

## **ABSTRACT**

Title of Dissertation:           EXPLORING SCHOOL–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND  
  SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION TO CREATE SCHOOLS  
  THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Denise Melina Joseph, Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Education of the University of Maryland, College Park,  
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The purpose of this study was to explore how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented in a high-performing school to increase student learning. The following research questions guide my dissertation: How do teachers and school leaders perceive Achievers Academy partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school’s students? In what ways does Achievers Academy staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school?

This study employed a single case study methodology with a convergent mixed methods case study design to answer the research questions. Using the case study methodology provided a real-life context with a holistic approach and meaningful characteristics with the hope to inform other educational reforms to improve the student achievement of underserved students.

This mixed methods approach and theoretical framing captured the complexity of the case and connected it with data. I also conducted a document review and semistructured

interviews with key school leaders to thoroughly explore my research topic to provide a robust study. The interview protocol provides a detailed investigation of different facets of my research questions regarding standards, expectations, daily practices, community involvement, and collaborative practices and I was able to collect additional data and further explored the intricacies of my case school. I used the school improvement perception survey to capture the perspectives of school key stakeholders on school–community partnerships (Shannon and Bylsma, 2007), and the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) School Improvement Tool to examine the school’s supplemental education programs as it relates to school improvement in my case school.

Using these data, I examined school–community stakeholders’ perceptions and experiences around school–community partnerships and supplemental education. The school leadership team is part of the leadership structure of a school which often undertakes the crucial role of developing, overseeing, and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the school’s action plan and has the responsibility for leading the strategic planning process while providing clear and achievable goals and targets. Finally, I analyzed the data collected to examine how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the improvement of minoritized students (e.g., Black, Latinx, and other minoritized students) and their overall community well-being.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
Research Questions	12
Background	12
Theoretical Perspectives	13
Research Design	16
Significance of the Dissertation Topic	17
Next Chapters	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review	22
High-Performing Schools and Their Characteristics	22
Benefits of Attending High-Performing Schools	29
School–Community Partnerships	31
Supplemental Education Programs	45
Connecting School–Community Partnerships/Supplemental Education	48
Chapter 3: Methodology	52
Research Design	52
Overview of the Study	55
The School Case: Achievers Academy	56
Recruitment	63
Participants and Data Collection	64
Procedures	74
Analysis	75
Research Positionality	77
Ethical Procedures	80
Chapter 4: Results	80
Introduction	80
Results for Research Question 1	82
Staff Perspectives Staff perspectives on how school-community partnerships	82
Views on Supplemental Education Opportunities	89
Results for Research Question 2	88
School–Community Partnerships	96
Supplemental Education Opportunities	96
School Characteristics: Collaborations and Involvement	105
Relationship With the Local University	109
Chapter 5: Discussion	111
Summary of Findings	112
Research Question 1: Being Intentional and Systemic to Help Students	106
Research Question 2: Forming and sustaining	108
Summary of the survey	116
Summary of the interview results	117
Summary of the document review	119

Explaining the findings in context	120
Patterns, unexpected results, and contradictions	122
Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Results	126
Connection to Literature	127
RQ1: Being intentional and systematic to help schools	127
RQ2: Forming and sustaining partners and supplemental education programs	128
Implications of the Study	130
Limitations of the Study	134
Recommendations for Future Research	135
Conclusion	136
Appendix A: School Improvement Survey Tool: School Staff	139
Appendix B: School Improvement Survey Tool: Community Partners	148
Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Protocols	148
Appendix D: Consent Form	153
Appendix E: IRB Exempt Letter	154
Appendix F: Charts	158
References	177

## List of Tables

Table 1. Survey Content	69
Table 2. Participant Demographics	72
Table 3. Qualitative Interview Data	74

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Improving the educational experiences of students is one of my main professional commitments. When I was in the second grade, I attended a Catholic school about 30 minutes from my house while other children in my neighborhood walked to the neighborhood school, which my mother told me “wasn’t too good.” She explained that my school was better, and I wondered why the children in my neighborhood went to a “bad” school. I wanted all my friends to go to a good school and grow up to be smart or, as my mother said, to be the “best of whatever I choose to be.” I believe this study’s exploration of school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs will help researchers to identify some key best practices for schools going forward.

In a day and time where students have multiple unmet basic needs (e.g., academic, social, and mental), experience frequent traumas (e.g., collective traumas in the community like school shootings, there is an increased number of shootings of Black and Latinx citizens, a global pandemic). Schools are struggling with accessing the required resources, school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are and have always been two cornerstone of public schools. I believe that these collaborative efforts are needed for our students and schools to be more successful (Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, 2020).

Sanders and Galindo (2014) defined school–community partnerships as connections between schools and individuals, businesses, organizations, and institutions within or beyond the geographic boundaries of neighborhoods. These partnerships, according to the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS; 2006), have an integrated focus on academics and community engagement, health and social services, and youth and community development. In general, when schools and communities work together, students have better academic and

social-emotional outcomes, schools and communities share the same goals, and families have a stronger sense of belonging (Blank et al., 2003).

Since the early 2000s, many schools have incorporated supplemental education programs in their school model to promote a variety of learning strategies, to reduce barriers to learning, and to provide additional support beyond initial classroom instruction (Kannapel et al., 2005). To holistically respond to students' needs, schools rely on a diverse set of strategies to boost learning and fill any gaps not provided by school staff. Sepsnik and Brown (2021) noted that schools and school districts are being asked to provide more services for students and this burden on teachers and schools creates economic inequality, a limited social safety net, systemic racism, prejudice, and various other societal issues.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which was a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was designed to eliminate poverty by providing supplemental educational services to children who lived in poverty (Young & Goings, 2018). The premise of NCLB was to allocate federal funds to provide supplemental educational services for low-achieving students, such as Reading First Grants that have been demonstrated to be effective through evidence-based research (Yell et al., 2006). The ultimate goal of these policies is to eradicate deficiencies in minoritized groups of students by providing more supplemental resources and specialized programs and to make sure that the funds allotted to them are used to implement strong educational programs to support student success. Educating all children means providing resources that can assist students to learn and grow so they can achieve academic excellence. Providing supplemental education programs includes incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) and other strategies to support a host of student needs through the school day (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Since the premise of supplemental education

services is to educate all children in a holistic way beyond traditional structure and provide SEL to students, students need more outlets than the classroom teacher and support staff.

Closing the endemic opportunity and achievement gaps require addressing historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral inequities that have been created in the American School system and are more evident since the pandemic. There are models of success in school that amplify school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs that could provide important information to improve schools for underserved communities. Research has consistently shown that many of the benefits obtained when incorporating school–community partnerships and supplemental activities are helping to increase student grades and better prepare students for college and careers (Bryk, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to explore how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented in a high-performing school. I sought out to provide a lens on this type of community involvement by specifically delving into how using school–community partnerships can provide a holistic approach to supporting students’ various needs. I used a survey, semi-structured interviews (which served as additional data points to answer my research questions), and a document review to gather the perceptions and experiences of the senior leadership team. These items were used to learn about their perceptions around partnerships, academic excellence, and supplemental education at their school. In this dissertation, I studied Achievers Academy (pseudonym), a high-performing Grade 6–12 school, and I focused on the high school (Grades 9–12) to understand how high-performing schools add value to K–12 education through their commitment to improving the educational outcomes and experiences of historically underserved students. I conducted my research in this high school because high school years are crucial for college and career readiness and global competitiveness

for the nation's workers. Parrett and Budge (2012) noted that K–12 schools are more readily designated as high-performing schools and there is an expansive body of research that served as my theoretical foundation for this study.

In this study, I chose my research questions because they directly address the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders, teachers and school leaders, who play a critical role in student success. I could have focused on capacity related innovations of community collaborations through the work of Anderson-Butcher et al. (2010), or I could have looked at how community partnerships helped build the whole child approach because of the community support and the work of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Another angle I could have researched was looking at student achievement beyond the classroom and expanded on the work of Best and Dunlap (2012). Another approach I could have taken was exploring partnerships and programs that support school improvement and expanding on the work of Bryk (2010), but I choose to focus on how partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school's students and explore questions that tap into practical, real-world outcomes. Understanding these perceptions provides valuable insights into these programs' effectiveness and impact on student development. Additionally, the second question, which explores how Achievers Academy staff build these partnerships and activities, allows for a deeper examination of the processes behind these educational initiatives. This focus ensures the study remains relevant and actionable for those involved in educational decision-making and could provide a roadmap and options for other schools to consider and follow when supporting and increasing student achievement.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do teachers and school leaders perceive that Achievers Academy partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school's students?
2. In what ways does Achievers Academy staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school?

In the next sections of Chapter 1, I describe the background of the study, the importance of high-performing schools, the theoretical framework, and research design. In the last section of this chapter, I present the significance of the study.

## **Background**

Every school should encompass a positive learning environment where every student learns and achieves academic success. Students should be able to attend a school where graduation is a core priority and where the school supports students to be successful in their future educational journey. Every school should be a high-performing school to meet the needs of students and the needs of the community.

Over the years, many federal policies have tried to address supporting students and creating high-performing schools. For example, through NCLB, Congress developed provisions to help support the educational outcomes of high-needs and underserved students. A second goal of NCLB was to close the achievement gap across student subgroups and schools. Disparities in achievement are a reality for math and reading between many subgroups (e.g., white students vs. minoritized students, students living with poverty versus middle- and higher-income students), particularly because some schools (and students) have better access to resources like tutoring, systems of support, as well as better teachers, summer support programs, and supplemental educational programs. The third and other primary purpose of NCLB was to support educational

initiatives and adopt a law that would hold schools accountable for student outcomes by utilizing penalties for poor performance. From NCLB's system of incentives and punishments, the notion of "high-performing schools" emerged from 2002–2015. Conversely, schools that not only met but also exceeded adequate yearly progress were considered high-performing schools. Essentially, schools received a report card from the state and/or websites like [greatschools.com](http://greatschools.com). The report cards rated schools on how they were performing and if the schools receive an A or A+, the schools are considered high-performing. We need schools that meet progress goals, show improvements, and perform well so our children can be well.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

My research builds on the framework of community partnerships by Epstein, Blank, and Mapp to bridge their research findings with Parrett and Budge's framework of action to explore how school–community partnerships impact high-performing schools. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), community partnerships are mainly focused on building learning communities and building networks. School–community partnerships provide multiple benefits and resources designed to have a systemic and sustained effect on student learning outcomes and overall well-being. Similarly, Sanders and Galindo (2014) discussed how school–community partnerships refer to connections between schools and individuals, businesses, organizations, and institutions within or outside neighborhoods' geographic boundaries. In regard to supplemental education, the framework explored by Miller (2009) examined how students used supplemental education services to obtain higher test scores. The author hypothesized that after the 6-month benchmark of tutoring provided by supplemental education programs, students in the experimental group would achieve higher scores on the language arts and mathematic posttests

in comparison to the students in the control group, those students who did not receive tutoring services. Miller noted “that further research on the effects of supplemental educational services on students’ achievement should be conducted in order to provide greater opportunity for the youth and future of America” (p. 39). I agree with this premise, and I wanted to explore this topic further.

