while interacting with the adult staff. BGCA strives to make the Club a place where all youth feel they belong, and therefore, any youth between the ages of 6 and 18 can join the Club. In addition, BGCA feels that youth should choose to belong, so Boys & Girls Clubs have an open-door policy, which means that members can come during all hours of operation, but are not required to come every day, or for all hours the program operates (BGCA, 1998).

The program opportunities offered by BGCA are designed for any youth, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion or culture (BGCA, 1998). The programs offered by BGCA fulfill the requirements of the organization’s Youth Development Strategy. The Strategy aims to enhance the self-esteem of participating youth, in order to help them reach their full potential. According to BGCA (1998), the Club programs assist in the development of youth by instilling the components of the Youth Development Strategy, which include the following:

1. **A Sense of Competence:** The feeling that there is something boys and girls can do and do well (BGCA, 1998, p. C).

2. **A Sense of Usefulness:** The opportunity to do something of value for other people (BGCA, 1998, p. C).

3. **A Sense of Belonging:** A setting where young people know they “fit” and are accepted (BGCA, 1998, p. C).

4. **A Sense of Power or Influence:** A chance to be heard and to influence decisions (BGCA, 1998, p. C).
All programs that are offered by BGCA focus on the Youth Development Strategy and aim to achieve at least one of the components above.

Along with the Youth Development Strategy, BGCA provides affiliate organizations with a set of Core Program Areas. The Core Program Areas designed by BGCA include: Character and Leadership Development; Education and Career Development; Health and Life Skills; The Arts; and Sports, Fitness and Recreation (BGCA, 1998). These program areas were specifically chosen because they provide opportunities for youth to work on academics, while also growing physically, emotionally, culturally, and socially (BGCA, 1998). Each program area also has a core group of programs designed by BGCA and field tested around the country. While affiliate organizations are not required to utilize the programs designed by BGCA, most organizations choose to use the programs because they have been designed specifically for use within a Boys & Girls Club and were developed by experts in the field. Moreover, BGCA provides the majority of the program materials to the affiliate organizations free of charge, which makes running the programs cost-effective for affiliate organizations (BGCA, 1999a). Each of the Core Program Areas provides opportunities for learning, and they enhance not only academic skills, but also address non-academic barriers to learning.

**Character and Leadership Development.**

The programs in this Core Program Area help youth to give back to their communities, while also learning the skills needed to develop their own identities as individuals (BGCA, 1999a). The primary program within this area is the Keystone Club, where teens, ages 14 to 18, participate in a small-group service club that focuses on completing service projects for the community, while developing skills needed to succeed
in the adult world. The program is complete with its own national conference for participating teens, and an opportunity for teens to develop the skills necessary to become a successful leader. The Torch Club is a program for younger Club members, which also focuses on providing service to the Club and the surrounding community.

Finally, the Youth of the Year program honors youth who are successfully growing into productive adults. Each participating youth is judged in core areas, including, service to the Club, community, and family; academic achievements; spirituality; the presence of life goals; and poise, especially when speaking in public (BGCA, 1999a). Most organizations honor a Youth of the Month, and then select a Youth of the Year at the end of the year. To honor the youth, state, regional and national competitions are held to determine the Youth of the Year for BGCA.

**Education and Career Development.**

This Core Program Area is designed to help youth achieve success in the basic educational skills, by applying what they learn to everyday life and introducing technology as a means of education (BGCA, 1999a). The flagship program within Education and Career Development is Project Learn, which serves to reinforce the skills that are learned during the school day. While the program includes tutoring and homework help, the program also provides "high yield learning activities," which include silent reading, various writing tasks, discussions with adults, and educational games such as Scrabble. A primary component of the program is that it encourages Clubs to become active collaborators with their youths’ schools, in order to ensure that the best after-school environment is being created (BGCA, 1999b).
Other programs within the Core Program Area of Education and Career Development include JOB READY! and Junior Staff Career Development, which work with teens on developing the skills and abilities needed for finding and maintaining a job within the workforce. The Junior Staff program also employs teen Club members to work with younger Club members, while encouraging the teens to consider Boys & Girls Club work as a future career.

Health and Life Skills.

One of the most important Core Program Areas for youth is Health and Life Skills. These programs focus on providing youth with skills that will help them to make positive choices, while teaching youth to set goals to help them achieve a healthy life (BGCA, 1999a). The primary program within this Core Program Area is SMART (Skills Mastery and Resistance Training) Moves. BGCA designed SMART Moves to be used with small groups, whereby youth learn the skills needed to refuse peer pressure. The program touches on areas such as drug and alcohol prevention, hygiene, family relationships, and peer relationships, while helping youth to gain the skills needed to achieve a healthy and substance-free lifestyle. Subcomponents of the SMART Moves program include (a) SMART Kids for youth ages 6 to 9, (b) Start SMART for members 10 to 12, (c) Stay SMART for members 13 to 15, (d) SMART Girls, a self-enhancement and prevention program for girls ages 10 to 15, and (e) Street SMART, a gang awareness and violence prevention program for youth ages 11 to 13 (BGCA, 1999a).

The Arts.

Most of the programs within the Core Program Area of The Arts are national competitions that BGCA provides for the affiliate organizations. However, each
organization should strive to provide programs that help youth to develop their creativity, while also gaining an understanding of other cultures through visual arts, crafts, performing arts and creative writing (BGCA, 1999a). The Fine Arts Exhibit, as well as the National Photography Contest, are venues where youth can display the art projects they have worked on throughout the course of the year at their Club (BGCA, 1999a). Each organization hosts their own competitions, and then regional and national competitions are held to highlight the talent from around the country.

**Sports, Fitness and Recreation.**

The final Core Program Area is Sports, Fitness and Recreation, where youth participate in programs that help them to achieve physical development, learn ways of using their leisure time positively, and interact with their peers, while developing social skills (BGCA, 1999a) The typical opinion held of BGCA is that they provide “gym and swim” activities (R. Spillett, personal communication, September 17, 2002). While this is a stalwart Core Program Area offered by most Boys & Girls Clubs, the Clubs have come to realize the importance of other competencies that need to be developed within youth.

To complement the Sports, Fitness, and Recreation programs, BGCA forged a partnership with NIKE, who helps to provide activities such as: the NIKE Girls Sports program, to get more girls involved in physical education; NIKE Challenges, to allow youth to develop skills in various sports; NIKE Swoosh Clubs, which involves teen Club members in pursing physical fitness endeavors, while also helping younger members in the Club’s athletic programs; and the NIKE Games, which are competitions between four or more affiliate organizations, similar to an Olympic event, with winners taking home medals (BGCA, 1999a). Besides the partnership with NIKE, BGCA also has a
partnership with Major League Baseball, who utilizes the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program to expand inner-city baseball and softball leagues around the country (BGCA, 1999a).

Most Clubs are equipped with a gymnasium, or access to a gymnasium, and various team and large-group games are played, such as Warball, obstacle courses, pick-up basketball games, and double-dutch. The majority of local affiliates also have game rooms complete with board games, foosball, and in many cases, billiards tables. The Physical and Social Recreation program gives Club members an opportunity to learn cooperative play, which enhance the development of productive social competencies.

Impact of Boys & Girls Clubs.

Much research has been conducted throughout the last 10 years to highlight the potential for positive impacts that Boys & Girls Clubs have on the healthy development of participating youth, as described in the paragraphs below. Consistent with the key factors associated with youth development organizations, including a safe place to be, psychological and physical well-being, and supportive relationships with adults, BGCA have reached millions of kids through its after-school, weekend and summer programming for youth, and have had positive impacts on these youths lives.

At the forefront of research findings regarding the impact of BGCA programs, one attribute stands clear above the rest: positive relationships with adults. Serving as an extended family of sorts, BGCA helps youth to develop relationships with adult Club staff, which in turn lead to their increased self-esteem and self-efficacy. When interviewed, youth who attend a BGCA stated that Club staff and the ability to spend time with these staff after school is what contributed to their participation in the program
(Anderson-Butcher, Cash, Saltzburg, Midle & Pace, in press; Roffman, Pagano & Hirsch, 2001). Similarly, research suggests that more girls than boys view this relationship with staff as a key reason for their attendance at the Club (Hirsch, Roffman, Deutsch, Flynn, Loder & Pagano, 2000; Roffman et al., 2001). Interestingly, the positive relationships with the Club staff also lead to positive attitudes and behaviors at school, which in turn affects academic achievement at school (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2002). Finally, the ability to develop positive relationships with peers, especially for girls, is a key offering of BGCA (Hirsch et al., 2000).

As mentioned earlier in this section, one of the key initiatives offered by BGCA to address academic achievement of students is the program Project Learn. Designed to provide youth with homework help and tutoring, while at the same time incorporating “high-yield” learning activities into all areas of the Club, Project Learn attempts to extend what is being taught at school into the after-school environment. According to Savage (1999), BGCA members should be able to learn and reinforce the skills that they are focusing on at school in the gymnasium, in the gamesroom, through arts and crafts, and in other program areas. As Savage explained, the Project Learn philosophy was designed to allow those students who typically do not perform well in school, and who therefore avoid the homework help activities at the Club, to participate in activities that will facilitate learning without their blatant knowledge of this being the case.

As Schinke, Cole, and Poulin (2000) observed, the Project Learn program led to increased school performance by those youth that participated, in comparison to youth that participated in other community-based programs. In particular, the researchers found that Project Learn youth had higher grades in reading, spelling, history, science, social
studies and math, and higher school attendance rates than those youth that did not participate in the program. Along with this, teachers reported that these students had a higher overall school performance and interest in class materials. According to BGCA (2001), one local Club, when partnering with their local schools, emphasized that the Project Learn program would enrich the academic learning of youth, rather than guarantee specific results, such as raising letter grades or scores on achievement tests.

Another key program designed by BGCA to address the non-academic barriers facing students is the drug, alcohol and pregnancy prevention program called SMART Moves. Researchers have concluded that the SMART Moves program can be effective with all age groups, from elementary-age to adolescents. Some of the earliest studies conducted around the SMART Moves program were conducted with adolescents. As St. Pierre, Kaltreider, Mark and Aikin (1992) observed, youth who participated in the SMART Moves program perceived fewer social benefits from drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. In addition, participating youth reported less alcohol, marijuana, cigarette and drug use behavior, while demonstrating more knowledge about the effects of these drugs, than did the control group. When analyzing the pregnancy prevention aspects of the SMART Moves program, St. Pierre, Mark, Kaltreider and Aikin (1995) observed that the program had more of an effect on non-virgins’ than it did on virgins’ views of sexual activity. Finally, St. Pierre, Mark, Kaltreider and Aikin (1997) recommend involving parents in the prevention programming at BGCA, as this is more effective than just trying to reach the youth alone.

As a means for reaching out to collaborate with schools, three local Clubs partnered with an elementary school to provide three hours of after-school programming
at the school each day, which included the SMART Kids prevention program. The researchers concluded that the program had positive effects on the social competency skills of participating students (St. Pierre, Mark, Kaltreider, & Campbell, 2001). Specifically, the program helped students to refuse wrongdoing, to develop positive ways of solving problems with peers and in school, to develop a level of respect for teachers and school personnel and to behave ethically. Teachers and school administrators are more likely to approve the SMART Moves program being offered in their schools if they think that it will help with the academic assistance of the students. A recent study found that participation in the SMART Moves program with students at the elementary school led to positive changes in classroom behavior, completed homework, and better spelling and reading skills (St. Pierre & Kaltreider, 2001). This research verifies the belief that participation in SMART Moves impacts the life skills of participating youth, not just the attitudes and behaviors of drug and alcohol use.

Finally, while a great deal of research has been conducted to suggest that the structured, curriculum-oriented programs have positive effects on youths’ attitudes and behaviors, the underlying assumption that participation in non-structured activities can have positive impacts on youth has also been realized. According to Anderson-Butcher, Newsome and Ferrari (2003), participation in BGCA is related to lower levels of truancy, favorable attitudes of cheating, and cigarette use, while leading to higher enjoyment and increased effort in school. According to the researchers, the participation in the non-structured activities were the “hooks” to get the youth involved in the Club, where they could then participate in homework help, take life skills classes and experience the other activities that lead to positive youth development.
The long-standing effectiveness of BGCA’s ability to reach disadvantaged youth, as well as the capacity for the organization to reach youth throughout the entire country, has led to the organization’s ability to remain an effective youth development organizations. Recently, BGCA has taken a stronger focus on how to partner effectively with other community systems, in particular schools, to reach the maximum number of youth, with the optimal level of impact. This expansion into the community at-large, as opposed to the traditional building-centered activities, will lead to more opportunities to reach youth who are lacking in structured opportunities to participate in positive, non-school hour programs. Finally, BGCA has a structure in place to address both academic and non-academic barriers to learning.

What We Know About School and BGCA Partnerships

School and youth development partnerships have taken on new popularity within the past few years. As schools become more aware of the various non-academic barriers affecting their students, they are more open to partnering with youth development organizations. As Quinn (1999) describes, schools are realizing that they do not have to focus on everything rather, they can partner with youth development organizations to address non-school issues and help with the academic achievement. One of the largest youth development organizations, BGCA, has recently begun placing Clubs within school buildings in an effort to go where the kids are. Below is a description of the services offered when Clubs and school partner.

Traditionally, BGCA conducted programs in buildings owned and operated by the local affiliates, which functioned as drop-in centers, rather than an outreach service. Given the issues surrounding many communities today, such as lack of transportation, the
need to take the program to the youth has become more evident. However, developing partnerships with schools is difficult to facilitate, primarily due to a conflict in basic thought patterns regarding youth development.

In 1997, BGCA published a manual called *Establishing Boys & Girls Clubs in a School Setting*, which was designed for local affiliates to develop effective partnerships with schools. In this literature, BGCA highlights that Clubs have a history of holding the trust of parents, other human service agencies, and the youth who take ownership in belonging. This is one key factor that is lacking in many schools serving disadvantaged youth. According to BGCA, partnering with schools can lead to an effective alternative for unsupervised during after-school, weekend, and summer hours.