The literature review and theoretical framework influenced the planning, the choice of research questions, and the implications related to the topic (Mertens, 1998). Mertens (1998) stated that the framework allows researchers to understand the experiences of the group being studied, help focus the inquiry and give it boundaries that serve to compare and contrast results. In other words, the literature review and theory drive the research question, and the research question drives the recommendations for next steps for the field.

A high-performing school is a school that exceeds state test scores or has graduation rates over the state average. High-performing schools “have their state’s highest graduation rates and the highest achieving students (the top 15%) in English and mathematics, measured by state assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These schools are also those that have made the greatest advances (top 15%) in closing subgroup English and mathematics achievement disparities. High-performing schools have high standards for all students, have diverse partnerships and resources, and prioritize systems learning (diverse pedagogical approaches to equitable education; Parrett & Budge, 2012). High-performing schools also provide hope and rigor to students who have been failed by the U.S. education system (Gehrke, 2012). This notion of creating high-performing schools has resulted in improved educational outcomes for all children which was the goal for NCLB and now for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015.

While there is a plethora of research on community resources, I have noticed that current research has focused on community involvement and I wanted to expand the literature on school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs to see how the interactions work together to increase student achievement and benefit students on a broader basis. Previous research aligned community involvement with civic engagement and explored how members of the community participate and engage in social wellbeing activities. On the contrary, school–community partnerships tend to focus on how external community organizations support and collaborate with schools to promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Additionally, school–community partnerships often strive to support the unique needs of a particular school.

A theoretical perspective of supplemental education programs is the sociocultural theory, which suggests that learning is a social process influenced by interactions between individuals and their environment. From this viewpoint, supplemental education programs provide opportunities for students to engage in learning outside traditional classroom settings, offering experiences that may enhance academic achievement, social development, and cultural awareness. Supplemental education programs usually incorporate remedial and enrichment activities that support students on the learning continuum beyond academic achievement alone. Supplemental education programs are often developed assuming that a child’s success in school is influenced by various factors, including their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. It appears that supplemental education programs combined with school–community partnerships play a vital role in supporting these critical programs by bringing together the resources, expertise, and support of the school and the larger community. Take, for instance, the integrated framework that helps educators understand and address the

independent and overlapping factors essential to students' learning and development that Sanders and Galindo (2022) outlined. My dissertation theoretical framework on school–community partnerships provides a roadmap to the success of a systematic and sustained approach to incorporate the viewpoint of engaging students outside the classroom to enhance their educational acumen. In Chapter 2, I conducted a literature review focusing on how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are utilized collectively to achieve student success.

### **Research Design**

I utilized a mixed methods research design using the case study methodology and a survey as a main instrument for data collection. Yin (2003) stated that case study is a research approach that provides evidence based on a real-life case with a holistic approach and meaningful characteristics. This approach helps to establish a framework for discussion and debate among educators, research, families, and communities. The convergent case study methodology, which utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods, helped me to understand the intricacies and process of a high-performing school and how they use school–community partnerships for school improvement. With this methodology, I conducted a document review and semistructured interviews with key school leaders to provide qualitative data to complement my quantitative data and provide more context and connections for a more robust study.

The survey was open to a variety of school and community stakeholders, and the intent was to include teachers, administrators, community members, and members of the school leadership team (which overlaps with teachers and administrators). My goal was to get at least 30

respondents, at least five from each of the previously identified groups. I only received 14 responses, which was about a 30% response rate. In addition, I interviewed five members of the school leadership team. I used semi-structured interviews to gather the perceptions and experiences of the leadership team around partnerships, academic excellence, and supplemental education. The interviews served as additional data points to answer my research questions. I describe the interviews and the characteristics of the school in more depth in the methodology section in Chapter 3. My case site (Achievers Academy) is a public charter high school located in a state in the United States of America. Achievers Academy has been ranked the No. 1 high school in its school district and is among the 2024 Best High Schools by *U.S. News & World Report*. The school was also ranked No. 1 for graduation rate in their state, the No. 2 charter school in their state, and in the top 10% for high schools nationally (out of nearly 18,000 high schools). According to *U.S. News & World Report*, the high school's principal note,

Achievers Academy's academic success is built upon the dedication of our students and their families. The school has a vibrant partnership with the local community and the city's community opens doors to many exciting partnerships and career pathways. The goal and commitment is to offer the best in education for the county and students in Grades 6–12. (U.S. News & World Report, 2024)

### **Significance of the Dissertation Topic**

Research on school–community partnerships and supplemental education opportunities is paramount in the educational landscape. There are many benefits to investigating how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are used in schools. Some of the benefits include an improved learning environment and enhanced student achievement,

which is critical for students to help them become college- and career-ready. The notion of systems thinking includes the incorporation of supplemental educational services and supplemental learning blocks that address both remedial and enrichment programs. These entities engage in meaningful collaborations with their communities, enriching students' learning experiences. In particular, fostering school–community partnerships with families of color is crucial for improving Black and Latinx young children's learning opportunities and outcomes and enriching all children's learning experiences (Montoya et al., 2018). Noguera (2001) noted that schools need to be more responsive and supportive to the children, families, and communities by consciously developing partnerships based upon mutual accountability and responsibility, which is key in building successful partnerships.

If educators do not understand school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs, students will continue to feel unsafe at schools, have inconsistent attendance, bring in lower test scores, and have decreased college attendance. These trends are apparent in many schools, especially ones with limited programming, weak partnerships, and inadequate community support. The support that is needed in schools and in the community is far beyond the reach of only school staff, and more is needed to help students reduce trauma and support student's mental health needs in order for them to learn. I believe this is true because humans are social beings, meant to be in a community and supporting each other. Having supportive partnerships and enriching programs will help students not only feel a sense of community and belonging but also build relationships outside school and into the world of work, enhancing career development. Once students enter the work field, they will be unprepared and not globally competitive, further weakening the nation's strength. According to the University of Chicago Consortium of School Research (2017), partnerships and supplemental programs like

these will serve as a much-needed support system for students, teachers, leaders, and the community to be globally ready, career-ready, and college-ready. In my experience, when school–community partnerships are in place, students are better off academically and personally, the school’s test scores improve, and the community does better (e.g., less crime, less poverty, better employment avenues).

Based on schools’ goal to serve students better, I wanted to explore the notion of high-performing high schools in a direct way through the demonstration of tangible benefits of partnerships and supplemental education, those that truly stand out for their holistic approach to education. This is one of the reasons I chose my case school. According to the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (2017), some of the tangible benefits of partnerships and supplemental programs include a stronger sense of safety, more positive relationships with peers and teachers, better attendance, the decreased likelihood of being suspended, higher test scores, and increased college enrollment. These benefits are also seen with partnerships and supplemental education programs. High-performing schools prioritize well-rounded educational opportunities, focusing not only on academic achievement but also on social, emotional, and physical development and enrichment activities to support learning and development. Gehrke (2011) noted that high-performing, high-poverty Title I schools and districts promote a collective sense of importance and purpose around what is necessary to improve learning for all students, which includes this notion of systems thinking to best meet student needs. High-performing schools exhibit high academic performance, lower dropout rates, and greater student engagement, fostering environments where children thrive.

Such research can shed light on the practices and strategies that set high-performing schools apart and can provide guidance on how to make all schools high-performing. By

exploring these approaches, we can gain insights into bridging the achievement gap, improving graduation rates, and preparing students for lifelong success. This knowledge empowers educators, policymakers, and communities to replicate successful models, leading to more equitable, inclusive, and effective educational systems.

I aimed to contribute to this understanding by examining a real-world example of a school that implements these approaches. As noted in the recommendations section, the study provided concrete evidence of how school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs could translate into improved student outcomes. This study shed light on how a school systematically and intentionally builds partnerships and incorporates programs to help students in a multitude of ways, including academically, mentally, physically, critically, socially, and psychologically. By investigating the nuances of these phenomena, I sought to highlight best practices, potential challenges, and opportunities for replication. Ultimately, this work advances comprehension of how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs can be harnessed to create high-performing schools that truly make a difference in the lives of students, enhancing their educational journey and prospects.

## **Next Chapters**

In the dissertation, I examine the intentional use of school–community partnerships to support the use of supplemental education programs to improve educational outcomes and how these practices show up in the daily practices of the school. I set out to provide a lens on this type of community involvement by specifically delving into how using school–community partnerships can provide a holistic approach to supporting the various needs of students. This dissertation has four additional chapters. In Chapter 2, I will present the results of a literature

review to situate and motivate my empirical study. I begin by outlining the current knowledge about school–community partnerships. I also identify the multiple ways school–community partnerships and school–university partnerships can be used to create a high-performing school. In Chapter 3, I will describe the research design and methodology used to conduct my dissertation study. I will explain my research design and share my positionality before discussing the case study design, study context, procedures and instruments for data collection, and an analysis. The chapter will end with a discussion on validity and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will include the results by research questions and themes. Tables, graphs, and charts will present a data story about school–community partnerships and supplemental education from the data collection instruments to share the importance of my topic and how planning and executing these programs affect my case school. In Chapter 5, I will discuss how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented in a high-performing school to increase student learning with interviews, a survey, and a document review. I will summarize the findings, explore the emergent themes, explain the implications of the study, discuss the limitations of the research, and provide recommendations for future research in hopes of sparking more interest and a broader conversation on how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs can be implemented in schools to make a difference.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In the United States, far too many schools provide inequitable conditions for learning and counterproductive practices that perpetuate underachievement for minoritized students, usually Black and Latinx students and students living with poverty (Parrett & Budge, 2012). To respond to educational inequities and achievement disparities, the federal government and several school districts have prioritized the implementation of high-performing schools. A high-performing school is a school that exceeds state test scores or has graduation rates over the state average (an expanded definition is presented later in the chapter).

Through NCLB, Congress developed provisions to help support the educational outcomes of underserved students who have faced structural inequalities and disparities in educational opportunities. Parrett and Budge (2012) found that high-performing schools demonstrated improved educational outcomes for all children, which was the goal of NCLB and now the ESSA.

My dissertation was a study to explore how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented in a high-performing school to increase student learning to support minoritized students. I examined how teachers and school leaders perceive partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school’s students and how the school’s staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school. I directly addressed the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders, teachers, and school leaders who play a critical role in student success. I focused on how partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school’s students and explored questions that tap into practical, real-world outcomes. I believe that understanding these perceptions provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of these

programs and their impact on student development. It allows for a deeper examination of the processes behind these educational initiatives and ensures the study remains relevant and actionable for educational decision-making. This study's results could provide a framework for other schools when supporting and increasing student achievement. Given my research plan, this literature review is organized around the following themes: (a) the characteristics of high-performing schools, (b) benefits of high-performing schools, (c) school–community partnerships, (d) supplemental education programs, and (e) connecting high-performing schools, school–community partnerships, and supplemental education programs.

### **High-Performing Schools and Their Characteristics**

In this section, I review high-performing schools in general before zeroing in on the subset of those schools that employ supplemental education programs and/or school–community partnerships. Specifically, I present multiple interrelated conceptions of high-performing schools, their characteristics, and the empirical evidence that supports their effectiveness.

A high-performing school is any school that is exemplary and produces extraordinary educational outcomes compared to other schools in the district or state. High-performing schools have high standards for all students, have diverse partnerships and resources, and prioritize systems learning (Parrett & Budge, 2012). The strategy of systems learning emphasizes diverse pedagogical approaches and equitable education by making available opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful and critical learning (Parrett & Budge 2012). As Gehrke (2012) argued, high-performing schools provide hope and rigor to students who have been failed by the U.S. education system. Students need to assume the responsibilities of citizenship and the rigors of global competition.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, high-performing schools share some core elements with effective schools. Lezotte (2001) described effective schools as successful in educating all students regardless of socioeconomic status. Lezotte found effective schools had some common characteristics, which included strong instructional leadership, a strong sense of mission, effective instructional behaviors, high expectations for all students, frequent monitoring of student achievement, and safe and orderly operation.

The U.S. Department of Education suggested that high-performing schools “use standards of excellence evidenced by student achievement measures the Department honors” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These schools are centers of academic excellence that close achievement gaps over time. Based on their academic excellence, academic performance, attendance rates, and progress toward closing achievement disparities among student subgroups, schools are considered high-performing.

The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) website stated that high-performing schools “have their state’s highest high school graduation rates and the highest achieving students (the top 15%) in English and mathematics, measured by state assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These schools are also “Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing,” because they have made the greatest advances (top 15%) in closing subgroup English and mathematics achievement gaps over the past three to five years. At a Blue Ribbon Award program I attended in 2019, a National Blue Ribbon School staff member stated that high-performing schools are exemplary because the staff put in hard work to design programs and experiences to create great environments where students can learn and thrive.

Several other school models/strategies have the potential to become high-performing schools, including KIPP (Knowledge in Power Program) Schools,<sup>1</sup> Community Schools,<sup>2</sup> Blue Ribbon Schools,<sup>3</sup> and Summits Schools.<sup>4</sup> In the past years, researchers have also studied these schools as exemplary educational models. Researchers have also claimed that high-performing schools have similar attributes to the school models/strategies referenced, as these schools support students' learning and their multiple needs through services and supports for children and families (e.g., Blankstein, 2004; Bryk, 2010; Parrett & Budge, 2012). Next, I discuss the main characteristics of high-performing schools.

Although high-performing schools have common characteristics, as Parrett and Budge (2020) noted, the characteristics, framework, and factors may play out differently in specific high-performing schools. Because the authors focused on learning, building leadership capacity, and fostering healthy, supportive, and safe learning environments, some schools might incorporate a reading program and their test scores in math increase, or a school may choose to incorporate an extended day program and their reading scores increase. In contrast, another school might focus more on high expectations and support and decreasing suspensions.

A qualitative exploratory study examined teachers' perceptions of the nine characteristics of high-performing schools (clear and shared focus; high standards and expectations for all students; effective school leadership; high levels of collaboration and communication;

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<sup>1</sup> KIPP schools educate and support students who have historically had limited access to quality educational options.

<sup>2</sup> The community school's strategy seeks to transform a school into a place where educators, community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. Note that different scholars use terms such as community schools and full-service community schools interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools based on their comprehensive academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student groups.

<sup>4</sup> The Summit School seeks to educate children with unique learning profiles to help them reach their full potential.

curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned with standards; frequent monitoring of learning and teaching; focused professional development; supportive learning environment; and high levels of family and community involvement), Goes (2018) found that high standards and expectations, the alignment to state standards, and family and community involvement were highly present in high-performing schools. The author found that school leadership, collaboration, and communication among school personnel were consistently not present in these participating schools, although very important characteristics. The fact that community involvement and high expectations rose to the top of the list piqued my interest and guided me to explore this further in my research.

In their review of 80 studies, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) identified the most important characteristics of high-performing schools. High-performing schools had a clear and shared focus, better academic achievement, more effective school leadership, and a stronger learning environment. These schools have high standards and expectations for all students, and the curriculum, instruction, and assessments were aligned with state standards, which promoted a school culture centered on constant improvement. In addition, high-performing schools have frequent monitoring of learning and teaching and focused professional development for their teachers and staff. All of these factors help to create a supportive learning environment which paves the way for high levels of family and community involvement.

Gehrke (2010) stated that high-performing schools are schools that have consistently met adequate yearly progress requirements and consistently continued to improve student achievement. In their study, Gehrke identified five relevant attributes for improving the learning outcomes of students living with poverty: building a shared vision, systems thinking to improve school processes, mental models to help support outcomes, team learning for collaborative

support, and personal mastery over standards, teaching, and your profession. The exploration of these facets was crucial to my dissertation.

Parrett and Budge (2012) identified effective practices and a framework that provides leaders with guidance and support to create high-performing schools: spheres of influence, an encouraging school culture, and consistent actions to help create high-performing schools. The framework includes 16 strategies and their complex interactions and actions needed to create high-performing schools. The 16 strategies are categorized by topic and include fostering healthy, supportive, safe learning environments. The six strategies under these interactions are as follows: eliminate blame, establish a safe environment, develop an understanding of poverty, level the playing field, use structures/processes that promote relationships, and engage parents/families as partners. The next set of practices are under the topic *focus on learning* and include challenging the pedagogy of poverty: develop a common instructional framework, teaching every student to read proficiently, confronting and eliminating tracking/ability grouping, providing additional quality instructional time, promoting engagement and ownership, and offering job-embedded professional learning. Finally, Parrett and Budge listed their last effective practice category: building leadership capacity that includes going back and finding the time for effective hiring/retention practices, and confronting and eliminating low expectations for everyone (e.g., school leaders supporting staff and students). This foundational framework was the springboard for my research study and led to the formation of my research and some of my survey questions.

In line with National Blue Ribbon Schools and the Department of Education's definition of high-performing schools, common strategies include a positive school culture with diverse spheres of influence (classroom, community, family, etc.), ultimately leading to students learning

to high standards. Padilla et al. (2020) found 11 effective characteristics of high-performing schools in Texas, including strong school leadership, competent staff, consistent home and community relations, a positive culture, an aligned mission/vision, a thriving environment, a system that displayed continuous improvement, an aligned curriculum, strong instruction, access to resources, and a relevant professional development program. These characteristics are also aligned with the supplemental education practices and school–community partnerships that I discuss later in the chapter.

In examining high-performing schools, Bryk (2010) conducted a 15-year study in two Chicago schools. Initially, these schools had low math and reading achievement and 100% of their students live with low-income families. The author identified five organizational features of schools that interact with life inside classrooms and were essential to advancing student achievement: coherent instructional guidance system, professional capacity, strong parent-community-school ties, student-centered learning climate, and leadership drives change. These organizational features are in line with Shannon and Bylsma’s (2007) nine characteristics of high-performing schools and reflect the importance of having a well-rounded approach that incorporates various aspects of the school community.

Bryk (2010) found that undergirding school improvement is a solid base of community ties that require concerted efforts to bring food, shelter, health care, and physical security to students and their families before focusing on school-level strategies to improve schooling outcomes. Bryk added that any school reform must develop a holistic approach to meet the needs of the whole student and not only focus on academic needs. There is no magic pill to improve educational outcomes and experiences of underserved students; however, as Bryk pointed out, more attention must be paid to schools that do not and, conversely, do address systematic racism,

social inequalities, inequitable conditions, and resources to avoid perpetuating underachievement and instill practices and strategies that can help all students to achieve and thrive. The African proverb states, if “all the children are well,” then we have done a good thing in our country. This is the goal of school improvement, creating high-performing schools, and establishing a holistic approach with school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs.

The research site for this study was a high-performing school with high standards, robust school–community partnerships, and a wide variety of supplemental education programs. The school’s commitment to partnerships and providing a well-rounded education to scholars seemed noble to me and I wanted to explore this more. As an educator, when I step into a high-performing school, I notice the school personnel’s commitment to high performance. High-performing schools have an organized system of schooling, a culture of teaching and learning, high-achieving students, purposeful teaching, high results on assessments, high student performance, and camaraderie between students and teachers. High-performing schools are necessary to support student achievement and school improvement. Because there has been increased interest in researching high-performing schools and identifying the common characteristics, conducting research on these schools may help to improve academic excellence for all students regardless of where they live, who their parents are, their race, and the challenges these students may face.

### **Benefits of Attending High-Performing Schools**

As President Obama stated in the 2012 State of the Union address, U.S. schools must equip graduates for the demands of a high-tech economy and emphasize the skills required in current jobs and those in the near future (Rivera, 2013). High-performing schools are necessary

to support student achievement and school improvement. Several empirical studies have shown the benefits of high-performing schools for students and their communities. Gehrke (2012) found that although most public schools fail to teach poor children, high-poverty and high-performing schools provide hope for students who otherwise would have little chance. At high-performing schools, researchers can see increased academic performance, higher test scores, and better grades. Frequently, students say these schools have better environments (Blankstein, 2004). The benefits of attending a high-performing school are embedded in the purpose of schools that America was founded on, and educators must give students the skills that employers are looking for to fill jobs now and in the future (Rivera, 2013).