Several strategies are highlighted by BGCA as being imperative for the successful implementation of the program. In particular, Club staff needs to realize that students participating in school-based Clubs have been in the same building, in a very structured atmosphere for the entire day. Therefore, allowing youth to participate in non-structured, physical and social recreation activities at the beginning of the program day allows the youth to “unwind.” Along with this, co-locating a Club in a school allows the Clubs to develop positive relationships with families and the schools. In particular, the Clubs can provide services that are beneficial for families (physical exams, dental care, extended after-school hours, etc.), while also providing services for teachers and school staff (homework help for students, educational enhancement programs, etc.) Clearly, BGCA sees the benefits in combining resources to most effectively meet the needs of the youth it serves.
Complementing the work mentioned above, BGCA (2002) devised another manual for best practices in collaborating with schools. *The School Zone: Forging Effective Alliances with Public Schools*, contends that partnerships between schools and youth development organizations provide the single-greatest opportunity for reaching the largest number of youth that do not typically attend an after-school program. BGCA recommends several steps for developing effective partnerships with schools, which include the following:

1. Mutual willingness and commitment.
2. Plan the partnership from the start.
3. Clarify the vision.
4. Take time to get to know one another
5. Set ground rules
6. Start small and build gradually
7. Involve parents as partners
8. Clarify roles and responsibilities
9. Share decision-making
10. Prepare team members to work together
11. Stay flexible
12. Keep tending the relationships
13. Be strategic

A highlight of the materials produced by BGCA, however, is the need for Club staff to link the after-school program with the school day. Strategies encouraged by BGCA include: providing opportunities for Club staff and teachers to communicate about
changes they see in a child’s school performance, behavior or attendance at school; sharing information about the curriculum being taught in the classroom; sending lists of homework assignments to the after-school program; allowing Club staff to attend parent-teacher conferences to be a support for the families; and hiring teachers to work in the after-school program (BGCA, 2002).

While several strategies have already been designed and distributed by BGCA, there is still great room for individual organizations to tailor their programs to fit the needs of their communities. In essence, BGCA is in line with other youth development researchers of the day, who see collaboration among key stakeholders as the most effective way of reaching disadvantaged youth. While these current strategies highlight necessary factors for developing effective collaborations, there is still too little research to confirm a single collaborative strategy as being most effective at addressing the needs of youth.

*What We Need to Learn About Partnerships between Schools and BGCA*

What has yet to be developed is a framework for how BGCA and other youth development agencies develop effective partnerships with schools to increase the academic performance of participating youth, and be within the guidelines of NCLB. Taking into account the numerous policy requirements and after-school youth development programs that currently are operating independent of school systems, the major research question becomes, how do these organizations partner effectively with local school districts? The NCLB Act will require school districts to provide supplemental services for underachieving, low-income students that attend a school that is not meeting adequate yearly performance. If BGCA and other youth development
organizations partner with school districts, integrated services can be devised to meet the immediate academic and social needs of students.

*Problem Statement*

As discussed above, schools are being held more accountable for the performance of students through the NCLB education policy changes. Schools are under the microscope of the federal government and are being held responsible for the academic achievement of their students. This is distressing because schools cannot meet the academic achievement of students alone, due to the large number of non-academic barriers that affects a student’s ability to achieve. Thus, schools should be supported by other partners in enhancing the academic success of students, as students are also a product of their home and community, and these two systems should also bear the weight of responsibility. Therefore, communication needs to take place between all three systems, and an effective strategy is school-family-community partnerships.

This research study was designed to answer two key questions: (a) What is teachers’ current knowledge of NCLB and (b) Based on teachers’ perceptions, what are effective strategies for school-youth development organization partnerships?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Study Context

The Columbus Public Schools are currently failing to achieve adequate yearly performance as a district. The results from the 2001-2002 school year are alarming. As a district, Columbus Public Schools met only 5 of the 22 district standards set forth by the state in 2002 (Ohio Department of Education, 2003a), qualifying the district as being in a state of “Academic Emergency.” With over 63,000 students, the district is spending approximately $8,500 per elementary student, per school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2003a). For the investment, the district has a graduation rate of 56%, (Ohio Department of Education, 2003a). Another alarming statistic is that the district met only one of ten performance indicators for the fourth or sixth grade assessment levels (Ohio Department of Education, 2003a).

These statistics are daunting and disparaging, and imply that children are not achieving academically from a very critical early age. As such, there are many schools in Columbus Public Schools who are falling below the standards that the state
deems acceptable. For example, there are 15 elementary schools in Columbus Public Schools that are in their third year as a school improvement school for the 2002-2003 school year, while there are 5 schools that are in their second year as a school improvement school (Columbus Public Schools, 2002). This means that if those schools that have been labeled a school improvement school for three years do not improve, they face school restructuring beginning as early as the next school year.

Columbus Public Schools’ demographics also are indicative of need. Many of the students attending these schools live at or near poverty, as all of the schools in the district are Title I schools. This means that all Columbus Public schools will be held to the guidelines set forth in NCLB (C. Hughes, personal communication, February 8, 2003). Additionally, 64% of the students in the district belong to a minority group, 13% are students with disabilities, and 15% of students change schools within the course of a year (Ohio Department of Education, 2003a).

Given the current status of these schools, meeting the provisions of NCLB is of serious concern to Columbus Public Schools. In examining this current academic trend, the district may potentially find itself with schools that have not met adequate yearly progress for four straight years as early as the 2003-2004 school year (Columbus Public Schools, 2002). The implications are great. Under NCLB legislation, if a district fails to make adequate yearly progress for four straight years, the state will take corrective action and must attempt to rectify the situation using one of the following measures: deferring funds or reducing administrative funds, implementing a new curriculum, replacing personnel, establishing alternative governing structures, appointing a trustee to administer
the district in place of the superintendent, or abolishing or restructuring the school district (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

At the school level, the results are just as distressing. In particular, two schools that I am interested in studying are schools that have Boys & Girls Clubs actively working with their students and are located in the neighborhoods where the students live. These schools are Medary Elementary School and Franklinton Elementary School.

Medary Elementary School.

The Boys & Girl Clubs operate a school-based after-school program at Medary Elementary. As such, the school allows the Boys & Girls Clubs to utilize the gymnasium, art room, and several classrooms after school each evening in order for the Club to provide programming to Medary students, while the Club assumes all operational responsibilities. The program, which began in 2001, operates every day that the school is open, and runs for three hours each evening. Activities offered include tutoring, homework assistance, arts and crafts, social recreation, physical recreation, health and life skills, leadership groups, and an after-school meal. Currently, there are over 110 Medary students who participate in the program, with an average daily attendance of around 50 youth (L. Hall, personal communication, March 18, 2003).

During the school day, Medary Elementary serves a student population of 305 students. Of these students, 48% are African-American, 42% Caucasian, 6% Hispanic and 4% Asian. Being a fairly large school, 26% of the student population is considered as being Limited English Proficient. At Medary, 87% of the students receive a free- or reduced-price lunch (R. Coon, personal communication, March 13, 2003). The teaching staff does not reflect the background of the youth attending Medary, as 83% of the
teachers are Caucasian and only 17% are African-American. In addition, the teaching population of 18 teachers is 94% female (Ohio Department of Education, 2003b).

The student population of Medary is not performing well on the annual 4th grade proficiency tests. During the 2001-2002 school year, according to the Ohio Department of Education (2003b), Medary failed to meet the state standards for all five sections of the Fourth Grade Proficiency Test. When focusing on the two subject areas most critical to NCLB policy legislators, reading and mathematics, Medary Elementary is struggling. The percentage of 4th grade students who are considered “below proficient level” is 70.3% for mathematics and 67.6% for reading (Ohio Department of Education, 2003b). At the same time, the difference in scores between African-American students and Caucasian students is distressing. The percentage of African-American students who are performing at or above the proficient level in math is 23.8% compared with 42.9% of Caucasian youth (Ohio Department of Education, 2003b). In addition, the reading scores reflect a similar trend, with 28.6% of African-American students considered proficient compared to 42.9% of Caucasian youth (Ohio Department of Education, 2003b).

Franklinton Elementary School.

The second school that was selected for teacher participation was Franklinton Elementary, which is located on the same city block as the Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus’ largest unit. The Westside Unit, which opened in 1955, is open every day after school and approximately 75 Franklinton students are walked to the Club by Franklinton school personnel at the end of each school day. The Westside Unit is open for 6 hours after school every day, and on Saturdays and school holidays. There are several programs that youth can participate in, including: homework help and tutoring, a
computer lab, a gamesroom, a gymnasium, drug and alcohol prevention activities, leadership clubs and an after-school meal.

The Westside Unit and the school have had a positive relationship for numerous years that often includes shared space during the school day and communication between Club staff and school personnel (R. Cunningham, personal communication, February 22, 2003). On any given day, the Westside Unit serves approximately 130 members after school. Many teachers at Franklinton Elementary communicate with the Education Director of the Club on a regular basis, as well as the Unit’s Director, and they provide homework lists and other pertinent information that can assist Club staff in providing academic assistance to youth (R. Cunningham, personal communication, February 22, 2003).

Franklinton Elementary within Columbus Public Schools also serves a diverse population. According to the Ohio Department of Education (2003c), Franklinton, with just over 200 students, has a school population that is 67% African-American and 32% Caucasian. The teaching staff is 85% Caucasian, with a higher proportion of female teachers, who make up 69% of the teaching population. At Franklinton, 90% of the students receive a free- or reduced-price lunch (G. Blosser, personal communication, March 18, 2003). Similarly, compared to Medary, 20% of the students at Franklinton are considered as Limited English Proficient.

Franklinton Elementary’s scores are also below the state’s standard. During the 2001-2002 school year, Franklinton also failed to meet the performance indicators for all five sections of the 4th grade proficiency test. Academically, nearly 62% of students are considered “below proficient level” in mathematics and nearly 68% are considered
“below proficient level” in reading, as assessed during the 2001-2002 4th grade proficiency test (Ohio Department of Education, 2003c). Unfortunately, the Ohio Department of Education data did not list the academic performance data for Caucasian youth so racial/ethnic comparisons reported for Medary are not available for Franklinton.

**Design**

The present study utilized a qualitative research design in order to provide an in-depth descriptive understanding of teachers’ perspectives of NCLB and partnerships with youth development organizations. Specifically, the research was conducted using the principles of grounded theory. The use of grounded theory lends itself to qualitative study because it uses the words and phrases of the research participants to generate theory. As such, the researcher should not have one set theory in his or her mind when conducting research using grounded theory; rather, the researcher should be open to the ever-developing theory that comes from collecting, coding, and analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is also beneficial to qualitative studies because all of the evidence for the theory has been derived from the data, not deduced from the logical assumptions of the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Furthermore, grounded theory was chosen because it involves the generation of theory from data, rather than the verification of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In the youth development field today, there is currently a great deal of research being conducted to determine best practice models. One best practice standard that has yet to be determined is how to engage professionals from diverse perspectives, including schools and youth development organizations, to collaborate in a more productive manner in order to ensure that there are more opportunities for positive youth development.
(McLaughlin, 2000). Through this research, additional information will be generated to assist researchers in determining an effective partnership model to study.

To gather the perspectives of teachers on this partnership model, the researcher utilized grounded theory for data collection and analysis. The use of grounded theory allows the researcher to engage teachers in the process of determining best practices. The information that the teachers provide (data) is used to generate hypotheses about what an effective partnership would look like from the perspective of the educator. Grounded theory involves utilizing data to develop conceptual categories, which are then used to illustrate the larger concept being studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through this process, the responses that teachers give during the structured interviews were used to generate categories of data. These categories were then internally studied to determine what properties for partnerships emerge from the data. The categories will then be compared with each other to determine a substantive theory, which is derived from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In addition, grounded theory relies on a process called theoretical saturation for determining how much data is enough (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the researcher collects data and places the data into emerging categories, each category is analyzed to determine properties. Theoretical saturation is achieved when the researcher cannot find additional data to develop further properties for a category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Saturation is said to occur when the researcher finds that “some gap in his theory, especially in his major categories, is almost, if not completely filled” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61).
In summary, this methodological approach is beneficial for this research study because it helps to broaden the existing theories regarding partnership models, and it will be more applicable to the youth development field. Along with this, grounded theory is beneficial because it does not require the researcher to provide a perfect understanding of an area, but instead allows the researcher to develop a theory that accounts for behavior in an given area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

By interviewing teachers, the researcher gained an understanding of how teachers feel about youth development organizations assisting them in enhancing the academic achievement of their students. The information generated can then be used by other youth development organizations as a starting point for understanding teachers’ perceptions about their programs. This will give the other organizations a new perspective and will provide them with an understandable model for partnering with schools. The major benefit the research will provide for other youth development organizations is that it will give them a theory that can be applied throughout the daily routine of youth development professionals (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Likewise, the information generated also will help schools and teachers to further understand the importance of partnerships with youth development organizations. They then can use the new knowledge generated to guide their work with youth development professionals and others.

Sample

First, 31 teachers at Medary and Franklinton Elementary Schools were identified as possible participants in the study, as they had a current Boys & Girls Club member in their classroom. Teachers rather than school administrators were interviewed because it was believed that teachers would have a more authentic understanding of their students.
and their needs. In order to get a true understanding of how youth development organizations and schools can partner effectively, the researcher believed that it was important to understand the teachers’ viewpoints of what these organizations are currently doing, and what they can do better. Teachers have the advantage of interacting with the students all day. Thus, one would believe that teachers understand the educational achievement of each student, behavior issues, family issues, peer issues, and more. In turn, youth development organizations are designed to increase the skills for youth in many areas, including educational competency, social competency, cultural competency, and behavioral competency, while schools are often only able to assist with the educational competency of students (i.e., potentially help schools and teachers meet some of the aforementioned needs). Therefore, the data generated from teacher interviews allowed the researcher to understand how youth development organizations can assist in areas that the teachers see as the most beneficial.

In all, 12 Columbus Public Schools teachers participated in the study, as determined through the saturation process. Table 3.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study. To overview, the average age of the participants was 31 years old, and teachers had an average of 6 years experience as a teacher. Complementary to the schools’ demographics, 75% of the teachers interviewed were female, while 58% of the participants taught at Franklinton and 42% taught at Medary. All teachers reported that they had students who attended the Boys & Girls Club after school, so all teachers were at least moderately familiar with the types of activities provided to youth after school.
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<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
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</table>

Note: The information under “School” is coded where F= Franklinton Elementary and M=Medary Elementary, and under “Gender” M= Male and F= Female.

Table 3.1: Participants’ Demographic Characteristics

Data Collection and Procedures

The project was approved as “Exempt” by the Institutional Review Board of The Ohio State University, and received final approval from the Columbus Public Schools research department. To garner participation, the identified teachers were informed of the study initially through a letter sent to their workplace asking them to volunteer for the study (Appendix A). A follow-up, person-to-person discussion took place between the teacher participants and the researcher. All teachers agreed to participate, and an interview time was scheduled at a location determined by the participant. The exact number of participants was determined through a saturation process, which is achieved once no new concepts are discussed by the interviewees (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
The interview began by reading a written script that highlighted the purpose of the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and risks and benefits of participating (Appendix B). The participant then signed a written consent form giving permission to participate in the research study (Appendix C). Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. A semi-structured interview guide was used (Appendix D). In order to ensure that the data recorded in the interview guide were accurate, all interviews were audio-taped for review during the data analysis. Following the interviews, the interview tapes were transcribed. A total of 12 teachers participated in the study.