In examining academic outcomes, May and Supovitz (2006) found districtwide evidence of student learning gains that allow for chronic progress in academic experiences of high-performing schools. Their research used the comprehensive school reform design to help increase the test performance of students attending America's Choice schools, which are considered high-performing schools. The findings revealed significant annual effects in elementary and middle grades reading and mathematics, which accumulate over time. Researchers also have found important mechanisms through which high-performing schools benefit student learning and academic outcomes. Colby (2015) identified some of the mediating mechanisms (correlating factors) in high-performing schools as adopted strategies, behavior strategies, clear and high expectations, cultural competence, changes to organizational structure, effective leadership, pedagogical strategies, positive school climate, adequate resources, and community support all to support school improvement and student achievement.

Parrett and Budge (2012) found that high-performing schools increase community involvement, community progress, and a sense of pride with the hope to tailor school

improvement efforts by strategically identifying and prioritizing characteristics that are perceived to contribute to students' high performance anywhere and at any time. Returning to the National Blue Ribbon Schools shows that high-performing schools' practices and strategies increased student achievement, closed achievement gaps, and provided examples of best practices, frameworks, and characteristics perhaps replicable in any school, anywhere in America. High-performing schools are much needed in America. In the following section, I discuss how school–community partnerships can help produce more high-performing schools, which is the premise of my empirical study.

### **School–Community Partnerships**

Ever since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was passed to improve public education for all students (especially, those from low-income backgrounds) and to reduce achievement gaps, family engagement and school–community partnerships have been an important component of this policy. School–community partnerships are considered a key mechanism for increasing student learning and other indicators of student well-being (Epstein et al., 1997; Galindo & Sheldon, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Sanders and Galindo (2014) defined school–community partnerships as connections between schools and individuals, businesses, organizations, and institutions within or beyond the geographic boundaries of neighborhoods. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), community partnerships are mainly focused on building learning communities and networks. These researchers shared how partnerships yield initiatives for collaboration between community and school members for the purpose of shared learning and create collective learning environments that foster peer learning

and communications networks among families and staff with the hope of building connections that support children, learning, and the community as a whole.

According to the CCS, school–community partnerships have an integrated focus on academics and community engagement, health and social services, and youth and community development (Blank et al., 2003). In general, when schools and communities work together, students have better academic and social-emotional outcomes, schools and communities share the same goals, and families have a stronger sense of belonging (Osterman, 2000). Over the years, educators have learned about the need to attend to communities, complex systems, schools, and especially families to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for underserved students (Galindo & Sanders, 2019). This work is important, and it should not be overlooked. I believe the work of full-service community schools, school–community partnerships, and these intentional collaborations will be the key markers as well as the foundation of school success stories in America in years to come.

In schools with a high representation of underserved students, school–community partnerships are even more important because of the need to provide extra assistance in the class and not just rely on teachers and staff to meet the needs of all students (Hardiman, 2022). Galindo et al. (2017) found that partnering with local communities helped to respond to these students’ and parents’ multifaceted needs, which, according to Sanders and Galindo (2014), is in line with the central work of Dewey (1976) and remains a critical component in constructivist approaches to learning and reform initiatives such as integrated services in schools (Sanders & Hembrick-Roberts, 2013).

Title IV, Part A, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment program, is a great example of a law that seeks to improve students’ academic achievement by providing funds to

increase schools' capacity to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education. Concerning improving students' academic achievement levels and improving school conditions for student learning while examining high-performing schools, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment program requires stakeholders to be a part of the consultations and collaborations in order to fund activities that are in line with program objectives and intended outcomes seems to have been a step in the right direction to improve students' academic achievement for all students. Title IV, Part A enhanced the movement and need for school–community partnerships, especially for underserved communities, and helped improve schools in a broader sense.

As a teacher and community advocate, I have observed community-centered partnerships in the following forms: organizations sending their employees to support as part of career day, volunteers from various companies who read to students either at lunch or after school, nonprofits using their employees to assist in cleaning schools or setting up activities as community gardens, special programs designed to support students, and business partnerships developed to set up learning activities used to promote the students understanding about various careers. I have seen informal (not legally binding or no Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreement in place) and formal partnerships, schools being used as a community hub, and partners providing resources like computers, snacks, reading, or tutoring before, during, and after school hours. In my alma mater at Brooklyn Technical High School in Brooklyn, New York, the school developed a partnership with Consolidated Edison. This local energy provider offered internships to students during the school year and full-time jobs once students graduated. Another example of school–community partnerships is the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH). This program started at a New York City public high school and

opened in September 2011. This partnership was between IBM, City University of New York – City Tech, and the New York City Department of Education. The program’s focus is on technology, and now many states like Maryland, New York, and Texas have these programs in their local high schools. Schools and States have seen increased academic performance and interest in technology careers because of this program.

I want to bring awareness to school–university partnerships like those that I just mentioned at City University of New York – City Tech and through the P-TECH program. These are important additions to the realm of partnerships because the school–university partnerships add a layer of support for school-community partnerships, as in the situation with my case school. Not only does my case school have intentional school–community partnerships, Achievers Academy was also founded to build on the school–university partnership with a local university. Two of the school’s FY23 goals are to work with a local University to increase the opportunities and accessibilities and to increase the number of college credits earned by Achievers Academy students. In addition, the School’s Board would like to increase participation in events in the local area, especially with a local university. I believe the goals to work with the university and increase college credits earned are included in their yearly goals because the school leadership realized that school–university partnerships can strengthen student achievement in a number of ways. Taking classes and earning college credits will help more students become college- and career-ready. Additionally, being able to participate in events at the university could help students to become career-ready, and as Galindo et al. (2021) explored, this will help to improve students’ educational exposure and enhance their experiences as scholars at Achievers Academy. More detailed discussion follows when I explore my case school and provide a more detailed description.

Epstein et al. (2018) published a family, school, and community partnership handbook based on research conducted in 600 schools and 60 school districts. The handbook outlined the success and challenges of sustaining school–community partnerships for the purposes of developing research-based partnership programs for school success. The overarching insights from the handbook were to present a comprehensive framework for partnerships, provide actions to take to form partnerships and increase the knowledge, skills, and awareness in developing partnership programs. Other scholars have discussed school–community partnerships.

Some scholars argue that community resources are the backbone of our schools and have been a central element of many educational reforms that focus on equity. Epstein et al. (2009) highlighted some frequently used school–community partnerships. The researchers noted ten different types of school–community partners ranging from businesses and corporations, universities, and education institutions to media organizations. The authors suggested that states use innovative and effective partnerships throughout the school year.

In addition to the community partners, schools (and states and districts) should have on their websites the programs and actions of the school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein et al., 2009). An example of how community resources are used to support schools is an experience with First Book, a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring educational equity that provides brand-new books and resources to children in need. Their book donations increased the number of books in the home, and as Sheldon (2019) outlined and in accordance with the report by the U.S. Department of Education, “Children from homes with more books at home and more reading by parents perform higher on reading achievement tests” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 45).

Some researchers stated that fostering comprehensive and authentic school–community partnerships with families of color is crucial if society wants to improve the Black and Latinx

children's learning opportunities and outcomes as well as enrich and deepen the learning experiences of all children (Montoya-Ávila et al., 2018). Noguera (2001) noted that schools must become more responsive and supportive to the children, families, and communities by consciously developing partnerships based on mutual accountability and responsibility, which is key to building successful partnerships. Montoya-Ávila et al. (2018) demonstrated a wide range of studies on community partnerships with Black and Latinx families in their analysis. These community partnerships have illustrated that the benefits of these partnerships positively affect student outcomes, regardless of race/ethnicity, including academic achievement, social-emotional skills, and school attendance. I explored the impact of school–community partnerships and if they had the same effect on student achievement, which I believe will have tremendous benefits to society.

The federal and local governments recognized the potential benefits of school–community partnerships (Montoya-Ávila et al. 2018). Ever since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was first passed to improve public education for all students (especially those living in poverty) and reduce achievement gaps, family engagement and school–community partnerships have been important components of major educational policies. Over the last few years, many schools have been working to establish better relationships with the community, especially in terms of engagement (Sanders, 2001). With the pandemics, endemics, and push for more high-performing schools, I believe that more school–community partnerships will be sought out in the years to come, and my research will help to contribute to the field and close some knowledge gaps on this topic. One way to do this was to explore the intentions of senior school leaders in thinking about, planning, and developing these partnerships, as I did via the senior leader interviews.

In 2015 with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Every Student Succeed Act in 2015, as stated by Sanders and Galindo (2020), emphasized that the new law brought about the need for implementation reform strategies and more evidence-based strategies for equitable school improvement requiring that all school staff build on students' cultural, family, community assets, and expand access to needed resources through service coordination and provisions of partnerships and programs that diversify, strengthen, and support the school systems. My dissertation research on school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs is likened to Sanders and Galindo's research on full-service community schools because of the similar goals of improving the educational experiences and outcomes of students by providing comprehensive services and activities that respond to the multifaceted needs and aids in children's learning and development. These developments with various types of schools, partners, and programs build a community of care needed in today's education space. Galloway and Ishimaru (2017) outlined the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders in 2015. Standard 5 focused on building a community of care and support for students as educational leaders promote each student's academic success and well-being. Relatedly, Standard 8 exemplifies the concept of meaningful engagement, which can promote student academic success and personal well-being. These are great examples of school–community partnerships and demonstrate their utility for community engagement.

Bryk (2010) found that undergirding school improvement is a solid base of community ties that would require concerted efforts to bring food, shelter, health care, income, and physical security to their lives before school reforms could help them to learn. Bryk also found that community relationships, which are relationships with schools, community partners, and families (e.g., health and social services for children and families), are one of the five essential

components of school improvement and help with the sustainability of school reform and student achievement. Bryk stated that if schools did not develop a more holistic approach to student development and well-being, it would deny a public education of value for all.

Mapp and Kuttner (2013) created a dual capacity-building framework for family–school partnerships designed to support families while working with educators to develop strategies, policies, and programs for the success of their students. The dual capacity-building framework set the tone for partnerships by establishing a standard of effective family and community engagement efforts linked to student achievement and school improvement. Although the framework’s focus was to support family and school partnerships, these strategies are also relevant for enhancing school–community partnerships.