Instrumentation

An interview guide was developed based on NCLB regulations, BGCA, and grounded theory. The guide was designed to explore current attitudes and knowledge of the NCLB Act, current attitudes and knowledge of Boys & Girls Clubs, and various ways that Boys & Girls Clubs can assist teachers with meeting state and federal educational standards. The guide is outlined in Table 3.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What do you know about the NCLB Act? (Teachers were asked to read Appendix E after answering the question and were given the opportunity to add to their answer.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Given the NCLB changes in law, how do you think your school has responded?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Given the NCLB changes in law, how do you think you have responded as a teacher?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>What types of supports, if any, would be helpful to ensure that your students succeed academically?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>One section of NCLB talks of supplemental services for students. Are you aware of any agencies that may be providing these services at this time? If yes, who?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>One group of organizations that can provide supplemental services for youth are youth development organizations. Are you aware of any youth development organizations that are serving your students at this time? If yes, who?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>To the best of your knowledge, what types of objectives are common among youth development organizations that are serving your students at this time? (Teachers were asked to read Appendix F after answering this question).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The youth development organization that I’m interested in talking to you about is the Boys &amp; Girls Club. Do you have any students that attend the Boys &amp; Girls Club?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To the best of your knowledge, what services are provided by the Boys &amp; Girls Club?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you think the Boys &amp; Girls Club has any impact on your students that participate in the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>One of the objectives of the Boys &amp; Girls Club is to impact the academic achievement of participating youth. What are your thoughts on the Boys &amp; Girls Club assisting with the academic needs of your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Given that a Boys &amp; Girls Club is located in your building (or next door to your building), what are your thoughts on the Boys &amp; Girls Club assisting you as a teacher with meeting the NCLB law changes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Interview Questions for Teachers
In-flight adjustments were made to the guide in order to facilitate interview flow. Two questions were removed from guide on March 24, 2003 after four interviews had been completed, as it was believed that the two questions were not providing information relevant to the themes being explored. The questions were, “What are the agencies that are working with your students?” and “Are there any services that you feel your students need but are not receiving at this time?” were removed. In addition, question #7 was added to determine what knowledge teachers have of youth development organizations to explore whether teachers would highlight the Boys and Girls Club program without direction and prompting from the researcher.

Data Analyses

The interview transcriptions were reviewed and analyzed after each individual interview. Using grounded theory techniques, a review of the data was conducted to identify common themes stated by the participants. Upon gathering group themes, the data were then deciphered into individual quotes from each participant, which is considered the raw data. This raw data was then categorized into common themes, which served as the final data sets (Appendix G).

The data analysis process involved the researcher utilizing techniques from grounded theory of qualitative research. The researcher asked questions that were very broad, with the anticipation of formatting theories based on the answers to those broad questions. Common concepts offered by the teachers were observed, and these concepts were developed into a larger theory base or themes. This process allowed the researcher to remain open to the variety of possible statements that teachers may make during the interview (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Each concept that was mentioned by the teachers was then grouped into a category. These categories are beneficial so that there are fewer separate data sets that the researcher is working with, and can help the researcher to explain and predict emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As such, the categories helped the researcher to understand the issues and concerns that are important to the person being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By categorizing the data, teachers’ perceptions were broken down into a larger theory base, helping to determine the systems framework over-viewing effective partnerships between youth development organizations and schools.

*Researcher as Self*

One issue central to analyses within qualitative research involves the researcher as self. In other words, the researcher actually becomes a key data analysis tool, as she organizes, interprets, and categorizes the interview responses. As such, it is essential for the researcher to have a good understanding of how her own background, past experiences, and assumptions may or may not effect data coding. In response, an overview of the researcher’s potential biases and perspectives is provided here.

Due to over four years of full-time experience, and over seven years of contact with Clubs in the BGCA Movement, the researcher is qualified to assess how the teachers’ responses will benefit BGCA. As the Director of Operations for Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus, I have extensive training in and knowledge of the mission and philosophies of the BGCA Movement. Additionally, the researcher has a thorough understanding of the various programs offered at the Boys & Girls Club and the Youth Development Strategy, which is the foundation for the design of all programs and activities.

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As a Boys & Girls Club staff member, there is an inherent likelihood that some of the researcher's personal biases may have come into effect during the data analysis procedures. For instance, when inquiring about teachers' viewpoints on the effectiveness of the Club at impacting academic achievement, it was challenging for the researcher to not inform the teachers of what exactly the Club does do during homework help. In addition, biases must be kept in mind when determining the themes that emerged from the data. For instance, the researcher may hope that the teachers would say that the Club had an impact on their students, but will need to be aware that not all teachers would view the Club in this fashion.

In addition, as a trained social worker, the researcher has been taught to think in a more systemic and holistic manner. Educators may not have been trained to think in this same way. The researcher, therefore, must be aware of this when categorizing data into emergent themes, as teachers may not think in the same comprehensive and systemic manner that the researcher does.

Given these past experiences, knowledge base, and potential assumptions, the results should be interpreted with caution. Several strategies, however, were used to safeguard the integrity of the data. Techniques to ensure reliability and validity of the data are as follows.

*Reliability and Validity*

To assure the reliability of the themes devised from the teacher interviews, a peer reviewer was used. This person, who is an expert in the youth development field, independently examined the raw data quotes generated from the interviews and attempted to categorize the quotes into themes using content analysis. The peer reviewer and the
researcher devised an agreement for the percent that the independent reviewer adequately coded the data, which was 80%, indicating adequate reliability. When there was a discrepancy, the researcher and reviewer re-examined the data, discussed its meaning, and recoded the data accordingly.

Threats to validity were taken into serious consideration, especially given the fact that the researcher has a great deal of knowledge of the BGCA Movement. In particular, feedback techniques were used in order to validate that the emergent themes made sense to other people (Maxwell, 1996). To complete this task, three individuals were helpful in providing feedback about coding, including the thesis adviser, a staff member from the Boys & Girls Club, and a professional from the business field. The peer reviewers were chosen based on both convenience and the researcher’s prior experience with these individuals professionally. The thesis advisor is an expert in the field of school-family-community partnerships and youth development. The Boys & Girls Club professional was chosen due to her own prior experience in data collection procedures and her wealth of knowledge of the mission and philosophies of the Boys & Girls Club Movement. The final individual was chosen based on my prior experience in soliciting his technical advice on previous writing tasks. It was believed he was likely to offer good judgment on the relevance of the emergent themes based on his analytic nature. All three individuals offered suggestions for how to improve the categories originally created. For instance, one individual suggested that I categorize teachers’ knowledge of BGCA activities into the five Core Program Areas of BGCA. Another indicated that themes related to teachers’ knowledge and perceptions about NCLB should be coded simultaneously as opposed to separately.
In addition, the emergent themes were shared with a core group of teachers originally interviewed individually. The teachers were chosen based on their availability at the time the researcher visited the school. They were asked if the themes that the researcher had developed coincide with their ideas of what was shared in the interview, and they were asked if there are any themes that they felt were missing. The teachers felt that the themes adequately described how they felt about the NCLB policy changes and their understanding and views of the Boys & Girls Club.

Further threats to validity were assessed by using two other tactics. First, the data transcribed are considered rich data (Maxwell, 1996), as the data are verbatim transcripts from participants, rather than memos or notes from field observation. This helps to ensure that a researcher is not driving the data analyses using his or her own bias of the situation. Secondly, quasi-statistics were devised from the data, and Figure 5.1 shows the results of this numerical analysis. Maxwell (1996) suggests using quasi-statistics to allow the researcher to assess the amount of data that supports a conclusion.

In summary, several techniques, such as using the peer reviewer, having the three individuals provide feedback related to coding, and re-checking emergent themes with teachers, were all helpful in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data. Results generated through the data analyses were enhanced as a result.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results provided in this section are broken into seven domains, which all contain several themes that emerged from the data analysis. These themes are derived from the information provided by the interviewed teachers. The goal of the research was to determine what partnership strategies could be developed between schools and youth development organizations in the eyes of the teachers. In addition, the researcher was interested in determining if teachers view students academic achievement from a systems perspective.

Domain #1: Teachers’ Knowledge of NCLB

The information categorized under this domain came from teachers’ responses to the question, “What do you know about the NCLB Act?” and their subsequent viewing of the NCLB fact sheet provided by this researcher.

The main understanding teachers have of NCLB is that it will impact teachers’ standards. Seventy-five percent (n=9) of the teachers interviewed mentioned that this was an area they had heard was impacted by the NCLB policy changes. Out of these respondents, their feelings about this area were divided, where some felt strongly against the standards (n=3), and others felt that the standards are positive for the profession (n=5).
Those who see the teachers' standards as negative (n=3) felt that the teachers' standards are not going to solve the schools' problems, as teachers felt the schools' problems are that students are coming to school unprepared to learn. As one teacher commented, “I have not seen a building of horrible teachers, it’s been what the kids come to school with.” Another teacher felt that “the community wants to point fingers at the teachers,” and “they don’t want to look at that child and see what needs or disabilities the child might be facing.”

Those who felt positively (n=5) about the teachers’ standards view the standards as necessary in college undergraduate programs, but not directly with their own jobs. One teacher felt that the “fast-track” certification programs were harming the field, because people with an unrelated bachelor’s degree are getting master’s degrees in Education in less than one year, and are missing out on all of the important methods courses being taught. As one teacher responded, “I do believe that undergrad programs need to be revamped with more time spent, not in a college classroom, but spent being a teacher or intern in an urban district.”

The second area of NCLB teachers have heard about is school choice, which 66% (n=8) of teachers mentioned. Out of these teachers, two-thirds (n=5) understood that school choice had to do with low-performing schools. As one teacher offered, “there’s a school improvement list” and another stated, “I know that it’s for low-performing schools, and it offers the option to parents to remove their children from low-performing schools and put them in another school of their choice within the district.” Some teachers were a bit skeptical of what school choice will look like when it is implemented. According to one teacher interviewed, “school choice - I
want to see what it looks like. It looks like it's going to devoid schools of students, but it's not going to change things.” Another teacher suggested that the district, “go in there and see why it’s a bad school,” rather than giving students the option of transferring to another school.

Thirdly, teachers mentioned their knowledge of NCLB consisted of testing changes. Nearly 60% (n=7) of respondents had knowledge that testing was part of NCLB. Some teachers understood that testing was going to affect more grades, and would be offered to more than just 4th grade students, as is the case with the Ohio proficiency test. A few teachers felt strongly against the increased testing, and one teacher laughingly stated, “I know some teachers have dubbed it no child left untested,” and later stated, “I don’t necessarily think that if our goal is no child left behind that the answer is to necessarily add more tests.” Another teacher stated that “we assess enough, we need time to teach.” Only one teacher felt that the increase in testing was positive, and this teacher felt that the subjects being tested are important subject matters and that youth should be tested “to see where their weaknesses are and to try to improve it.”

A smaller percentage of teachers were aware of NCLB requirements related to school accountability and supplemental services. Thirty-three percent (n=4) of teachers mentioned they had knowledge of school accountability standards with NCLB, and 33% (n=4) also mentioned supplemental services as being part of NCLB. With school accountability, teachers felt that it was much larger than looking at just the schools. One teacher mentioned that mobility rates need to be taken into consideration, and another felt that if schools were going to be held accountable, then
the parents should be held accountable. As the teacher described, "without the parenting part of the equation, the home-life part of the equation, the student part of the equation, it doesn’t matter how accountable the school is.”

With regard to supplemental services, some teachers had concerns about how they would be implemented. According to one teacher, "I don’t really see how that can be implemented. The districts will be required to provide stipends for services and transportation, but at the same time, I know our school budget just got cut millions of dollars.” Another teacher was concerned that the supplemental services provided by agencies like Sylvan would not be able to serve every child, and felt that “I don’t always think that they are good programs, personally as an educator.”

It is evident that teachers have a familiar understanding of NCLB and have heard concepts that are associated with the policy changes. They are aware that teacher standards, school choice, and testing are major areas that will affect their schools and students. However, it is clear that many teachers do not have an understanding of how the policy changes will be implemented within their own school building. They may have heard what the new standards are, but they could not describe what those standards would look like for the teachers or the schools.

Domain #2: School/Classroom Response to NCLB

Originally, I felt that it was important to examine how teachers and schools had changed their daily routines in response to the NCLB policy changes. The responses presented below are from the questions, “Given your knowledge of NCLB law changes, how do you think your school has responded?” and, “Given the NCLB law changes, how do you think you have responded as a teacher?”

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Out of the teachers interviewed, half of the teachers (n=6) felt they had changed by *teaching to comprehension* rather than to a test. What this means is that teachers are teaching so that students understand, not so they reach a certain number on an achievement test. As the teachers described, “I try to teach them skills that I know they need to learn as readers,” and “the bottom line is trying to come up with ways where kids can understand things.” Some teachers specifically described teaching to meet the kids “needs” and mentioned working in “creative ways to meet the kids’ needs.”

Half of the teachers (n=6) also mentioned that their school had changed by adding *more tutoring and supplemental services*. All of the services mentioned by the teachers were all services that were affiliated with and performed inside of the school buildings. Teachers mentioned that they had added after-school tutoring and a Saturday morning tutoring program for 4th graders taking the proficiency test. One teacher described the after-school tutoring as a way to “help those students who are behind to meet those needs.” Another teacher mentioned that supplemental services included, “not only the academic needs, but also personal needs of lower-income students; be it giving them clothes or basic moral support.” Another teacher mentioned that there was support from the guidance counselor and interns who “really have a lot in place to help.”

Although a great number of teachers were able to state changes that had been made in their schools and classrooms, over 40% (n=5) of the teachers interviewed stated that there had been *no changes* in the day-to-day operations of the school and their classrooms. The majority of the teachers felt that they were already teaching in
an effective manner. Statements such as, “I feel my teaching hasn’t really changed,” and, “I feel that I have a good strong program,” reflect that teachers are confident in their teaching strategies. As one teacher described, “I feel that I’m a professional and know what I’m doing. I’m doing what’s best for my kids.” One teacher mentioned that “the act doesn’t blow me away, because we’ve been told lie after lie and it’s unfortunate that these parents put up with it.”

Finally, 25% (n=3) of the teachers felt that they had responded by participating in continuing education courses that they pursued on their own. As one teacher described, “I’m constantly building my own knowledge. I’m constantly re-evaluating what I’m doing and how it works.”

Teachers were able to describe changes that had been made in the schools and classrooms in order to meet NCLB policy changes. All of the changes mentioned involved school-initiated reform efforts, and none of the strategies described involved the integration of outside supporters. Despite the large number of teachers who had made changes in their classrooms, there are still a great number of teachers who have not changed their day-to-day structure at all. The teachers who have not changed felt confident in their abilities as a teacher and do not feel that changes are necessary.

Domain #3: Strategies to Meet Students’ Academic Needs

This domain area explores what supports teachers’ see as necessary in regards to improving the academic achievement of students. The responses in this section were derived from the question, “What types of supports, if any, would be helpful to ensure that your students succeed academically?”
The most mentioned need addressed by teachers is *parent support* for their child’s education. Over 40% (n=5) of teachers felt that this would be the area most likely to impact the academic achievement of students. As one teacher stated, “Parent support. That’s a big one.” Teachers want parents involved to back them up in regards to their students’ education. For instance, one teacher commented, “Parents need to know that as a school we can’t do this on our own. We need their help and support.” Another teacher felt that parents do not think it’s important to be involved in their child’s education and said, “some of the parents I talk to think a 5th grade child should be able to handle it on their own.” One teacher mentioned that she would like to work collaboratively with the parents and stated, “with the teacher and parent working together, that child can be successful in their education.” The teachers did not mention that other agencies could be beneficial in generating parent involvement.

The second most commonly stated support was *materials* for the classroom. One-third (n=4) of the teachers mentioned that materials were sparse because of financial constraints. One teacher mentioned that the materials should include new curriculum guides because she had spent “a lot of time coming up with 1st grade activities to do in the classroom.”

Thirty-three percent (n=4) of teachers mentioned that *in-school services* would be beneficial. By in-school services, teachers felt that tutoring, resource rooms, and guidance counselors would be helpful for addressing academic difficulties. In particular, one teacher mentioned that guidance counselors would be useful for offering students someone to talk to, since “their jives are so much different than what I can imagine.” Another teacher felt that classroom behavior issues were a
concern and that there should be a “resource room or some type of classroom where the student can be mainstreamed back in to the classroom.” It is also notable that teachers mentioned in-school services, but did not think of out-of-school services, such as the Boys & Girls Club. Along with this, only one teacher identified that the school’s guidance counselor could be beneficial for addressing students’ needs, and no one mentioned the school social worker as being beneficial.

Fourthly, smaller class size was mentioned as a needed resource by one quarter (n=3) of the teachers. One teacher felt that the student-teacher ratio was disproportionate for the number of students who had multiple needs. As the teacher stated, “lower ratio will automatically help scores- you won’t be dealing with two times more kids than you can handle.” Another mentioned that smaller class sizes led to the opportunity to provide more fun learning activities, and “it makes a huge difference to be able to give students individualized attention.”

Similarly, 25% (n=3) of the teachers felt that teacher education would help to meet the academic needs of students. One teacher felt that teachers needed training in “targeting the population we work with, specifically, low-income types of kids.” Another teacher felt that teacher education would be beneficial for helping to improve current teaching strategies being used. This particular teacher described this as looking like, “a lead teacher coming in, observing, making suggestions, making comments.” Finally, one teacher felt that it would be helpful to have training in learning more about the NCLB policy changes.

In response to this question, teachers did not think of any partnership opportunities as a response for assisting with academic achievement. The only non-
school support mentioned was parent support, which was mentioned as a means for helping to support the teachers’ efforts with the student. The other supports mentioned were all internal to the school. Some of the teachers are thinking about systems, in regards to providing more guidance counseling services, but their systems thinking involves utilizing microsystems within their own educational system.

Domain #4: Teachers’ Knowledge of Boys & Girls Clubs

This section is broken down into two distinct categories: Core Program Areas and Other Resources. The reasoning for this is that many teachers identified aspects of the Club that were not directly tied to programming, but still warranted attention in this domain. Responses for this domain were generated by asking the question, “To the best of your knowledge, what services are provided by the Boys & Girls Club?”

Core Program Areas.

All of the teachers interviewed (n=12) reported that the Club provides programming in Education and Career Development. The teachers identified that students get help with their homework when they go to the Club. Teachers mentioned that the Club helps students “solve their problems in schoolwork.” In addition, two teachers mentioned that their students take part in Power Hour, which is the homework component of the Project Learn curriculum designed by BGCA. Other teachers were aware that there are “volunteer tutors coming in and working with the kids.” Teachers acknowledged that their students received help with homework and that many made it a priority at the end of the school day. For instance, a teacher reported, “I know that a lot of mine do the homework room after school, immediately.”
The second most commonly mentioned program area was *Sports, Fitness, and Recreation*. Over 50% (n=7) of teachers interviewed mentioned that students could take part in leisure activities. Some teachers classified this as just an opportunity for play and stated, “I know there’s a place for them to hang out and play,” and “giving them opportunities to play games.” Other teachers, however, mentioned that was more specific than just playing games. One teacher commented that there are sports programs, too, and “I’m usually there on Saturdays watching basketball.” Another teacher commented that there are sports teams where both boys and girls can be participants.

Teachers also felt that students experienced *Character and Leadership Development* programs while at the Club. Specifically, half of the teachers (n=6) interviewed mentioned that Club programs lead to developmental competency. As one teacher commented, “everything is focused on teamwork and sportsmanship.” Another teacher mentioned that youth are encouraged to be positive role models in the Club and that “they have a member of the month type of thing, which is good for kids.” Along with the comments listed above, many teachers felt that the Club provided an opportunity for students to get along with their peers and that, “self-esteem is promoted.”

_The Arts_ were mentioned as being a key component of the after-school program at the Club. Forty-two percent of teachers (n=5) interviewed mentioned that this was an area where youth could participate. Some teachers had an understanding of some of the programs being offered within the art program, such as working with community artists and working with various artistic mediums.
Finally, one teacher mentioned that there are *Health & Life Skills* activities offered at the Club. This teacher described these activities as helping students with “taking responsibility, making good choices, and good role modeling.”

**Other Resources.**

In this second category of services provided, one of the main resources mentioned by teachers was an *after-school meal*. One-third (n=4) of the teachers mentioned that the students get fed at the end of the school day, which one teacher said “is the main reason why most of our kids go there-- because they don’t get that at home, if anyone is even home.”

A similar number of teachers (33%; n=4) mentioned that the Club provides opportunities for youth to interact with *supportive adults*. Teachers described this as a mentorship type of program. As one teacher pointed out, the Club is similar to a “big brother” program, where “they really look out for the kids.” Teachers also mentioned that Club staff has gone to the school to make sure that students are doing well. The teacher stated, “He’s been extremely good with talking to them about ‘Club members don’t act like this, Club members are to go to school and be role models.’”

One teacher mentioned that the Club provides opportunities for students to go on *field trips*. The teacher felt that this was a positive opportunity for students to be, “exposed to new things.”

Overall, teachers had a fairly good knowledge of activities that take place at the Boys & Girls Club. While all of the teachers were able to identify that the Club provided educational opportunities, no one mentioned in the previous domain that the Boys & Girls Club could be a support for helping students academically. This could
be due to the fact that teachers are not thinking systemically. These teachers are thinking more in terms of how they are specifically trained to serve their students’ academic needs, and may believe other adults may not have the needed knowledge to effectively help.

Domain #3: Teachers’ Perceptions on the Impact of the Boys & Girls Club

This domain area is centered upon what teachers perceive to be the most impacting characteristics of the Boys & Girls Club. Specifically, teachers were asked the question, “Do you think the Boys & Girls Club has any impact on your students that participate in the program?”

According to teachers, the number one impact that students receive from attending the Boys & Girls Club is they have the opportunity to interact with supportive adults. In all, 66% (n=8) of the teachers mentioned that this had an impact on the students. Most of the teachers mentioned that these adults were supportive because they helped students with their homework. One teacher felt that, “children would not complete their homework at all if they did not have someone over at the Club supporting them,” and “they get help with homework and they come in and tell me so and so showed them an alternative way to solve a problem or something like that.” Other teachers felt that the Club staff was supportive because they helped to reinforce the need for students to behave at school. One teacher mentioned, “I have worked with Rich [the Unit Director] to enforce discipline, where if they don’t do the work, I tell him and they’re required to do their work after school.”

The second impact the Club has on youth in the teachers’ eyes is that it provides them with an opportunity to develop social skills. In this area, 42% (n=5) of
teachers felt that the opportunity to “interact” is what impacted students the most. One teacher noted that her students to seem more “social and more outgoing with their peers in the classroom.” Another teacher felt that the Club was a positive place for children to go to “form friendships.”

Thirdly, teachers felt that the Club provided the students with a safe place to be after school. One-third (n=4) of the teacher stated that this was positive for their students. As one teacher stated, “I’m worried about some of my kids that are free to roam the streets after school and some of the things I hear them getting into.” Another teacher commented, “It’s a safe place for them to run around because a lot of parents put them in rather than have them hang out in the unsafe neighborhood.”

Equally as important, 33% (n=4) of the teachers felt that the Club impacted students by giving them a sense of belonging. One teacher stated that students, “put a lot of value on going there.” Other teachers stated that their students are “excited” about the Boys & Girls Club and they “look forward to it.” As one teacher described, “I think the kids that are in the Boys & Girls Club, they just have a bond with each other because they have a place to go together after school and they like that.”

Again, teachers have positive things to say about the Boys & Girls Club. They mentioned that the Club has supportive adults who work with students after school, and these adults help with school-related issues. Some of the teachers are beginning to think systemically, and are beginning to realize that positive adults, other than teachers, can assist with academic achievement. Teachers are also beginning to understand that the Club activities impact the community by providing students with a safe place to be after school. Again, when prompted, teachers are starting to think in
terms of systems thinking.

*Domain #6: Teachers’ Perceptions on the Boys & Girls Club Impacting Students’ Academic Achievement*

This domain reflects on teachers’ views regarding the Boys & Girls Club being beneficial for helping their students’ academic achievement. The researcher asked teachers the question, “One of the objectives of the Boys & Girls Club is to impact the academic achievement of participating youth. What are your thoughts on the Boys & Girls Club assisting with the academic needs of your students?”

The majority of the teachers, 66% (n=8), felt that the Club staff could support the school to meet the academic success of the students. The teachers described the Club’s involvement as being a supportive role in helping teachers to reach students through education. As teachers stated, “the Club backs us up,” and “they [students] realize we’re working together to get them educated.” Teachers described the Club as being able to help students to achieve academic success because they teach students new ways of solving problems. One teacher mentioned, “I think it’s great because if the teacher can’t drive it home, maybe there’s something that person can show them that will help them understand it.” Another teacher felt that the Club helps to “reinforce learning during the after-school hours.”

Despite the majority of teachers supporting the belief that the Clubs are able to assist the students’ with academic achievement, 25% (n=3) of the teachers felt that this was *not the job of the Boys & Girls Club*. As one teacher responded, “I don’t feel that’s their job. Our students need more than that,” and “they’re not professionals, they’re not educators.” Another teacher felt that the homework help was not
beneficial because, “the person in charge of the homework room isn’t necessarily through school.” Lastly, one teacher felt that in order for the Club to impact academic achievement, they would need to be familiar with “state standards and what we teach everyday.”

Finally, one teacher felt that the Club should help with the *non-academic* barriers to learning and that the Club could “teach the kids to get along, how to play together, appropriate responses to frustration, staying on task, staying focused.”

The majority of the teachers are beginning to think in terms of systems and feel that the Club can help them with the academic achievement of students, but they are only realizing this after the researcher directly asks them if the Club can have an impact. The teachers did not come up with systems thinking on their own.

*Domain #7: Partnership Possibilities*

This final domain highlights teachers’ perceptions on what a partnership with the Boys & Girls Club would look like. The responses in this section are derived from the question, “Given that a Boys & Girls Club is located in your building (or next door to your building) what are your thoughts on the Boys & Girls Club assisting you as a teacher with meeting the NCLB law changes?”

Half of the teachers (n=6) interviewed feel the ideal partnership would involve the Club helping with the *non-academic barriers* of students. As teachers described, this can be “pulling in resources and saying, ‘hey, this is, we need help addressing this’” and, “we can definitely help meet any of the needs -- physical, educational, psychological and so forth.” One teacher described this non-academic partnership as important because, “for a child to open to learning, their emotional needs need to be
intact, or appropriate.”

One-third (n=4) of the teachers felt that a partnership with the Boys & Girls Club could help *impact the academic achievement of students*. One teacher emphatically responded, “I would love any help with that!” Another teacher stated, “I think it would be a good thing for us to get together and collaborate and let each other know what was going on in both places and how we can help each other.”

Finally, two teachers felt that they *do not need any help* with impacting the academic achievement of their students. As one teacher responded, “I don’t really see them as helping me at all. And with the Kindergartners it’s just more play and social relationships with them than anything else, so I don’t see that it’s probably going to help support my program at all.”

This final question directly asked teachers how the Boys & Girls Club could help them meet the NCLB law changes. By directly asking how the Boys & Girls Club could partner with the schools, there are still a few teachers who do not feel such a partnership is necessary. Those teachers who felt that there were partnership possibilities were more apt to agree to partnering to address the non-academic barriers. Despite the fact that 100% of teachers responded that they knew their students’ received homework help at the Club, only 33% felt that the Club could help with the academic needs of youth. The reality is that teachers are not thinking in systems theory, and on the occasions when they do think in systems theory, they feel that other systems can help by *enhancing* what is taking place in school, not by providing new learning opportunities.

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Quasi-Statistics

Table 4.1 highlights the quasi-statistics of the results described above. This technique is highlighted by Maxwell (1996) as being effective for enhancing the validity of qualitative research. This method allows those reviewing the data to see the exact number of respondents for each category of data.
Knowledge of NCLB

Teachers and NCLB

School/Classroom Response to NCLB

Strategies to Meet Students' Academic Needs

Teacher Standards (75%)
School Choice (66%)
Testing (58%)
School Accountability (33%)
Supplemental Services (33%)

Tutoring/Supplemental Services (50%)
Teaching to Comprehension (50%)
No Changes (42%)
Continuing Education (25%)

Parent Support (42%)
Materials (33%)
In-School Supports (33%)
Smaller Class Size (25%)
Teacher Education (25%)

Figure 5.1: Quasi-Statistics of Results (CONTINUED)
Figure 5.1 Cont’d.
Quasi-Statistics of Results

Knowledge of B&GC

Core Program Areas
- Education & Career Development (100%)
- Sports, Fitness & Recreation (58%)
- Character & Leadership Development (50%)
- The Arts (42%)
- Health & Life Skills (8%)

Other Supports
- After-School Meal (33%)
- Supportive Adults (33%)
- Field Trips (8%)

Perceptions of Impact of B&GC

- Supportive Adults (66%)
- Social Skills (42%)
- Safe Haven (33%)
- Sense of Belonging (33%)

Perceptions of B&GC Impacting Academic Achievement

- Collaborate with School (66%)
- Staff Are Not Trained Properly (25%)
- Help with Non-Academic Barriers (8%)

Partnership Possibilities

- Partner for Non-Academic Barriers (50%)
- Partner for Academic Achievement (33%)
- No Help is Needed (17%)
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research study was designed to answer two key questions: (a) What is teachers’ current knowledge of NCLB and (b) based on teachers’ perceptions, what are effective strategies for school-youth development organization partnerships? Through the use of grounded theory, this researcher was able to capture teachers’ viewpoints about how they have or have not been impacted by the NCLB policy changes, and whether they view partnerships with youth development organizations as worthwhile. This chapter highlights key findings and implications.