The framework’s four components are as follows: (a) a description of the capacity challenges that must be addressed to support the cultivation of effective home–school partnerships; (b) an articulation of the conditions integral to the success of family–school partnership initiatives and interventions; (c) an identification of the desired intermediate capacity goals that should be the focus of family engagement policies and programs at the federal, state, and local level; and (d) a description of the capacity-building outcomes for school and program staff as well as for families (Mapp & Kutner, 2013). This framework is important to school–community partnerships because it outlines the framework that led to various efforts to develop capacity around effective school–community partnerships. In this framework, community resources can be linked to learning, relational, developmental, collective/collaborative, and interactive strategies for student improvement.

In the dual capacity framework, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) included an example directly related to community partnerships in Santa Clara, California. The Santa Clara case was a

county-wide effort to support the healthy development of its residents aged 0–5 through community-based family resource centers and prekindergarten family programming. The researchers found in the case study, named the First 5 Santa Clara, that the community used the framework to leverage community resources in the form of community partnerships to drive their student achievement, which built strong relationships and partnerships with families and communities.

Another example of a school–community partnership is at Boston Public School in Massachusetts. Michelle Brooks, the Deputy Superintendent for Family and Student Engagement, built capacity on a district level and implemented policies and protocols to build a systems-wide infrastructure. The Boston Public School framework was called the Seven Essentials for Whole School Improvement. Brooks created binders with support materials to help teachers and principals build their whole-school improvement plans, which included links to outside resources, organizations to partner with, suggestions for how to raise funds, etc. (Mapp & Kutner, 2013).

How else are community resources supporting schools? Community resources and partnerships can help create atmospheres conducive to producing high-performing schools. Schools can be renovated, have high-quality programs, have funding for after-school programs and family workshops, have access to resources and software, and have other programs to improve teaching and learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Sepsnik and Brown (2021) noted that schools and school districts are being asked to provide more services for students. This burden on teachers and schools creates economic inequality, a limited social safety net, systemic racism, prejudice, and various other societal issues. A school system can only create equitable learning environments when it recognizes the disparities in students’ in- and out-of-school

experiences and provides all students with the social and emotional conditions they need to learn (Sepsnik & Brown, 2021),

How school–community partnerships are implemented in schools is diverse. Given the economic inequality, a limited social safety net, systemic racism, prejudice, and other societal issues, Sepanik and Brown (2021) argued the notion that a school system can create equitable learning environments when it recognizes the disparities and provides all students with the social and emotional conditions they need. The authors stated that school–community partnerships can help bridge these gaps. Sepanik and Brown also noted that school–community partnerships could include organizations or agency collaborations that provide services to schools, full-service community schools partnering with organizations and agencies to students, families, and the community, or community schools that include partnerships and school planning and decision-making. The authors explained that school–community partnerships that are respectful and collaborative can help school districts meet the needs of all students, especially those most marginalized by our current political and social systems. For example, partner organizations and agencies can provide academic enrichment activities, tutoring and behavior support for students, a variety of services and referrals to social and health services for students and their families who need them, and opportunities to engage families and community members. The authors’ research brings to the forefront that school–community partnerships are an evidence-based tool that can bring additional resources and services into schools and can help transform schools into healthy learning environments where all students experience the conditions they need to learn and grow to their greatest potential (Sepanik & Brown, 2021).

Valli et al. (2016) also found validity in school–community partnerships, especially in education reforms in urban settings. The researchers used a grounded theory and a comparative

analysis to uncover theories of action where partnerships are valued to increase the school's capacity to engage in strategies that would meet the needs of children and their families. Valli et al. found three types of school–community partnerships—family and interagency collaboration, full-service community schools, and the community development model—which all have a shared focus on academic success indicators such as test scores, attendance, motivation, and behavior.

Blank et al. (2009) explored the way community schools used resources. The researchers identified a “community school advantage” (p. 36) because of the integration of schools and community resources as a part of their design and operation which allowed schools to reduce demands on school staff, to add learning opportunities to develop a variety of competencies and to build social capital like networks, relationships, and partnerships to the school community. Yu et al. (2020) explored wraparound schools, seen in the full-service school strategy. These schools seek fruitful partnerships with community agencies to serve the needs of children and their families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Yu et al. noted that full-service community schools attempt to integrate a full range of academic, health, and social services beyond traditional school models and policy frameworks. When schools focus on outside-of-school factors that affect students' learning by identifying, securing, and coordinating relevant supports those initiatives or practices can impact students' academic achievement and well-being at school.

Research has consistently shown the multiple benefits for students and school functioning of school–community partnerships. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (n.d.) found that partnerships are essential for helping students achieve their maximum potential. The organization investigated partnerships and shared school responsibility and found that when the community supports students, students earn higher grades, attend school

more regularly, stay in school, and are more motivated. Anderson-Butcher et al. (2010) discovered similar results. Using a mixed methods research approach, Anderson-Butcher et al. found that all six participating schools had community and family stakeholders on their improvement teams and expanded their improvement plans. In addition, infrastructures were developed to help connect teachers to other service providers, and schools were able to secure other service providers and enhance and expand their funding streams through these partnerships.

Anderson-Butcher et al. (2010) also showed that Redwood City Schools used family engagement, extended learning, social support services, and programs for parents such as parent education classes, leadership, and volunteer opportunities, as well as on-campus events that demonstrated positive associations with school outcomes. The researchers noted how family and community engagement programs contributed to an increase in mathematics achievement in two of the schools that served kindergarten through fifth grade, three schools that served kindergarten through eighth grade, and one school that served sixth through eighth grades. Although the Anderson-Butcher et al. studied engagement programs for parents, I argue that similar benefits could be found in school–community partnerships.

Sheldon (2007) described how community partnerships are vital to help students succeed. Sheldon outlined the positive effects of school–community partnerships on parent involvement, academic outcomes (including mathematics), student involvement in science, improved attendance rates, better in-school behavior, and reduced problematic behaviors. Research has suggested that schools with greater school and community support systems can create a web of learning and engagement for students and schools. Epstein et al. (2009) found similar results, revealing that community resources and partnerships influence students’ success and have a wide

range of positive effects on student outcomes. Specifically, Epstein et al. revealed that over time, partnership programs and activities incrementally increase student reading, literacy, math, and science scores, as well as nonacademic outcomes related to school success. The key to improving outcomes is that leaders, schools, and districts have a plan to implement a holistic system. Blasé et al. (2010) explored this in their work and concluded that having a holistic system is necessary for high-quality partnerships, programs, and activities. This holistic system with S.M.A.R.T.<sup>5</sup> goals helps students improve and achieve on all levels.

In addition, high-quality schools have demonstrated track records connecting community resources and families. Renault (2018) argued that people can empower others, build the community, and transform children. A physical place can serve as a symbol of hope, a meeting place, or the functional purpose of the building (e.g., a hospital, park, or church). Community support can improve life by providing resources, knowledge, talents, and skills or supplies to help sustain and improve schools and students. Community resources, as Blank (2009) and Renault have noted, are unique to the specific needs of the community; therefore, there is a tailored approach to this work with the premise that schools serve as a hub and the partnerships serve as a strategy to improve learning, develop stronger families, and create healthier students. Similarly, Henderson and Mapp's (2002) key findings revealed that organized initiatives connecting schools to community resources improved schools. These partnerships, efforts, and strategies not only held schools and districts accountable, but they also increased student achievement and contributed to changes in policy, resources, personnel, school culture, and educational programs.

Blase et al. (2010) concluded that a holistic approach to communities' resources that includes a systems approach to student achievement with high levels of community support from

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<sup>5</sup> SMART - goals are that they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

parental involvement and partnership programs increases student attendance, grades, and achievements. These approaches have also resulted in fewer behavioral problems and a general attitude of positivity toward school and homework. Every school would benefit from increased community support through partnerships and resources.

Rudo and Dimock (2017) researched how family, school, and community engagement can improve student achievement and influence school reform. After studying the Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement initiative, the researchers showed preliminary success in forming partnerships, leading to significant academic achievement across targeted subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities and low-SES students) in one school. The key elements of the model included increasing the number and variety of stakeholders in determining school needs and priorities, identifying interventions and partnerships to address needs, and building collaborative leadership infrastructures. This community partnership and engagement system with a holistic approach would incorporate best practices, evidence-based research, effective practices and would not only engage families and the community with schools and students but would also help students attain their academic-specific goals.

Research underscores the efficacy of school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs in promoting student learning. Henderson and Mapp (2002) emphasized the importance of family and community involvement in education, highlighting its positive impact on student achievement. Valli et al. (2016) created a theory of action in their model for school–community partnerships that value partnerships to increase the school’s capacity to engage in strategies designed to meet the multiple needs of children and their families. This notion of a well-rounded education that these partnerships increase, as Valli et al. brought to light, is about encouraging students to be actively engaged in learning and promoting strong and

positive development as well as strengthening families, but the primary emphasis on these supplemental education programs is on student learning. Similarly, supplemental education programs provide assistance beyond initial classroom instruction and incorporate the community and a collective sense of urgency around what is needed to improve learning to best meet students' needs (Gehrke, 2011). Next, I examine the different approaches to supplemental education programs.

### **Supplemental Education Programs**

Galloway and Ishimaru (2017) argued that because of the inequities throughout our society, schools are unprepared to adequately lead, create, and cultivate educational environments where all students (regardless of demographic backgrounds) reach academic success and overall well-being. Supplemental education programs focus on support services beyond the classroom and are specifically geared to students who live with poverty and other disadvantaged situations to provide extra resources to allow for a fair, equitable, and high-quality education by helping to close academic achievement gaps (Petersen & Young, 2004). These programs, services, and activities can emphasize a holistic perspective that addresses all aspects of a child's needs: their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. In line with the premise of Title I funding, the extra support of these programs is geared toward helping children meet high academic standards. These services help the community and educators understand and address the independent and overlapping factors essential to students' learning and development (Sanders & Galindo, 2022), providing a great roadmap to success.

Supplemental education programs can play a pivotal role in enhancing student learning outcomes by complementing traditional classroom instruction. High-performing schools often

leverage school–community partnerships to implement robust supplemental education programs (VanderWey, 2019). These partnerships can involve collaborations with local libraries, museums, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to provide students with access to diverse learning opportunities. For instance, after-school tutoring programs staffed by community volunteers can offer personalized academic support tailored to individual student needs. Enrichment programs, such as STEM workshops or arts-based initiatives, can ignite students’ passions and foster creativity beyond the confines of the regular curriculum. Through these collaborative efforts, high-performing schools bolster academic achievement and cultivate well-rounded individuals equipped with essential skills for success in the modern world.