Key Findings

Teachers are aware of NCLB and policy changes regarding teacher standards, school choice, and testing. They are less informed of the school accountability and supplemental services provisions of the policy. Many teachers have not changed their teaching practices to account for the NCLB policy changes, as these individuals felt that their teaching programs were already strong. Those teachers who mentioned they and their school had changed teaching strategies stated the changes involved tutoring and supplemental services for students, teaching to comprehension, and participating
in continuing education. Interestingly, these are all strategies implemented by the school for the purpose of increasing academic achievement. No teachers mentioned strategies that were aimed at addressing the non-academic barriers of students, and no teachers mentioned that they had developed partnerships with outside agencies, such as the Boys & Girls Club, to help meet the NCLB policy changes.

When asked about what would support their students’ academic achievement, teachers stated additional supports that the schools could provide. School supports included smaller class size, materials, in-school supports (tutoring and resource rooms), and teacher education. Again, these strategies are all focused on academic interventions, and only one teacher mentioned addressing the non-academic barriers affecting achievement, which included increased guidance counseling opportunities. The only community-driven support mentioned by teachers was parent support. Teachers expressed that they would like for parents to be more involved in their child’s education and would like the parents to back up what the teachers are doing at school. Once again, teachers did not mention that partnerships with outside agencies would be a support for the academic achievement of students.

The fact that teachers did not indicate that the Boys & Girls Club could be a support for the academic achievement for students is odd, due to the fact that all 12 teachers have an understanding of what takes place at the Club, and all 12 mentioned that homework help is a key component. All of the teachers responded that they were aware that the Club provided homework help to students, although they did not say how this had impacted academic achievement of students. Teachers are also aware of the other activities that take place at the Club, including recreation, arts and crafts and character...
and leadership development. The majority of teachers expressed that they valued and supported the role that the Club staff played in the students’ lives. In addition, they also felt that the Club provided students with a safe place to be, opportunities to develop social skills, and a sense of belonging.

When directly asked, some teachers felt that the Club could support the academic achievement of students. However, these supports were based more on homework help than on enhancing learning through new, hands-on strategies. Other teachers, however, felt that the Club would not be beneficial in supporting with academic achievement, as it is not the Club’s job. When these teachers do think of the role of the Club, it is in relation to addressing the non-academic barriers to education.

The primary finding is that teachers are not thinking in terms of systems. Those teachers who are aware of NCLB have used school strategies for addressing the policy changes, and have not thought in terms of how outside supports could benefit their attempts to address the changes. These teachers do not seem to value the option of partnering with outside agencies to address non-academic barriers that greatly affect academic achievement. Those that expressed partnering as a possibility mentioned that the partnership would involve the outside agency addressing the non-academic barriers, not assisting with academic achievement of students.

*Teachers & Systems Theory*

A main goal of this research was to determine if teachers think in a systems-based model, which is critical for the success of school-family-community partnerships. Teachers must be able to recognize that there are outside support systems that can effectively help students with achieving academic success, whether that involves
increased emphasis on academic learning, or the non-academic barriers that affect achievement. What this researcher found is that teachers were able to express systems thinking, but it occurred only after the researcher took them in that direction with the questioning. For instance, when asked what supports were needed to help with academic achievement, teachers mentioned primarily school-based supports, with the exception of parent support. However, when asked directly if the Boys & Girls Club could help with academic achievement, teachers were able to think of examples where the Club could support students. This research is encouraging because the potential for partnerships is evident, but it will involve educating teachers on the necessity of thinking in systems as the starting point.

There are many necessary factors that need to be in place for school-family-community partnership models to be effective. With regard to partnering for the sake of meeting NCLB policy changes, it is imperative that teachers first view this policy as worthwhile. It is evident from this research that many teachers do not believe in the policy or the policymakers who designed NCLB. This is an unintended consequence of the NCLB policy. Thus, the education system needs to get buy-in from its members first, before any other steps can be taken. Additionally, the majority of teachers do not view students’ non-academic barriers as something that can be addressed by the school. It appears that these teachers felt that these non-academic barriers are something that are a given and that they are a constant in a student’s life. Therefore, educating teachers that supports are available to help address these issues is a critical component for the partnership. Finally, teachers need to view others as being capable of helping to educate a child.
These others can include parents, community members, and youth development organizations.

This model of ensuring that positive conditions are in place for the school-family-community partnership is highlighted in Table 5.1. The model was designed from a synthesis of all data and domains and includes two sections. The first section deals with the conditions that must be present for positively addressing the NCLB policy changes. The second section describes the conditions that must be present for developing an effective school-family-community partnership. This second part can be altered to address each of the partners’ responsibilities in a partnership (e.g. teachers, schools, youth development organizations, community organizations), but this table is written in the perspective of what is needed to make teachers more responsive to partnerships. It is highly probable that when the positive conditions are in place, a partnership model is more likely to be successful in impacting the academic achievement of students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Conditions</th>
<th>Negative Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCLB</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are aware of NCLB</td>
<td>Teacher are unaware of NCLB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers understand the policy changes of NCLB and see them as important</td>
<td>Teachers do not understand the NCLB policy changes and see the policy as just another “lie” being told to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers try new things in their classroom to meet NCLB policy changes</td>
<td>Teachers do not adjust/change their teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers utilize outside supports (parents, community, etc.) to meet NCLB policy changes</td>
<td>Teachers attempt to meet NCLB policy changes alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership Possibilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers view parents as partners in their child’s education</td>
<td>Teachers view parents as part of their child’s problem in achieving academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers view community organizations as partners in students’ education and see these organizations as vehicles for learning, and as capable of addressing non-academic barriers outside the classroom</td>
<td>Teachers view community organizations as a place where students complete their homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers view their role systemically and believe that a students’ academic achievement is the responsibility of everyone</td>
<td>Teachers view themselves as the only professionals able to impact academic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers value a school-family-community partnership</td>
<td>Teachers prefer to work independently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Model for a School-Family-Community Partnership Model Utilized for Meeting NCLB Policy Changes
The findings from the research highlight that there is a great deal of work to be done for ensuring that partnerships are successful. In particular, teachers must be taught to think in a more systemic manner. At the moment, teachers view themselves as very independent and often under-valued members of society.

However, despite teachers’ lack of providing responses reflective of systemic thinking during the interviews, the interviews with the teachers highlighted that there are current partnerships taking place between the schools and the Club. Even though teachers may not label these strategies as part of a systems theory perspective, they did mention several key partnership strategies at work between the schools and the Boys & Girls Club.

First, there is an existing link between school staff and Club staff. Teachers point out that the Club staff is there to “back them up” and to help them to drive home key learning strategies. The teachers mentioned that this relationship is two-way, meaning the school staff goes to the Club and the Club staff goes to the school. Teachers also mentioned that they felt comfortable talking to Club staff about problems a student was experiencing in the classroom, either academically or behaviorally. This willingness to communicate is one the first steps in developing an effective partnership.

Secondly, the close proximity of the Club to the school makes a partnership effective. For instance, the Medary Unit is a school-based after-school program, while the Westside Unit is a neighborhood-based program. Students, therefore, have easy access to participate. Teachers from both schools felt that the Club was important for their students because the neighborhoods were too unsafe for students to be at home alone after school.
Additionally, teachers recognized that the Club can be an effective partner in meeting the developmental needs of students. Teachers mentioned academic needs, and highlighted that the Club provides homework help for their students after school. However, teachers also mentioned that the Club provides opportunities for students to interact with peers and learn important social skills. One teacher also mentioned that the Club was helpful for providing students with positive self-esteem, which is necessary for successful academic achievement.

Finally, it was evident through talking with the teachers that the majority valued the work of the Club. They saw the Club as being a positive place where students could spend their afternoons, and they felt that there was learning taking place during after-school hours. One teacher mentioned that she had provided Club staff with some curriculum materials to use during the after-school hours. Conversely, a teacher mentioned that he valued the fact that he could rely on Club staff to come to the school if there was a problem with a student. It was evident that the teachers felt valued by the Club and value the Club in return.

Limitations of the Study

Results of this study should be interpreted with caution, as there were several limitations present within the study design. First, there was a small sample size used within the study (n=12). Second, only input from teachers from two schools was solicited within the study. Administrators, school support staff, youth development workers, and others may have differing perspectives related to these ideas. As well, teachers from other schools may have varying knowledge bases and perspectives related to these research questions. Third, teachers were recruited from schools that had one Boys & Girls Club
chartered organization operating in close proximity. Other Clubs and schools may indeed have different program strategies and partnerships. Furthermore, the sample was selected based on teachers who were interested in participating. These teachers' opinions of the Boys & Girls Club may have been more positive than others who might be randomly selected for the study or one who had not self-selected to participate. Additionally, there was not much diversity in the participants, although the sample size was reflective of the school populations. The teaching staff of both schools is predominantly Caucasian and the sample was also predominantly Caucasian. Finally, in qualitative designs, the researcher essentially is the data analysis tool. As such, the researcher's content knowledge and background help to facilitate the interpretation and understanding of the data, which could lead to researcher bias.

Given the limitations listed above, several strategies were used to safeguard against these coming through within the study. Using feedback techniques (Maxwell, 1996), themes and coding methods were processed with three different individuals who had varying degrees of knowledge about youth development. Likewise, teachers who were interviewed within the study had the opportunity to provide feedback related to the validity of the themes that emerged from the data. Both of these strategies helped to protect against researcher bias. There is still, however, the possibility that the researcher's beliefs and perceptions may have influenced the data analyses and coding. Despite these varying limitations, there are several implications that may be drawn from this research. The following section overviews these ideas.
Implications for Partnerships

The most important implication from this research is that schools, youth development organizations, and communities can use these findings to strengthen their own school-family-community partnerships. These teachers have expressed that they are frustrated that the NCLB policy places the blame on them for the failure of students to achieve academically. From a systems standpoint, we know that it is not the sole responsibility of the teachers and schools; it is the responsibility of everyone in the community. Thus, this research is beneficial in describing how the other systems can help with academic achievement and addressing the non-academic barriers to learning.

An important component of school-family-community partnerships to keep in mind is that just as children are often not getting their needs met, parents are often in the same situation. Parents also face barriers, such as unemployment and poverty, which keep them from succeeding as best as they could in the community. What is important to remember is that just as students may be immobilized at the bottom level of the hierarchy of needs, parents may be as well. In order for any intervention to be successful, the most basic level of parent needs must be met. Therefore, expecting a parent to make a full commitment to his or her child’s education may be unfair, given the many barriers affecting that parent’s situation. This highlights the need for schools to move from a one-generation strategy, of only focusing on the students’ needs, to a two-generation strategy, where students and their parents are both receiving support (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997).

In addition to being sensitive of the parents’ needs and issues, all partners need to be sensitive the needs of the participating systems. A key component of any school-
family-community partnership must include addressing the various perspectives that the key players bring to the table. For instance, teachers oftentimes do not understand the reality of their students’ home lives and neighborhoods, so there is often blaming that takes place. Teachers see the parents as needing to become actively involved in their child’s school life, but parents are often unable to help their child academically due to their own lack of education or time constraints. Therefore, the cycle of blaming needs to stop, and a method for positive communication among systems needs to take place.

An important type of organization that can help to further positive communication among partners is a youth development organization. Community organizations and youth development organizations can be beneficial for helping to address the many challenges that face schools in reaching parents. Due to the relatively supportive nature of these organizations, they can provide a place where parents feel that they can receive assistance for both their children and themselves. Thus, youth development organizations can be beneficial for helping to get parents involved in the life of their children. This positive relationship can then be used to strengthen the relationship between parents and schools.

*Implications for Teacher Training and Support*

There are four additional implications related to teacher training and support that have emerged from the research. First, teachers have very limited knowledge of NCLB and what the policy will mean for them personally as a teacher. The teachers do not value or buy-in to the federal policy, which is seeking major educational reform. Teachers need to value the NCLB policy change before they will alter their teaching methods. Second, the teachers interviewed here did not seem to think from a systems perspective. That is,
they were used to viewing the school as having sole responsibility for students' academic achievement, and did not think about partnerships with outside agencies as a complementary strategy. To combat this belief, teachers need to be trained to think holistically, and to view students as a product of their environment, with its accompanying risks and supports. Next, to establish effective partnerships with schools, youth development organizations need to take a one-down position when working with teachers (Duncan, Rock & Parks, 1987). In other words, teachers need to be seen as the experts in the education field and need to be valued for their knowledge. Finally, youth development organizations can help teachers primarily by engaging the parents of youth. Stated as one of the most needed supports for their students' academic achievement, youth development organizations can be responsible for involving parents in their child's education. Each implication related to working with teachers is discussed in more detail here.

**Teachers Need to Understand NCLB.**

One key implication involves teachers' values and perceptions of NCLB. It was evident that the majority of these teachers see NCLB as just one more policy that is put in place, which will, in their opinions, more than likely have no impact. Teachers expressed that they felt lied to about education policies, especially because the policy that created proficiency tests has not functioned in the way originally designed. One teacher expressed that he was not going to change his classroom until the district specifically told him to do so. It appears teachers feel voiceless when it comes to education policy, and they are frustrated that lawmakers are unaware of what really takes place within an urban classroom.
On the other hand, teachers have heard some of the buzz words associated with NCLB, such as school choice, teacher standards, and school accountability. While they may not completely agree with the policy change, at least they have been somewhat informed of what the policy entails for urban districts. The need for teachers to understand NCLB is imperative, as teachers often do not respond to the needs of students because of the bureaucracy and politics of schools and districts (Heath & McLaughlin, 1994b).

Given these issues, implications are clear. Getting teachers to understand NCLB needs to be the task of those at the top. The state and district administrators need to inform teachers of what the policy will mean to their jobs and the students that they teach. Right now, the policy is something that the district views as important, but the need for taking NCLB seriously has not been passed down to the line workers (i.e. the teachers). Expecting teachers to find out about NCLB on their own is not an effective strategy, as most teachers are already to their physical and emotional limits.

Teachers Need To Think Systemically.

One of the major findings that came from this research is that teachers are not necessarily thinking about their work from a systems perspective. Teachers have been the individuals primarily responsible for educating the youth of our communities (Heath & McLaughlin, 1994b); often they view their roles in isolation from others. This job can be a stressful one. For instance, the teachers interviewed in the study described that they feel the lack of support from parents, policymakers, and the community. This lack of support can lead to a great deal of burnout over time. Therefore, teachers may feel less pressure and stress if indeed they believed that the issue of educating today’s youth was a
community responsibility. According to Sanders & Epstein (1998), the schools that are the most effective at meeting the academic needs of students are schools that see their task as an integral part of a system of stakeholders, including parents and communities. Once teachers start thinking in terms of school-family-community partnerships, their self-efficacy will improve (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997).