Another aspect of supplemental education programs is that they provide a platform for collaboration between educators, families, community organizations, and local stakeholders to support school–community partnerships. By working together, these partners can address the diverse needs of students and create an environment that fosters their holistic growth.

Additionally, supplemental education programs use research-based strategies to improve student achievement. The programs provide targeted assistance and parental involvement by engaging families, communities, and other stakeholders as partners in education, ensuring that support systems extend beyond the school walls. For example, community organizations can offer after-school programs, mentoring initiatives, or health services that complement the school’s curriculum and support students’ overall well-being. This collaborative effort enhances academic outcomes and promotes social and emotional skills, physical health, and community engagement (Lewallen et al., 2015). By integrating resources and services from both the school and the community, supplemental education opportunities through school–community partnerships ensure that students receive comprehensive support that goes beyond the confines of the

classroom, ultimately preparing them for success in school and life. A meta-analysis by Dynarski et al. (2008) found that targeted supplemental education interventions can significantly improve academic outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged students.

According to Yu et al. (2020), wraparound services, through supplemental education activities, provide education professionals with a process that views the student as existing within a larger ecological context and promotes the practice of pulling together accessible resources from the larger context to address students' varied needs. In using supplemental programs and focusing on a well-rounded education, each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment to help them be positive contributors to society to help the common good.

By integrating these findings into their educational practices, high-performing schools can design comprehensive strategies that harness the community's collective resources to enrich all students' learning experiences. Reflecting on the implementation of NCLB, provisions were made to help students in failing schools by providing supplemental services, likened to the supplemental educational services that I am exploring in my study, to help with standards-based accountability, system reforms, and promote closer coordination of educational policies and programs (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2003). According to the authors, these systemic reform policies helped a number of states in the late 1980s and early 1990s to improve student achievement. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2003) noted that since each state has different achievement levels, different levels of support and interventions must be implemented; similarly, the same would have to be done with supplemental education programs in each school. In building off Fusarelli and Fusarelli's study, I want to note that these programs are more likely to help break barriers to increase student achievement and support students better in America.

## **Connecting School–Community Partnerships and Supplemental Education Programs**

To holistically respond to students’ needs, schools rely on diverse partnerships. The interplay between school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs fosters social connections, trust, and resource-sharing in the development and sustainability of effective school–community partnerships that have proven to create a positive synergy for students and the school community. The interplay between school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs fosters social connections, trust, and resource-sharing, which are essential for the development and sustainability of effective collaborations. These partnerships enable schools to tap into community members’ expertise, resources, and support, creating a network of shared responsibility for student success. Trust is built as schools and community organizations work closely together, aligning their goals and coordinating efforts to address the diverse needs of students. This collaboration encourages resource-sharing, such as access to additional educational programs, mentorship opportunities, or material resources, which enhances the overall educational environment. The result is a positive synergy that benefits the students and the wider school community, creating a more cohesive, supportive, and enriched learning experience. This synergy not only helps improve academic outcomes but also contributes to students’ social and emotional development, strengthening the overall school climate.

School–community partnerships are used to support supplemental education activities, and many schools have integrated these approaches into their school model to enhance learning for all students. As a result of partnerships, schools could have better access to supplemental education programs. Supplemental learning opportunities enhance opportunities for students, educators, school staff, families, community members, and policymakers to make sure all students are learning at comparable rates with evidence-based programs to help the system of

care and learning to function at their best by using these school–community partnerships.

Community partners play an integral role in students’ achievement and overall well-being. Blank et al. (2003) noted that the additional resources, whether they are partnerships or programs, provided by communities help to reduce the demands on school staff, provide learning opportunities that develop academic and nonacademic competencies, and help students, families, and the community to build connections.

Epstein et al. (2002), Henderson and Mapp (2002), Lavin (2021), Ndlovu (2018), and many others have looked at how school–community partnerships can support schools, relieve some of the burden on the schools and the teachers, and share the responsibility for training the children. Montoya-Ávila et al. (2018) noted that a positive school climate stems from caring and supportive relationships among members of the school community that help to increase student achievement. The scholars also noted that successful partnerships emphasize collaborative practices across school community members centered on improving education outcomes for all students.

Supplemental education programs geared toward low-income, minoritized, and marginalized students to help fill the educational needs and gaps have implications for schools, organizations, practices, and policies. Using these supplemental services will also help with greater family and community engagement, and this collaborative effect will lead to more school–community partnerships. This approach can be used in all schools across the country. For instance, in Baltimore City, Harding et al. (2012) studied a mandate that required districts to provide supplemental educational services to improve academic performance and close the achievement gap for low-income minoritized children. The study was important because the results showed an improvement for minority students living in urban communities and students

in Title I schools. The authors noted that a majority of school districts or schools would not have been able to attain state and national achievement standards without assistance. The results of the study showed that there was an improvement in learning outcomes of at-risk students and showed that it is imperative to hold public schools accountable for improving the proficiency of students in reading and mathematics (Harding et al., 2012) and schools can do this by incorporating supplemental educational services.

According to the ASCD (n.d.), developing and implementing a schoolwide plan (and, in the case above, a district-wide plan) to support a well-rounded education provided through supplemental education services that meet the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs of students is of the utmost importance. This means that students' needs are intentionally addressed throughout classroom curriculum, instruction and assessment, staff development, school culture, family, and community engagement schools, and in meeting those needs, schools can expect improved student achievement, health, attendance, behavior, social and emotional development, sense of connectedness, and respect for student voice. In addition, as the dots are connected between high-performing schools, meeting the needs of all students, especially underserved students, by using school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs, communities and schools can become a model for other schools to follow.

Knudson and Cantor (2020) argued that schools need to learn how to encourage, support, improve, and sustain the implementation, effectiveness, and interaction of national, state, and local collaborative partnerships because these partnerships support a well-rounded educational approach. This research study demonstrates the importance of a more intentional and systemic approach across the nation, where it could be the norm to have school and community

partnerships in schools to assist with youth development. More can be done to ensure that the right policies, programs, and systems are in place to support these approaches.

The 21st Century Community Learning Center offers a variety of services through partnerships to help students meet standards and performance goals. Programs and partnerships like this, along with providing opportunities to receive additional assistance beyond regular classroom instruction, provide a common framework to spark a national commitment to systematically foster interactive national, state, and local collaborative partnerships that can improve the education, mental health, and a variety of needs of American school students (Kolbe et al., 2015). Kolbe et al. (2015) explained that the schools of the past were not expected to solve the health and social problems of the day by themselves; different sectors of the community pitched in to support students. The researchers recognized that schools have not been able to provide solutions without the cooperation and support of families, community institutions, the healthcare enterprise, and the political system and therefore need to establish more school–community partnerships systematically and expeditiously to measurably improve both education and health outcomes.

For this study, I intend to contribute to the literature that focuses on high-performing schools and examine the inter-related connections between school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs. In fact, in my experience, partnerships are foundational strategies that drive equitable access to educational opportunities and support sustained student achievement.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology Research Design**

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to conduct my dissertation study. In the first section of the chapter, I explain my research design. Then, I share my positionality because it helps to show my perspectives on the topic. Sharing my perspectives is set up to also help readers see how my experiences and actions might influence the way I look at this research and why it is relevant to me at this point in time as well as the potential biases in my work. In the next section, I discuss the overview of the study, recruitment, participants and data collection; then I provide my analytical approach. I end the chapter with a discussion on validity and ethical considerations which explains consents, the IRB process, and how data is stored and shared.

This dissertation used a case study research design integrating survey results from ....., semi-structured interviews with five school leaders, and a document review. Yin (2003) explains that case study is a research approach that provides a holistic understanding and meaningful characteristics with real-life case evidence. I combine different data collection methods to understand the relationship between key stakeholders and their perceptions on how school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs contributed to student's overall education in a high-performing school by build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school to increase student achievement. By combining these different methods of data collection, I take a pluralistic approach to derive knowledge about the case study and provide a more robust analysis. In the sections that follow I will explain the data collection and analysis process.

Yin (1994) defined a case study design as an exploration of a phenomenon with real-life context which relies on multiple sources of evidence. Yin explained that one should use a case study strategy because he or she deliberately wants to study contextual conditions to improve social science methods and practices over time. Merriam (1998) encouraged researchers to give a rich, holistic, and comprehensive account of the phenomenon using case studies. Similarly Stake (1995) argued that case studies allow for descriptive and interpretive points of view by portraying the case and demonstrating its usefulness. Yin (2003) explained that the case study methodology has the ability to provide context, which can enable generalizations to other schools. Case studies can be used as a blueprint for analysis for research to help scholars understand the intricacies and processes of supplemental education programs and how school-community partnerships are prevalent in high-performing schools.

Several advantages can accrue from integrating qualitative and quantitative data. For example, I developed my research questions after reviewing the literature. I then developed my survey questions and my interview questions. I use quantitative data, derived primarily from the integrated survey I created, to identify patterns or trends in stakeholder beliefs about the implementation of school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs at the school. I then use data from the qualitative interviews and document reviews to complement my quantitative data analysis (O'Cathain et al., 2010). Quantitative data allowed for the measurement of trends, frequencies, and overall patterns across respondents, while qualitative data from interviews provided rich, contextual insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of staff and leaders. By triangulating data from these methods, the study was able to validate findings and address potential biases inherent in a single-method approach.

The research methods used in this study combined qualitative data analysis with aspects of descriptive statistics to corroborate and nuance findings. Using Excel, I organized the interview data for patterns, themes, and frequencies using a process of thematic analysis, organizing these results into sections comparable to the survey data. I examined responses to the Likert scale survey questions, calculating descriptive statistics by sections. For example, I looked at the range of responses for Section five, the supplemental education programs section, and noticed that most respondents, over 70%, responded agree or strongly agree to most questions, noting that staff had a positive perception of the impact of these programs. I then juxtaposed these findings with the themes identified by the qualitative interviews. Doing so allowed me to verify, contest, and adjust my findings to arrive at a more complete and arguably valid answer to my research questions.

Frequencies of responses were also calculated to quantify levels of agreement or highlight significant trends in participant perspectives. This meant that I looked at the range of responses from strongly disagree to strongly agree, for sections, such as the school-community partnership section. Even though staff and school leaders were favorable about the partnerships, there were a few areas, based on the neutral responses and disagreements, where staff did not perceive that the partnerships directly addressed students' and families' needs. By examining the interview data, I determined that some stakeholders felt that there was not enough diversity among partners and there was not enough data to provide a holistic experience for some students. By interpreting these patterns and themes, I was able to draw connections between the data and the study's objectives, presenting the findings in a comprehensive and detailed narrative in my study. I explore the data, themes, and trends further in Chapter 4, the Results section.