Conversely, as part of the social services field, youth development organizations have the advantage of being more systems-focused than schools. Specifically, the philosophies that youth development organizations adhere to are supportive of systems thinking. For instance, BGCA includes civic involvement as one of its core objectives (BGCA, 1998). BGCA understands the need for youth to give back to their communities, because youth are affecting and are affected by the community in which they live. Club members are taught to have respect for their environment and to give back to make their environment a better place for the next generation of youth (BGCA, 1998).

This understanding of the importance of social systems makes youth development organizations ideal partners for schools. They are looking for partnerships, and see the value of working with others, especially schools, as central to their work. As such, youth development organizations can be key leaders in fostering teachers’ systems thinking, as they outreach to teachers and other school staff within their school communities. As youth development organizations and their staff facilitate partnerships, in turn, teachers may be more likely to view students’ needs from a more systems-related perspective.

Youth Development Organizations Need to Take a One-Down Approach.

One approach that youth development organizations might use to help build these relationships involves taking a one-down approach. The one-down approach is a strategic
therapy technique used by social workers to facilitate cooperation with their client.

According to Duncan, Rock and Parks (1987), when the therapist takes a one-up or power position, the result is intimidating to clients and does not foster a productive relationship between therapist and client.

This technique would be effective when working with teachers because teachers stated that they felt undervalued and that people were “pointing fingers” at them. Teachers need to be built back up so that they feel that they are serving a worthwhile role in society. However, in order to get teacher buy-in for a school-family-community partnership, it appears that first, it would be the most beneficial to get the teachers’ opinions on what a partnership would entail and to allow them to start the process of describing that partnership. In this respect it would not be another mandate placed on top of teachers; rather, it would be an opportunity for teachers to tell the community what they need. This is important, as Briar-Lawson, Lawson, Collier and Joseph (1997) point out, because collaborations must be empowering for all of those participating.

Once teachers have expressed their views on the partnership, they may be more open to hearing alternative strategies that may be offered by families and community organizations. It is important to remember that schools, families, and communities all enter a partnership with their own expertise and having different ways of viewing a partnership (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997; National Academy of Health and Human Service Organizations, 2001). Getting these three systems to work together takes patience, understanding, and mutual goals (Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Surko, Lawson & Muse-Lindemann, 1999).
Youth Development Organizations Can Serve as a Bridge between Parents and Schools.

An additional strategy might also involve assisting teachers to build relationships with parents, as teachers mentioned that one of the greatest supports needed to enhance the academic achievement of students is parent support. Traditionally, however, parent support techniques described by schools have been one-generation. This means that the parents are expected to come to the school on the school’s terms, at a time deemed appropriate by the school (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). The teachers that took part in the interviews described that they wanted parent support to back them up with what they were teaching in the classroom. Teachers wanted parents to know that they could not “do it alone” without parent support. They mentioned that phone calls and parent teacher conferences do not work to engage their students’ parents. This is not surprising, given that these are one-generation strategies.

Parents of urban youth feel that their child’s school does not understand their needs as a parent. Parents feel that they are not welcome at school (Sanders & Epstein, 1998), parents feel that schools make assumptions about their abilities as parents (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002), and that they have been blamed by teachers and schools (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). Traditionally, schools have not thought of strategies that are mutually beneficial for themselves and the parents of their students. This mode of thinking needs to change in order for parent-teacher partnerships to be effective.

Youth development organizations are in an advantageous place for serving parents. Youth development organizations are seen as places that support children and
their parents, rather than as a place that will judge them. Importantly, youth development organizations can provide schools with important information about the students and their families. For instance, youth development organizations have an understanding about the community and neighborhood dynamics (Heath & McLaughlin, 1994b), and they have an understanding of what parents say they need most (Whalen & Wynn, 1995). As Heath and McLaughlin (1994b) point out, youth development organizations can be a bridge between the schools and the students and families served.

Thus, the research with these teachers brought forth four important implications for training teachers to be prepared to participate in a school-family-community partnership. First, teachers must have knowledge of and value NCLB. Next, teachers need to think in a more systems-based mode. In order for partnerships to work, teachers must buy in to the belief that students are a product of their environment, and that others in the community can be effective at helping with academic achievement. Third, youth development organizations need to take a one-down approach in order to make teachers feel like valuable resources in the partnership. Finally, youth development organizations can serve as a bridge between parents and schools.

*Implications for Social Work*

One key person that may help with building partnerships between schools and youth development organizations is the school social worker. This individual is vital the functioning of the school, as he or she is able to build links between the school day and the out-of-school time. Through the use of referral networks, assisting in bringing curriculum to the after-school program, and helping the parents to access resources, both in school and during the out-of-school time. The school social worker can also help to
bridge the school day and the after-school hours, just as partners in a school-family-community partnership can do.

The information generated through this study provides important implications for the social work field. Primarily, school social workers can be integral at assisting teachers in meeting policy changes at the school level, as well as strengthening the school-family-community partnerships. School social workers also can assist schools in meeting the non-academic barriers affecting students. In particular, school social workers are trained to think systemically, and therefore, have an understanding of how home-life and neighborhoods can impact a student’s academic performance. Additionally, school social workers are trained to work with all generations of the family. Therefore, working with parents is commonplace for school social workers.

School social workers can be instrumental in helping to initiate the school-family-community partnership. Foremost, school social workers can reach parents more effectively than teachers because they have mobility and can leave the school building during the day to do outreach with parents. Teachers primarily rely on phone calls home and teacher-parent conferences for communication. Secondly, school social workers have clinical training to perform mental health interventions. Finally, school social workers often know a great deal about the community and can be resourceful for linking parents with community supports.

In order to be responsive to the education policy changes occurring through NCLB, schools of social work should encourage districts and schools to utilize school social workers as part of their faculty. With the complementary skills that social workers bring to the education field, the likelihood of students’ learning improving is great.
Future Directions

The research on school-family-community partnerships is ever-evolving. A next step in this research would be to gather data on youth development organizations’ perceptions on partnerships with schools. While these teachers expressed their views on partnership strategies, equally beneficial information could be discovered by investigating youth development workers’ viewpoints on partnerships. Finding a common ground between the two systems could be a starting point for partnerships.

Additionally, focusing continual efforts on engaging parents in their child’s education needs to take place. Parents are an important piece of the partnership design, and if the parents are not willing or able to partner with the school and community, a key stakeholder would be missing from the strategy. Thus, researching parents’ needs and desires in regards to school-family-community partnerships is needed in order for the partnership to be successful in the parents’ eyes.

Furthermore, partnerships could be strengthened by starting at the university level. If colleges and universities could focus their teacher training on including systems-based theory, teachers would have a better understanding of the needs and non-academic barriers affecting students’ learning. In addition, as part of NCLB, teachers must take part in continuing education opportunities. These trainings could include systems-based training for trainings.

Thus, all systems in the partnership could be further studied to determine effective partnership strategies. Teachers, parents and youth workers should be investigated for additional strategies for making these partnerships work.
Conclusion

Much information was generated regarding teachers' perspectives on NCLB, school-family-community partnerships, impacts of Boys & Girls Clubs and systems thinking. The teachers' input was very beneficial in creating the model for how school-family-community partnerships can help schools address NCLB. The benefit from this research is that this model can be replicated in other communities to assist schools with meeting the policy changes. The research verified that partnerships between schools and youth development organizations can be strengthened in the future.
REFERENCES


Columbus Public Schools, ESEA Options Office. (2002). *Stepping up to make it happen: Important information about school choice* [Brochure]. Columbus, OH: Author.


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March 4, 2003

Dear Teachers:

This letter is to inform you of a research opportunity that is taking place in your school building during the month of March. As a student in the Master of Social Work program, I am conducting research under the guidance of my faculty advisor, Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher, to determine how legislative changes from the No Child Left Behind Act affect teachers and schools. I am investigating teachers' beliefs about how to best impact the academic achievement of their students. In particular, I am investigating how teachers feel the Boys & Girls Club can be beneficial during the out-of-school hours.

I would like your help in this evaluation process, which involves an interview with me that will last approximately forty-five minutes. As an incentive for participation, a $10.00 Holcombs' gift certificate will be given to all teachers that complete the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any question or decline to participate in this study at any time. All of the information you provide during the interview is completely confidential. That means no participants will be identified in any of the reports or findings. You will be noted only as a number, and never by a name.

The interview will be audio taped, in order for the researcher to ensure accuracy of the statements that were made. Only the researcher will access the audiotapes, and no other individuals will hear the tapes. All audiotapes will be taped over before being disposed of, and the tapes will be disposed of no later than September 1, 2003.

I envision no foreseeable risk associated with your participation. One benefit from your participation is that the Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus will be able to use information that you provide to them to improve the after-school program. Therefore, Boys & Girls Clubs may be a better support to you and the students you serve in the classroom.

There are no alternative procedures if you decline to participate.

I will be contacting each of you individually during the next week to determine your willingness to participate. Thank you for your consideration of this project. Should you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me at 221-8830, or Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher at 292-8596.

Sincerely,

Molly Frank
The Ohio State University
Master of Social Work Intern
APPENDIX B

SCRIPT TO USE WITH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus is an after school and summer program for youth between the ages of 6 and 18. You have been recruited as an interview candidate because you currently teach children who are members of a Boys & Girls Club. The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Boys & Girls Club program, and to determine what areas we are doing well in, and what areas need improvement. We would greatly appreciate any feedback you can provide in this regard. We anticipate that the interview will take approximately one hour.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decline to answer any question or decline to participate in the study at any time. Also, your decision to participate, or not participate, in the study will not affect your relationship with Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus.

All of the information that you provide in the interview is completely confidential. That means no participants will be identified in any of our reports or findings. You will be noted only as a number, and never by name.

We would like to audiotape the interview, in order to ensure accuracy of the statements made. The tapes will be accessed only by the researchers, and no outside individuals will hear the tapes. All audiotapes will be taped over before being disposed of, and will be disposed of no later than September 1, 2003.

We envision no foreseeable risk associated with your participation. However, one benefit from your participation is that Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus will be able to use the information you provide to improve the after school program. This will then help Boys & Girls Clubs to be a better support to you and the students you serve.

There are no alternative procedures if you decline to participate.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the research study, please feel free to contact Molly Frank at 221-8830, or Dawn Anderson-Butcher at 292-8596. Please read and sign the Teacher Consent for Participation form, indicating your consent to participate in the study.
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN
SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in the research entitled: *The Impact of Youth Development Organizations: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Teachers’ Perceptions and Attitudes of the No Child Left Behind Act and Boys & Girls Clubs.*

Molly Frank or her authorized representative has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described, as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I understand that my responses will be audiotaped in order for the researchers to ensure the accuracy of the statements that I make. I am aware that no individuals besides the researchers will listen to these tapes, and that the tapes will be recorded over before they are disposed.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: ________________________  Signed: __________________________

(Participant)

Signed: ________________________

(Principal Investigator or her authorized representative.)

Witness: ___________________________
APPENDIX D

Teacher Interview

Interview #: _______________________

1. What school do you teach at?

2. What grade do you teach?

3. How many years have you been a teacher?

4. How many years have you taught in Columbus Public Schools?

5. How many years have you taught at your current school?

6. How old are you?

7. Are you male or female?
Question #1: What do you know about the No Child Left Behind Act? (I will give all respondents Appendix A, in order to ensure they understand the law changes that I am interested in.)

Question #2: Given your knowledge of the NCLB law changes, how do you think your school has responded?

Question #3: Given the NCLB law changes, how do you think you have responded as a teacher?

Question #4: What types of supports, if any, would be helpful to ensure that your students succeed academically?

Question #5: One section of NCLB talks of supplemental services for students. Are you aware of any agencies that may be providing these services at this time? (If yes, proceed to question #5a. If no, proceed to question #6)

Question #5a: Who are the agencies that are working with your students?

Question #6: One group of organizations that can provide supplemental services for youth are youth development organizations. Are you aware of any youth development organizations that are serving your students at this time?

Question #7: To the best of your knowledge, what types of objectives are common among youth development organizations?

All participants will be given Appendix B to read before proceeding.

Question #8: The youth development organization that I’m interested in talking to you about is the Boys & Girls Club. Do you have any students that attend the Boys & Girls Club after school?

Question #9: To the best of your knowledge, what services are provided by the Boys & Girls Club?
Question #10: Do you think the Boys & Girls Club has any impact on your students that participate in the program?

Question #10a: If yes: In what ways does the Boys & Girls Club impact your students.

Question #10b: If no, proceed to question #10.

Question #11: One of the objectives of the Boys & Girls Club is to impact the academic achievement of participating youth. What are your thoughts on the Boys & Girls Club assisting with the academic needs of your students?

Question #12: Given that a Boys & Girls Club is located in your building (or next door to your building), what are your thoughts on the Boys & Girls Club assisting you as a teacher with meeting the NCLB law changes?

Updated on March 24, 2003. Changed # 5 and #13 (removed).
APPENDIX E

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT (NCLB)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized in late 2001, and the Act is now referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB is the law that provides guidelines for Title I funds, which are used for providing services to youth that receive free or reduced-price lunches and are falling behind academically.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), the following changes have occurred since the inception of NCLB.

- **Annual Assessments:** Students in grades 3 through 8 will be required to take annual assessments in core subject matter (reading, math & science).
- **Teacher Standards:** States must develop measurable objectives to determine if teachers are highly qualified to teach core subject matter (English, reading, math, science, foreign languages, civics, economics, arts, history and geography). The minimum standard for a teacher in a Title I school is state certification, a Bachelor’s degree and demonstrated competency in core subject matter being taught.
- **Adequate Yearly Progress:** States are required to devise measures that will be used to determine if schools and districts are making adequate yearly progress in meeting their students’ needs.
- **School Accountability:** Schools and districts must meet adequate yearly performance standards. If they fail to meet the standards for two straight years, they are placed on “improvement needed” status. In Ohio, each school and district on “improvement needed” status must increase their annual assessment scores by at least 2.5%.
- **School Choice:** Low-income students (students receiving free- or reduced-price lunch) who are failing to pass the annual assessments and are attending an “improvement needed” school must be given the option to attend a higher performing school in the district. Districts will be responsible for providing transportation for that student to get to his/her school of choice.
- **Supplemental Services:** Low-income students (students receiving free- or reduced-price lunch) who are failing to pass the annual assessments and are attending an “improvement needed” school must be given the option of choosing supplemental services rather than choosing another school within the district. Districts will be required to provide stipends for services and transportation costs.
APPENDIX F

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Personal and Social Assets: Youth development organizations aim to affect personal and social assets that increase the likelihood of healthy development and well-being for youth. These assets that lead to positive youth development are broken down into four broad development domains.