In this case study analysis, I examined the perceived importance of supplemental education programs and school-community partnerships for improving students' learning outcomes in a high-performing school for marginalized and minoritized students in hopes of providing pathways for change for schools across the nation. Mertens (1998) stated that case studies allow researchers to understand the experiences of a group or program implementation with a well-defined focus and its boundaries. Since case study research is good for describing, comparing, evaluating, and understanding different aspects of a research problem, this study highlighted concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about specific real-world school-community partnerships as well as highlighting how supplemental education programs work in tandem to support students. Using this method, I brought to light and explored the key characteristics, meanings, and experiences of staff and school leaders in a high-performing school.

In addition, the hope is that this case study research adds to the existing literature on how exploring a single high school could potentially provide in-depth knowledge of how to intentionally establish school-community partnerships and embed it in the curriculum as well as the school culture to support the overall education of students. Merriam (1998) encourages researchers to provide a rich, holistic, and comprehensive account of the phenomenon, which is what I intended to do using a case study methodology.

### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of my dissertation was to explore how school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented in a high performing high school.

Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and school leaders perceive that Achievers Academy partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school's students?
2. In what ways does Achievers Academy staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school?

For this study, I utilized a convergent mixed methods case study research design, which allows me to bring in data from my survey and interviews to provide richer context for my case. My main instrument for data collection was a survey. In addition, I used semi-structured interviews to gather the perceptions and experiences of the leadership team around partnerships, academic excellence, and supplemental education. With the interviews I hoped to provide implementation relevant information to diverse stakeholders who are committed to improving the schooling experiences of underserved and minoritized students. Utilizing a case study methodology provided me with an in-depth analysis that allowed for an understanding that is trustworthy and hopefully helps readers to learn more about school-community partnerships, and supplemental education programs at the site school.

## **The School Case: Achievers Academy**

Achievers Academy is a public charter grade 6-12 school located in a state in North America. The school opened in 2013 and has been continuously operating for over 10 years. The school is one of the first blended learning schools in its state to invest in the connection between the university and the community. The school utilizes an online Educational Technology platform to deliver some of the curriculum, where students take certain classes online (electives); however, the majority of classes are face-to-face. Students have the opportunity to take courses at universities in their State. This allows students to access their classes online in school or anywhere on the web, providing a more efficient method of teaching, with teachers acting as aids and guides whenever the students need them. The web-based learning provides students a personalized learning experience that they can access online at school and at home and allows acceleration on an individual basis.

The school is located in a district designated to revitalize the area and academic campus located close to the university with which it has a partnership. The district includes a variety of academic spaces, research and economic development, a public-private research hub and a vibrant downtown community filled with places for residents, faculty, staff and students to have a variety of experiences. The district has been newly developed with mixed use land in Sydney County (pseudonym) and is embedded between the housing community of a racially diverse middle-class community as well as a relatively new shopping center that serves the college community. Achievers Academy is located close to a university campus and is part of a district created for a rich partnership experience that will allow students and staff to make strong connections with the community for their benefit. According to the University's website, "the

goal of a district that includes a dynamic research park brings together a vibrant and inclusive community of university stakeholders, corporate partners, government researchers, entrepreneurs, and local residents.” On the website, the University’s President is quoted as saying “The Discovery District is a natural extension of the university’s research enterprise. It is a place where industry, government and research come together, creating an innovation ecosystem for organizations small and large.”

At Achievers Academy, the graduation rate for the high school is over 95%; 55% of students scored at or above the proficient level for math; and 67% scored at or above that level for reading. In 2022, the student diversity breakdown is 54% Black, 30% Hispanic, 8% White, 5% two or more races, 2% Asian Pacific Islander, and less than 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, which equates to 89.8% minority enrollment. The student-teacher ratio is 1:19, which is higher than the state average of 1:14. The school enrolls 49% economically disadvantaged students and 40% participate in the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Programs. Economically disadvantaged refers to individuals or groups who have limited financial resources and face economic hardships that may restrict their access to essential goods, services, and opportunities. Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) is a federally assisted meal program in the United States that provides low-cost or free meals to eligible students in public and nonprofit private schools. The FRPL is available to students from households earning at or below 130% of the federal poverty level and 185% of the federal poverty level, respectively.

The school has 22 AP courses and according to [greatschools.com](https://www.greatschools.com), the school is above average on their graduation rate (ties for #1 among charter schools in the state), summary rating, test scores, student progress and in equity. The high school has a high-performing ranking

designation from US News and World Reports. According to state reports, the school is the #2 ranked high-school in their district. In 2022, Achievers Academy exceeded state and county benchmarks for college readiness in science, writing, and mathematics. According to the State Report Card, in the 2021-22 school year, Achievers Academy had improved its overall school performance by 2% from the 2018-19 school year, which is determined by a combination of academic and school quality indicators, including growth in its well-rounded curriculum.

The school uses a lottery-based system to allow students from all parts of the county to attend the school. All students must apply through the lottery through the county school system. Some students can attend through sibling preference, such that if a new student has a sibling already attending the school, the student is admitted so long as the siblings live in the same household and have the same responsible parent/guardian. Students can also enter the school via geographic preference (but there is no guarantee that a student will be admitted). This preference means that a student must live within the boundaries of the catchment area, which includes about a seven-mile radius and six specific areas surrounding the school. Students of a teacher or staff member also are given preferential admittance. Students enrolled at the end of a school year automatically continue at Achievers Academy if they met the grade and attendance policy. If a student struggled academically or have low attendance, the student is officially withdrawn or officially transferred back to their boundary school (the school closest to where the student lives).

As of 2022, the student population of Achievers Academy is 800 and even though the school serves grades 6-12, my dissertation focuses on the high school, grades 9-12 primarily. The high school has about 300 students. , so this school has a more manageable bureaucracy

compared to larger institutions. This allowed me to coordinate with staff and teachers more easily. The high school is a high-performing school and the school has a variety of school-community partnerships as well as a robust number of supplemental education opportunities. High schools are also essential places for studying the effects of school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs and exploring the learning outcomes and experiences that could have meaningful consequences for the future college and career planning. In addition, charter high schools with selective enrollment systems often have active parent communities, which provide many opportunities for interacting with partners, staff, and the community, which I thought would help with the response rate for my survey. Lastly, I chose this high school out of convenience because I work with the school, and it seemed to be strategically aligned with the tenants and key topics of my study.

Achievers Academy was designed to maximize opportunities for students to take university credits and high school credits concurrently. Students can earn up to 25 credits in the following courses online at the local university as well as several designated community colleges in the state: Anatomy and Physiology, General Astronomy, Computer Science, Intro to Criminal Justice, Intro to Engineering Design, Intensive Intermediate French, Geography, Infant Development, Philosophy, Sociology, and Psychology. These courses add to the rigor of students' curriculum and help support a well-rounded education. Students can earn university credits through the school's Signature Programs. Signature Programs are centered around an academic discipline to give students exposure to the university academic experience while earning college credits in high school. The Signature Programs offers specific coursework (that may overlap with the online courses but some are taught by the actual school staff) in the following disciplines: behavioral and social science, business, computer science, education,

engineering, and public health, which mirrors a subset of majors at the partnership university. The Founding Board emphasizes a strong focus on college and career readiness and encourages students to earn college credits. While this aspect of the partnership is still developing, school leaders seek to strengthen the opportunities students have for taking university credits through this dual enrollment initiative. I struggled to determine the exact number of students who had taken college credits over the years but I estimate probably about 30%. Achievers Academy also offers four foreign languages (Spanish, Chinese, French, American Sign Language) which is not part of the a program but based on student interest and staff qualifications.

In terms of the school staff, Achievers Academy has approximately 40 equivalent full-time teachers and three full-time school counselors. Of these teachers, 100% are certified and 56% have 3 or more years of experience at the school. In 2022, 70% of students took an AP Exam and 9% of the students participated in the dual enrollment program. Dual enrollment programs, much like supplemental education programs, offer students additional opportunities to enhance their academic experiences beyond the traditional classroom. These programs allow high school students to take college-level courses, providing them with both high school and college credits, while promoting academic growth and college readiness. By participating in dual enrollment, students can access more challenging coursework and explore potential career paths early, helping to bridge educational transitions and reduce future college costs

In terms of school-community partnerships, through their partnership with the nearby public research university, students are afforded a variety of opportunities including service learning opportunities, internships, and paid positions to help them develop vocational and leadership skills for future employment. Over the past three decades school-university

partnerships have been on the rise, encouraged by some researchers and advocates (Eady, M. J., & Green, C. A. (2024), Luce, R. H. (2005), and Yang, H. (2018), to increase educational opportunities for underserved students. Researchers across America have gone on to note that statistics suggest the need for early interventions if we want to improve educational outcomes for underserved students and school-university partnerships provide viable options for interventions at the high school level. Researchers have noted that these partnerships have the potential to improve students' educational experiences, provide teacher support, and enhance opportunities for students in the education institutions that are involved (Galindo et al., 2021). My case study explores one such partnership, which, like the findings in Galindo's (2021) study, reveals that school-university partnerships have a strong potential for improving the educational experiences of underserved students.

In terms of supplemental education programs their Achievers Plus Program (pseudonym), which is a before and after school enrichment program, provides academic, athletic, and artistic extracurricular programs to complement regular coursework. Achievers Plus provides a platform for Achievers Academy students to learn from university students and staff on topics related to STEM, tutoring, and fitness programs that enhance their academic aptitude, health, and well-being. The school has access to three sports programs and 15 clubs including but not limited to Dance, Debate, Homework Help, Model UN, Robotics, and Sisters in Stem.

I chose to study Achievers Academy because it is a high-performing high school and its staff and leadership seemed to be engaged with improving the educational opportunities of students. I also chose Achievers Academy because of my knowledge of the school, and its existing programs. I met with the school's leaders and they explained the process for conducting

independent research with their school, as well as the procedures and standards for the research process. I am also conducting research at this school out of convenience since I have a relationship with the school, and I am quite familiar with their mission, vision, and school-community partnerships. Achievers Academy is a good school to conduct research because high schools often have more data points relevant to this study to measure and more robust programs due to their focus on college and career readiness and testing.