- Physical Development
- Intellectual Development
- Psychological and Emotional Development
- Social Development

Traits of Positive Youth Development Organizations:
- Physical and psychological safety and security
- Structure that is developmentally appropriate, with clear expectations for behavior as well as increasing opportunities to make decisions to participate in governance and rule-making, and to take on leadership roles as one matures and gains more experience.
- Emotional and moral support
- Opportunities for adolescents to experience supportive adult relationships.
- Opportunities to learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviors.
- Opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and being valued.
- Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms.
- Opportunities for skill building and mastery.
- Opportunities to develop confidence in one’s abilities to master one’s environment (a sense of personal efficacy).
- Opportunities to make a contribution to one’s community and to develop a sense of mattering.
- Strong links between families, schools and broader community resources.

APPENDIX G

CODED DATA

TEACHERS AND NCLB

Knowledge of NCLB

Teacher Standards

TEACHER #:

1: This school is not that much better than other schools. Across Columbus I’ve taught 6 years in 4 buildings. I have not seen a building of horrible teachers. It’s been what the kids come to school with- expectations on parents’ part, so it’s not going to change that kind of thing.

4: I was reading a little about the teacher’s standards in the NEA magazine and I was looking at a little graph that talked about the highly qualified thing. I had not really heard about that aspect of NCLB and I was trying to see what I was going to need to do to be highly qualified. I’m still not quite sure!

5: Teacher standards- that’s all common place.

7: Um, NCLB has been put through by George Bush and I believe this is the act that is saying, is making teachers more accountable for their jobs, which I don’t agree with.

7: Teachers are highly qualified to teach core subject matter. I do believe that undergrad programs need to be revamped with more time spent, not in a college classroom, but spent being a teacher or intern in an urban district.

8: Teacher’s standards- I agree they should be developed.

9: It’s a program to hold schools and teachers more accountable for student learning.

10: The community wants to point fingers at the teachers, that we’re not teaching, that they don’t want to look at that child and see what needs or disabilities the child might be facing.

11: Well, we know that it’s not really poor teachers, it’s the poor package overall. It’s the kids, the parents, the administration, the district, so idle threats on schools, what can we do?

11: This business of teachers standards, I can understand people needing to be qualified when you go into a classroom, but I see problems with people who are in fast-track certification programs who have an undergraduate degree in something else and then take 1 year rather than having a bachelor’s degree in education. They have 1 year in all of the quick methods courses, everything they’re supposedly going to need. And so, they pass the NTE and they have a master’s degree, but are they highly qualified.

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I would argue with that and say that if they don’t have enough background in education, not the developmental stuff and psychology and all of that prior stuff that, no, they wouldn’t be quite ready for it.

I definitely think it makes sense to re-examine the teaching standards and the degree programs that teachers are going through definitely makes sense.

**School Choice**

1: School choice- I don’t know. I want to see what it looks like. It looks like it’s going to devoid schools of students, but it’s not going to change things.

1: They already address school choice in CPS through alternative schools. Low-income parents are eager to send their kids to a slightly better school and will enroll them in the alternative school. It will be interesting to see what the population will do, whether they will enroll them in another school.

1: The problems will just be moved to another school. An example to use to argue against school choice is that we had busing for a while and we lose parents’ involvement in school if kids are bused across town.

2: I know children are able to go to the school they want to, as opposed to being sent to a school that the district wants them to go to.

3: Pretty much that if a child, if the school isn’t performing, that is on the proficiency tests, then parents can choose to send their child to another school in the district.

4: I know the school choice already went out to parents this year, at the beginning of the year. I know there was a little bit of controversy. Parents were receiving, those lower performing schools, the opportunity to come to Franklinton, or any school that is not in the improvement needed status, which we’re not. But, I don’t think we got any students.

5: As far as the school is concerned, it gives a parent the option to enter their child in any school- so school choice.

5: Parents have a right to any school I believe it is. Oh yeah, there’s a school improvement list that parents that want to be involved-depending on what school they want to put their child in.

7: And the school choice thing, I think instead of giving the children the option of going to a higher performing school, I think the state should come in and teach the classroom and show the teachers, let the teachers that are in the school improvement school observe how they teach and let’s measure their test scores. So that way, we can learn from our mistakes and the state can teach us what we need to learn.

8: School choice is ok, but not because it’s a bad school. I think they need to go in there and see why it’s a bad school. For example, if there are good schools out there, see if you can adapt some of those good skills and strategies and not try to tear down school after school to make a change or adjustment.

10: I knew about what occurs if they don’t make the 2.5% increase, and then those schools will be identified and parents will be given a choice about what school they want to send their child to.
11: I know that it is for low-performing schools, and it offers the option to parents to remove their children from low-performing schools and put them in another school of their choice within the district. As far as I know, another low-performing school or a higher-performing school, but it's their choice to take them out of the school.

11: I didn't realize that it was only low-income students that could move to another school. That's interesting. I'm not sure I like that part of it. It seems a little unfair.

Testing

1: Measurable objectives- that comes down to testing, and I disagree with that. I'm a good tester, but that doesn't tell me what type of teacher I am. That's an easy way to do it.

4: The adequate yearly progress, Columbus Public is already doing that. We're lucky at Franklinton because we haven't had 2 consecutive years where our scores have gone down.

4: I know that they are changing testing. Ohio is changing their testing to achievement testing and all students will be tested in all grade levels, not just certain grade levels.

4: I know that all students will be tested including special ed and ESL students, which we have a large portion of here. Right now they have to be in the country and in school for 3 years before they're tested, and I'm not sure if they'll still have the 3 year exemption.

4: There will be more accountability at grade levels with testing.

4: We've gone down, gone up, gone down, gone up. Hopefully this year we'll go up because if not, we'll be in what they call school improvement and the AAA schools, where they do things differently.

4: It's weird, you're not judging one group and seeing their progress throughout time, you're judging one group of 4th graders and then the next year you're judging another group. I think that's why our test scores have had valleys because certain groups overall are doing better than some other groups.

7: Well, 3 through 8 would be required for annual assessment, reading, math and science. We assess enough, we need time to teach.

8: Annual assessment for every grade. I agree with that, reading, math and science. I think those are very important courses, so I think they should be tested to see where their weaknesses are and try to improve it.

9: It involves implementing more testing, or at more grade levels.

10: The diagnostic and achievement test will be given to see where students are and to see what skills they have and mastered and that will tell teachers what skills need to be retaught.

11: Adequate yearly progress- I think these standardized tests, we all know that isolated testing is not a good indicator of what's happening in a school.

11: If they think that, well, we'll just keep going until they score better on the test, that's not going to happen. Until their child is worked with appropriately and consistently, there's not going to be changes.
12: I think some of it sounds good. I don’t necessarily think if our goal is no child left behind that the answer is to necessarily add more tests.
12: I don’t necessarily think that adding testing, and nothing’s wrong with the school accountability and things like that, but some of the problems that I see that are interfering with the students making progress that we would like to see are not addressed.
11: It’s all based on test scores. It doesn’t consider other factors
12: I know other teachers have dubbed it no child left untested.

School Accountability
1: School accountability- Franklinton is not a good basis for school accountability because our kids are here from September to May. You take a school like Dana, where turnover is 60 to 70% and you don’t have... kids go through 3 schools a year. High turnover rate, you can’t hold schools accountable for that.
4: It’s weird, you’re not judging one group and seeing their progress throughout time, you’re judging one group of 4th graders and then the next year you’re judging another group. I think that’s why our test scores have had valleys because certain groups overall are doing better than some other groups. That goes with the school accountability, which talks about each school must make adequate progress.
7: School accountability, um, schools can be held accountable all you want them to be, but without the parenting part of the equation, the home-life part of the equation, the student part of the equation, it doesn’t matter how accountable the school is.
8: With the school accountability, that’s a catch 22 because if there’s a good school a lot of times the parents will pull their child out of the bad school and put them in what they call a good school, and then that’s going to bring that school down because the child probably hasn’t been taught what they need to know. So, I think that it has its drawbacks.
11: Well, we know that it’s not really poor teachers, it’s the poor package overall. It’s the kids, the parents, the administration, the district, so idle threats on schools, what can we do?
12: School reform is so much bigger I think than looking at the school.

Supplemental Services
1: Supplemental services is great. I’d like to see supplemental services that work, that are proven and research-based. We need to have more Reading Recovery teachers- that would be wonderful.
7: Basically, every school that I have been at has an afterschool program that kids can sign up for and the first hour of that program has been geared toward homework help, where they are having trouble, so every school I’ve been in has done supplemental services.
10: I had a student, I taught special ed prior to regular ed, and I had a student who was not reading and he was a 5th grader and Sylvan wouldn’t even take him because he had something in his processing, you know a disability, and they would not
even take him because they have a thing that says we will get your kid reading, and they new it would take more than extra tutoring. Programs like that, I don’t always think that they are good programs, personally as an educator.

11: I didn’t know about this supplemental services, that they would be given the option of more services, rather than choosing another school. I don’t really see how that can really be implemented, that districts will be required to provide stipends for services and transportation, but at the same time, I know our school budget just got cut millions of dollars, so I can’t see how we can provide all of these services for people.

School/Classroom Response to NCLB
Tutoring/Supplemental Services
2: I think we are focused more on trying to meet not only the academic needs, but also personal needs of lower-income students. Be it giving them clothes. Basically moral support, which I also think will eventually cause the child and their family to see that the school cares. Just support them in any way that we can.

3: This school in particular is a really small school, close-knit and has made lots of provisions through tutoring to make sure the scores rise and stay up. Because of the size of the building and the staff, lots of supplemental programs are done to help individual needs that aren’t set forth by the district, the state, by the federal government, but just things in particular that get things to be where they need to be.

4: We’ve tried this year to step up our preparations for our 4th graders taking the proficiency tests. We do a Saturday morning tutoring program and we start that in January. We have a grant and use the funds to provide transportation for students and free breakfast. They can come and be fed and have a snack, an incentive for coming.

4: Also, this year, we tried something different. At 10:30 every morning, everything stopped for the 4th graders and they were split into about 8 groups based on their reading progress and we honed in on their skills based on the October proficiency test, which they take as practice. They had intensive reading every day at that time.

5: We have after school tutoring plus, uh, plus Saturday morning tutoring for 4th graders. The tutoring for after school goes through at least next month, so we’ve been doing that for at least 4 months. We’re trying to find ways to help those students that are behind to meet those needs.

8: I think this is an awesome school. I think there is a lot of support here. In the areas of math, reading and even supporting with the discipline. The counselors and the assistants, I think they really have a lot in place to help. Because I think in order to get through to a child you need to have an orderly room.

9: We do have some services that would be considered supplemental services. We have tutoring after school and also many, many, many extracurricular activities.

Teaching to Comprehension
4: I’ve tried to not only get kids ready for the test, but also teach them skills that I know they need to learn as readers. I know we can get so immersed in testing.
The same way. I'm just trying to come up with ways where kids can learn more or understand it. The bottom line is coming up with ways where kids can understand things. It's not always necessarily a grade, just as long as they get it.

Since I have first grade, and actually want to do more hands on learning because I think the kids learn better that way and I in 1st grade focus on different subject areas, I focus on a lot more units that I don't have to teach. So, for example, I don't have to teach electricity, or I don't have to teach horses, but I make sure that I touch on that because I know that is something that will lead to some other area.

I think I continue to grow and change and adapt where I need to adapt and work with creative ways to meet their needs.

I teach to the kids needs. I still focus on the state standards, which I have done for several years now. I always have followed the curriculums. I think now, however, I think twice when I do something in my classroom that may not be paper and pencil.

Just my own personal philosophy as a teacher, I operate my classroom so that it's always important to know where the child is academically in all areas and if I'm reaching that child. So, if I have a child that's reading on a 2nd grade level, giving them a 5th grade text would be way too frustrating for them, so I have to make sure that I'm modifying the curriculum.

Even though we have the 5th grade curriculum guidelines and all that stuff, I've found that if I stick to that too much, I have students that just quit and give up because it's too much for them. So that, I just try to differentiate instruction.

No Changes

We haven't and we probably won't until they set down guidelines.

I feel I'm a professional and know what I'm doing. I'm doing what's best for my kids. I'm pushing them as far as I feel they are developmentally ready to go, and it's helping those students achieve. It hasn't really impacted me yet.

I have not done anything different than what I normally do in my classroom.

I don't think that any changes have been based upon this.

I don't think any differently. Our hope is that we're pushing all of our students to achieve, so I don't think I do it any differently than I did prior to this. It's my responsibility to teach my kids.

I feel my teaching hasn't really changed. The act doesn't blow me away, because we've been told lie after lie and it's unfortunate that these parents put up with it.

I think that I have not done much to change things. I feel like I have a good, strong program.

On a building level though, I don't know if I see much of a change yet. Like I said, I know what is in store for next year and things.

Once again, I don't think I necessarily responded to the law changes.

Continuing Education

Just with continuing education. I have a Master's degree and I continue to take coursework offered by the district through OSU, in addition to workshops and conferences by the state.
7: I’m continuing my education, I’m not being reimbursed for my education.
11: I’m constantly building my own knowledge because I teach at the graduate level anyway. So I’m constantly reevaluating what I’m doing and how it works.

Strategies to Meet Students’ Academic Needs

Parent Support

1: You also have to hold parents accountable—attendance, behavior issues. Discipline problems of kids turning out in class constantly. He’s going to pull down the class. Accountability is hard to address.

3: Parent support. That’s a big one.

7: School accountability—um, schools can be held accountable all you want them to be, but without the parenting part of the equation, the homelife part of the equation, the student part of the equation, it doesn’t matter how accountable the school is.

8: I think first is the home. If you receive the proper support at home, with the teacher and parent working together, that child can be successful in their education.

10: The first thing is parental support it’s really important. I think we need to do a better job of getting parents to attend conferences of getting them to be part of their child’s education. You know, conferences don’t work, phone calls.

10: Parents need to know that as a school we cannot do this on our own. We need their help and support. If we send home an assignment to be completed as homework, even if the parent does not know the knowledge of the subject, at least look over it to make sure that it looks done, if that child is doing homework. I think the number 1 support needs to come from the parents. And I put that back on the parents because I think the number 1 problem we have today is the lack of parenting.

10: So, the first place I would look is definitely at the parents. I would want more support from the parents. I think we need to be open and stop trying to cover it up and blaming it on the schools.

11: Parent cooperation, greater parent support.

12: I think something else that would be a big help to me is that I personally would like to see, I guess like, more parental support in terms of... like I have some students, when they leave here they’re pretty much free to do whatever they want to do, which especially at this school doesn’t have to be the case cause we have CHAMPS, so even if parents aren’t home, they can sign their children up for CHAMPS and at least have them in some kind of supervised activity.

12: So, I would like to see more parental support in terms of the when I give a child... like when I was in 5th grade, when I came home, I had to show some proof that I did my homework. And I have students who regularly are not turning in assignments, and I contact parents, but I don’t see the parents following up, but some of the parents I talk to think that a 5th grade child should be able to handle it on their own.
Materials
1: Materials. It would be nice to have materials. There are just little things that would help—manipulatives, magnetic letters and boards.
2: Basically, just the financial ends, whether its materials.
6: Maybe materials. I know we’ve had a problem this year with spending so much time just coming up with different activities and materials, and I don’t know if I should say this, but I think our curriculum guides are horrible and they don’t just give us enough activities. So, I spend a lot of time coming up with 1st grade activities to do in the classroom. And more money to buy materials.
9: Materials, and I don’t see where that’s at on here (on the handout).

In-School Supports
4: We have a tutoring program for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th graders, but I think it’s really hard for the teacher to teach all day and then turn around and start tutoring again.
5: In a school such as this, if we have students that are classified in a certain group and aren’t able to keep it in the class (because of behavior issues), then we should have maybe a resource room or some type of classroom where the student can be mainstreamed back into the classroom.
9: I think that it’s great that we’re talking about supplemental services, but we also need counseling services. Right now, we only have a counselor here once a week, and that’s just not enough because our kids need help, and need to talk to someone because their lives are so much different than what I can imagine.
12: Like, they are redoing the curriculum guides in Columbus because, at this point, the curriculum guides at this point I think are impossible because they’re so fast-paced. 3 days to do division, 2 days to teach fractions, bam, bam, bam, I have to get through all of this stuff. So, definitely, you know, you’re missing a lot of people. I always have to try to find time to go back.

Smaller Class Size
1: Small class size.
2: I know Columbus wants you to average between 25 and 30:1 and you’re more at risk kids… if you can knock the classrooms down to 15 kids, which will take a lot of money and space. Essentially, it will help all kids, not just at-risk kids or kids affected by this act. Lower ratio will automatically affect scores. You won’t be dealing with 2 times more kids than you can handle.
6: Now, today? Definitely smaller class sizes. I’ve been fortunate this year because I’ve had 15 students, but for the most part I had 13, two moved, but then I got two new ones, so I’m back to 15, but for the most part I had 13 and it was amazing what I can do with 13 students when with my first year I had 28 and last year I had 25. It’s different, I can work in small groups and we can do more experiments. It makes a huge difference to be able to give student individualized attention.
Teacher Education
1: Teacher education. A lead teacher to come in, observe, make suggestions, make comments. I was at a school where we had a program like that. There was someone who could come in, model us and tell us there were things we were doing well. We do this as a kindergarten staff, but I have seniority, so I’m doing much of the leadership and I’m not getting much from it. I would like to get the input.
2: Something that we could do, since every school will be affected, is have some kind of staff representative for each school. To try to attend, or maybe come up with some kind of NCLB committee. They can interact with other teachers in the district, talk to the actual government officials who are implementing this.
9: More specific training targeting the population we work with. Specifically, low-income types of kids.

TEACHERS AND BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

Knowledge of B&GC: Core Program Areas
Education & Career Development
Homework Help/Tutoring
1: My kids take advantage of the homework help. I know there’s a library.
2: I know about Power Hour, which helps them with tutoring.
3: I know that a lot of mine do the homework room after school, immediately. Some of them do get help with homework.
4: I know they have a library where they have Power Hour, homework assistance, a library of books.
4: I know that they have.... computers and that sort of thing.
5: Helping to solve their problems in schoolwork.
6: I know they provide students with academic support, they have different academic areas that the kids can explore.
6: I know that they have computers
7: They did do homework help, but I’m not sure if they still do that.
8: It’s basically like tutoring and mentoring. Tutoring them in math and reading especially.
9: Some homework type. They get assistance with homework.
10: They do homework, but I see little academic and more emotional well-being for the student.
11: I know that last year they had homework services for them. They had tutors coming in, volunteer tutors coming in and working with the kids.
12: Help with homework

Sports, Fitness & Recreation
1: I know there’s a... gym, a place for them to hang out and play.
3: I know sports programs too- I’m usually there on Saturdays watching basketball.
4: I know that a lot of the kids are on teams, the Westside Dolphins, the football, basketball, baseball, cheerleading and all of that stuff. I know that a lot of them
are involved and I've seen some football games, which is good because I've seen the football players and cheerleaders at the same time, and then basketball- I've been over to some of the games.

5: Giving them opportunities to play games. Structured play that they may not get outside of school or the Club.
6: I believe that they have...a gym.
7: They interact, they let the kids play games.
12: And just a variety of activities, including sports activities.

Character & Leadership Development
2: I know that they also have a member of the month type of thing, which is good for kids.
4: And I know that everything is focused on teamwork and sportsmanship.
5: Skills and at least working one-on-one, or in groups.
7: They interact...which is good for team building
9: Social development.
10: The self-esteem is promoted. Getting along with peers.

The Arts
6: I know that they have....an art room
8: I saw some art work down there.
9: I know there's help with developing artistic developments.
11: I know that last year..., they had a lot of community artists coming in and working with the kids.
12: And just a variety of activities....arts, whether it's visual, drama, so exposure to all of those things.

Health & Life Skills
10: Taking responsibility, making good choices, good role modeling.

Knowledge of B&GC: Other Supports

After-School Meal
2: I know they get fed over there- which is a big treat for some of these kids.
6: I know that they provide students with meals.
7: They feed them, which is the main reason most of our kids go there because they don't get that at home, at night, if anyone is even home.
9: Dinner.

Supportive Adults
2: I know some of the workers, I don't know if it's formal or informal, but they have like a big brother program. I know some high school kids and some adults are like big brothers, I don't know if they're technically labeled like that. They really look out for the kids. Sometimes, they'll come over here to talk to teachers to make sure students are doing OK in school.
4: I know whenever we’ve had problems with children misbehaving in school, we’ve gone over and talked to Rich or someone. He’s been extremely good with talking to them about Club members don not act like this, Club members are to go to school and be role models.
8: Basically, it’s like a mentoring program
12: I think some of them have mentors through Boys & Girls Clubs, so there’s mentoring relationships.

Field Trips
12: Get to go on field trips, so they can get to be exposed to new things, in addition to what we do here at school.

Safe Place:
4: It’s a safe place for them to go and be.

Teachers’ Perceptions on the Impact of the Club
Supportive Adults
2: It’s kind of nice to have Rich and people like that come over to the school all the time, because maybe a kid is acting out or not behaving responsibly, then we can give Rich a heads up. I know Rich or Nate or whoever will talk to the kids and tell them they need to straighten up. I know if we just say we’ll let Rich know, either bluffing or whatever, then they’re fine for a long time.
3: I have worked with Rich to enforce discipline, where if they don’t do their work, I tell him and they’re required to do their work after school. And if they’re sent to PEAK or any kind of suspension, it’s supposed to happen over there as well. One student in particular is going through a real rough year and we’re trying to work together to get him back on the right track.
4: I know that a lot of my children would not complete their homework at all if they did not have someone over at the Club supporting them.
5: I know a lot of them come in and say well so and so said that I should try to work a little harder at listening or following directions. Students will come in and say so and so taught me another way to solve this math problem.
6: So many of our kids don’t have the family background that they should or need and they get that there.
9: It gives adult support, support with homework, provides extracurricular, like I go to watch the basketball games on Saturdays and it’s such a big deal to them.
10: They like the teachers there. I think they can relate to them and talk with them, so it’s not such a structured environment as it is in the classroom.
12: They get help with homework and they come in and tell me how someone showed them an alternative way to solve a problem or something like that, so academically, I definitely see a difference.

Social Skills
1: Mostly what I see is social. It’s a chance for them to interact.
4: It’s really good for their sportsmanship skills and forming friendships.
They get skills and at least working one-on-one, or in groups.
They interact, they let the kids play games, which is good for team building.
Yes. I think that the students that participate in the program are more social and more outgoing with their peers, in the classroom, even with adults. I think they’re given just a little more time to just talk and share and have fun.

Safe Haven
It’s a place for them to run around because a lot of parents put them in rather than have them hang out in the unsafe neighborhood.
It does keep them off the streets. They’re not going off after school and doing something awful.
I think it offers them a sense of going somewhere after school where they know it’s safe.
Like I said, I’m worried about some of my kids that are free to roam the streets after school and some of the things I hear them getting into, so it’s good that they have something to do that they want to do after school.

Sense of Belonging
They put a lot of value on going there, they enjoy it.
Absolutely, it gives them something to look forward to. It helps them feel important that they’re part of something.
And I think the kids that are in the B&GC, they just have a bond with each other because they have a place to go together after school and they like that. They always talk positively about it, that the kids that don’t go to it because of their parents’ decision are a little envious of that.
First of all, they’re excited about it, so it’s good that they have something to do after school that they’re excited about.

Perception of B&GC Impacting Academic Achievement
Collaborate with the School
The Club backs us up. When their grades start dropping, we have an inside line. We can drop in and say, he, so and so, plays basketball and he’s not doing well in school and they’ll back us up. Kind of like a coalition.
I would love to see even more of that. I know they get homework assistance, I’m thinking maybe they could develop a mentor program where staff could come over and check on certain students that would be considered at risk or maybe are having difficulties with academics. They could set up a school program where they could help them with what they’re having trouble with in school.
I think it’s a good idea. They hear other people, whatever the case may be, a lot of the kids come in and think if I’m teaching it that as a teacher that’s oh, well when they hear someone else say, “Oh yeah, this is what we had to do when we were little,” they were able to get some sort of, “Oh, ok, since you had to do it, I’m going to try a little harder.” They realize that we’re working together to get them educated.
I think it’s great because most of our students do not get academic support if they go home. You only have so much time in a school day to cover something. You can’t spend all day on one thing and you can’t spend all day with one child. So, I’m one of those people that doesn’t think that learning only takes place in the classroom. It takes place outside of the classroom, it takes place in the car with adults, everywhere. They’re always learning, so getting additional help outside of the classroom is a very good thing.

I think they do. At the beginning of the school year, she was asking us what we needed work on, and we were giving them math skills to work on down there, especially for the upper grades. Reading skills, comprehension skills and I do think that works and helps reinforce learning during the after-school hours.

I think it’s great because if the teacher can’t drive it home, maybe there’s something that person can show them that will help them understand it. That one-on-one attention helps out a lot. Not only that, a lot of time, students will go home and the parents aren’t there.

As I said, I definitely see the difference, because especially with the curriculum moving so fast, homework is crucial because we have 3 days, so you have what we do in class, what we do at home, what we do in class, what we do at home, so you have 3 days and that’s it. So you definitely need that reinforcement. And like I said, all of my kids that go to B&GC always have their homework done and they come back understanding it because they have someone that’s there making sure they’re not copying off of anybody, they can ask them questions about it. I have one student, she always comes in and lets me know about the interaction she had with someone who’s helped her with homework and the discussions they have, she loves math, so discussions about math problems.

Staff Are Not Trained Properly

I don’t feel that is their job. Our students need more than that. They need social skills, psychological development, developing personalities. I think that’s what their focus should be because they’re not professionals, they’re not educators. The can work on things- social skills. These kids desperately need social skills. It’s something we try to provide, but we also have this educating to do. That is what we’re trained to do. To ask another organization is not really fair because they’re not trained to do it.

To my knowledge, the person in charge of the homework room isn’t necessarily through school.

I don’t feel that they are familiar or maybe have the knowledge with what the state standards are and what we teach everyday. I guess that leads to, I have not met with any of them, we have not collaborated. Yes, they take my students after school and so forth, but I can’t even tell you who they are and what their evenings look like. And I’m not sure they know what my day looks like. And I don’t know if they’re familiar with the curriculum. The homework that I send home, I don’t hear my students say that they did this with a B&GC person or, you know. I think they do a lot of great hands-on arts and crafts, and I’ve seen pictures hanging up and artwork, but how that is tying in with our curriculum, I don’t know.
Help with Non-Academic Barriers Instead

1: That’s how they could help us academically, if they could teach the kids to get along, how to play together, how to get along, appropriate responses to frustration, staying on task, staying focused.

Partnership Possibilities

Partner for Non-Academic Barriers

1: It’s a matter of pulling in resources and saying, hey, this is, we need help addressing this. What kind of services can you help with. There are so many things that come down and are piled on top of each other, and that’s education.

2: I think anything we do like that, both cooperating, two forces cooperating, we can definitely help meet any of the needs- physical, educational, psychological, and so forth. I think between school and the Club, we can easily meet their needs and I think scores would raise, which would help us comply with law changes.

7: I think they fall into that supplemental service category. And I guess maybe they fall into school choice, because maybe there’s a school out there, I’m sure there are, that there are schools without an afterschool program. I would think they should, but maybe not every school does, but maybe the afterschool program would be something that would make parents want to bring their kids to this school.

8: I think it would be great, an excellent idea, because again, they can help them with other needs.

9: I think it can be very, very useful. I mean, extra people to work. And with this population we’re working with, we need the kids to feel important, we need them to gain self-confidence and things like that, and spending time with adults has an impact and I think it can be utilized much more.

10: I think they help with emotional needs of children, but academic needs, I don’t see that as the focus. But then again, for a child to be open to learning, their emotional needs need to be intact, or appropriate.

Partner for Academic Achievement

4: I would love any help with that! We walk over there all the time, and I feel comfortable going over and talking about anything that comes up. It can be a really great partnership. It’s already a great partnership, but it could be even more with increased emphasis on academics.

5: Anything that we can have to get these kids to know that they have to do their work or whatever, if they hear it from us or you, and sometimes they need to hear it from their parents. They need to hear it from somewhere other than school, they need to hear it outside school.

6: I think it would be a very positive thing. I think that’s something that we should set up, whether it be a meeting time, maybe once a month or whatever, because I know a lot of people don’t like to stay after school. But if we could just meet once a month to collaborate and we can talk about what’s going on in the classroom, and they can tell us what they expect from us. Because it’s such a great
opportunity for the students to go there. So, I think it would be a good thing for us to get together and collaborate and let each other know what was going on in both places and how we can help each other.

12: I have a small class size this year, but last year I had 28 kids and in a group like that, I had some kids that were just not functioning at their best level with a group that large. So, I think if there is a situation where I can work with small groups as often as I would like to, if they had a daily opportunity to meet in a smaller group and work with someone else than that would help foster academic achievement. So definitely helping to meet the different learning styles of students.

No Help Is Needed

3: I don’t feel we have a problem meeting those changes, so I don’t think anything extra is needed.

11: I guess I don’t really see them as helping me at all. And with the kindergartners, I think it’s just more play and social relationships with them than anything else, so I don’t see that it’s probably going to help support my program at all.