## **Recruitment**

I obtained the permission from the district external research team, the Executive Director and the Principal. I emailed all the staff that dealt with the high school students (since the school is a grade 6-12 and the focus of my dissertation only consists of the high school portion). As of June 2024, the total number of staff including teachers, administrator, custodians, and other school staff of the school is 70 and for the high school it is 50. All 50 staff members, which includes administrative personnel, teachers, and support staff, were sent an invitation to participate in my study. The invitation included the purpose of my study, a weblink to the survey and the consent form. I also shared important information about the study (e.g., goals, objectives, required involvement, potential impact). I noted that a paper copy of the survey and consent form would be available to those that were unable to access the items online. Additionally, to encourage participation, I stated that I would provide a well-liked snack in addition to fruit, water, and another beverage. Staff gathered in the multi-purpose room, and I told them about my study and went over the consent form. I opened the floor for questions and answered them. Subsequent emails were sent to all participants to thank them for taking the survey and to

non-survey completers (four attempts) in the initial participant pool to encourage them to participate in the study.

For the interviews with the leadership team, I talked to the Executive Director and provided a list of five senior leaders out of the 12 members of the senior leadership team that I thought might be good to interview. I provided the names to her and she suggested two alternative team members, which she thought would be better than the ones on my list because of their roles. I used the recommended school leaders in my participant pool. In terms of anonymity, the only person that I talked to about the selection of the seniors to be interviewed was the Executive Director. The names were not shared with anyone else and no personal information was collected during the interview. Once I had my list, I then emailed each leadership team member and stated that the Executive Director said “that you would be best to interview for my dissertation to ask questions about school-community partners and supplemental information.” I let them know the timeframe for the interview and three time slots available. The team members selected the time slot that fit them best and I sent them a calendar invite to participate.

### **Participants and Data Collection**

This study utilized a convenience sample, which as Weiss (1994) argues allows access to capture the perspectives and opinions of multiple stakeholders including administrators, teachers, the senior leaders, and community partners. The sample for this study was purposely selected because this sample includes key informational agents (e.g. educational partners from the

university), key stakeholders (e.g. community organizations that provide services), and other teachers.

The main source of data is a survey. The survey explored school-community stakeholders' perceptions and experiences around school-community partnerships and supplemental education. The survey was open to a variety of school and community stakeholders which I believed would enhance the results and would reflect a variety of voices and perceptions. My goal was to get at least 30 respondents, at least five from each group (teachers, administrators, community partners, and senior leadership team members). My first recruitment conversation points, after my independent research application was approved (more on this later in the chapter) was the Executive Director and the Principal (both responded to the survey and was interviewed). To me, this was a great opportunity to get input about the health and welfare of the school, via the perceptions of staff and senior leaders, because participation in the process could increase family and community engagement, and it could provoke conversations with the team (after reviewing the survey and the interview questions) since some staff participated in this endeavor and were eager to explore next steps and improvements for their students and school.

After I obtained the permission from the county external research team and the school, I presented my research and invited participants to a session dedicated to explaining my research study and inviting staff and community partners to create a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere. I did this to foster a sense of community and encourage attendees to participate in the survey. I also shared an email providing important information about the study (e.g., goals, objectives, required involvement, potential impact). By sharing this information, I hoped to generate interest and enthusiasm among the attendees. At this session, I shared with potential participants a sheet where they can write their names and email addresses if they are interested in

participating. Fifteen staff members answered the survey. Fourteen staff members used the link to complete the survey and one person answered via the paper copy. Most respondents took about 10 -15 minutes to complete the survey (See more below on the Data Collection Summary Chart on Page 75).

In addition to the survey, I examined documents such as the school's action plan as well as the Executive Director's goals and objectives for the year, and conducted semi-structured interviews with five Senior Leaders from the senior leadership team (via Zoom and Google Meet online) to explain more about the school and to capture the complexity of the case and connect it with data from the survey (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). Other documents examined are: the Achievers Academy Greatschools.com page, the Achievers Academy Niche.com page, the School's Action Plan FY 23-24, the School's website and the US News and World Report on Achievers Academy. I used these documents to support the claim that the school I am studying is a high-performing school and has robust partners and supplemental education programs.

Surveys are an effective way to obtain feedback, suggestions, and preferences from a large number of participants, making it an ideal data collection method for my study (Mertens, 1998). The survey utilized to collect data has eight major sections: role, SLT, information directly related to school-community partnerships and the supplemental education programs. school staff questions, collaboration/communications, family and community involvement, and a comment section with an opportunity for written answers about the benefits of school-community partnerships benefits (see Appendix A).

I developed an integrated survey for this case study to help to explore stakeholders' perceptions on school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs; my hope was that it would illuminate different aspects of my research problem using previously tested survey items. For the integrated survey, the intent was to explore how school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs exist at the school to increase student learning. Two surveys were modified based on the focus of this study. The School Improvement Perception Survey (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) and the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) School Improvement Tool were modified to address the research questions and solely for the intent of this study.

The survey<sup>6</sup> for school staff is a 40-item survey that measures the perceptions on the intentional use of school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs to increase student achievement. The survey for community partners is an 18-item survey with the same intent of the school staff survey. Some differences included questions on the type of support that the partner provided and the number of years they partnered with the school. The survey examined the following factors related to school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs: use of an action plan; using data to analyze the programs; students, parents, and community partners reactions and involvement of these programs; collaboration and communications; family and community involvement; and how these collaborations and community engagement relates to school improvement.

For the community partners, the factors were: alignment to the curriculum, advocating for effective use of the programs, intent of increasing student learning, effort to work with

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<sup>6</sup> *Note.* On the survey, I combined *strongly agree* and *agree* to connote agreement, and *strongly disagree* and *disagree* equated to disagreement. Neutral responses are noted if applicable.

community organizations, involvement of partners, frequency of visits to school and reaching high academic standards. Participants responded to each statement using a five-point Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Each response included a “not applicable” option (which no one used. There was also a question for both staff and community partners about whether they received professional development/training related to school-community partnerships. In the initial questions on the survey, I collected basic background information (e.g., role at the school and if they are on the School Leadership Team) about the person filling out the survey. In the third section of the survey, I asked people how long they served on the SLT to rate their perception on supplemental education programs. The fifth section includes a portion of the School Improvement Survey Tool originally created by Shannon and Bylsma (2007) and used to evaluate high-performing schools in Washington state. This section examines the utilization and concept of the supplemental education programs in the school. The next section examines the utilization and concept of the school-community partnerships in the school.

Section seven contains questions about what grade the staff teach or work with, years worked at the school, years of experience teaching or being an administrator, and professional development activities with school-community partnerships. Brown (2008) wrote the ASCD’s action tool was to be used for school-based, district-level, and community stakeholders to use as a part of a comprehensive process to put into practice the ASCD’s well-rounded initiative to support the tenets of the initiative. The intent of the action tool was to reflect on ways in which school improvement teams address the well-rounded education tenets and intervention strategies as part of the strategic planning process. Some of the key features implemented by well-rounded education strategies into classroom environments are: safety and concern, challenged students,

healthy students, engaged students, and community practices (ASCD, n.d.). I modified a survey tool to assess the school's similar components.

Of note, I adapted the two instruments described above so the overall survey will better align with the goals of this study. For example, for the Shannon and Bylsma (2007) instrument, I deleted the statements in the survey which were used to rate one or more of the nine characteristics of high-performing schools. For the ASCD survey, I removed all items that I deemed irrelevant to my study. For the first five sections, I removed items that were not directly related to the overall holistic elements or the culture of the school. For example, I removed items that focused only on one aspect of the school. The original ASCD survey tool included the statement "Our school addresses the health and well-being of each staff member," I removed that question because it seemed to be singularly focused and not in line with my research of how school-community partnerships and the supplemental education programs are intertwined at a high-performing school to holistically and intentionally support underserved students. Conversely, I included statements like "Our school personnel welcome and include all families as partners in their children's education and significant members of the school community," because this statement represents the holistic perspective that I am exploring in my research and the data from this statement will help to access how stakeholders believe school staff are including all families and community stakeholders to help not only support supplemental education programs but also incorporate the school-community partnership aspect which is the foundation of my study. My instrument contains 31 statements in which respondents rated their strength of agreement using a five-point Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. I also asked survey participants for their input on how school-community partnerships benefits

students' experiences in the schools. Please see the table (Table 1) below outline the content of the survey and rationale for each question.

**Table 1. Survey Content**

<b>Survey Item Table</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>	<b>Original Source and Rationale to include/modify</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	Participation	One Question	Gather information about staff member to differentiate for analysis and trends
<b>Section 2</b>	School Role	One Question	To differentiate respondents for analysis and trends
<b>Section 3</b>	School Leadership Team	One Question	To differentiate respondents for analysis and trends
<b>Section 4</b>	Role in School	One Question	To differentiate respondents for analysis and trends
<b>Teacher/Leader</b>			
<b>Section 5</b>	Supplemental Education Programs	Fourteen Questions	These questions were modified from Shannon and Bylsma's instrument and modified for my study
<b>Section 6</b>	School-Community Partnerships	Six Questions	These questions were modified from the ASCD survey and modified for my study
<b>Section 7</b>	School Staff Questions	Four Questions	To differentiate respondents for analysis and trends

<b>Section 8</b>	Collaborations and Communication	One Question	These questions were modified from the ASCD survey and modified for my study
<b>Section 9</b>	Family and Community Involvement	Six Questions	These questions were modified from the ASCD survey and modified for my study
<b>Section 10</b>	Partnership	Comment Section	To identify trends and themes from respondents for further analysis
<b>Community Partner/Member</b>			
<b>Section 11</b>	Community Partner/Member Questions	Two Questions	To differentiate respondents for analysis and trends
<b>Section 12</b>	Supplemental Education	Five Questions	These questions were modified from Shannon and Bylsma's instrument and modified for my study
<b>Section 13</b>	School-Community Partnerships	Five Questions	These questions were modified from the ASCD survey and modified for my study
<b>Section 14</b>	Frequency of Visits to provide services/support to students	One Question and Comment section	To differentiate respondents and to identify trends and themes from respondents for further analysis
<b>Section 15</b>	Other Stakeholders	One questions	To see if there were recommendations to get eager survey participants
<b>Section 16</b>	Thank you and contact	NA	NA

The survey was made available online and in paper format. Two participants preferred to respond to the survey online and received a survey link by email. Staff, teachers, and community partners were asked to explore their views on school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs. I used a Google form to share my survey online. I made sure that all contact information was kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of the survey.

One participant who preferred to respond to the survey in a paper format, I had the survey for participants if they needed it and I emailed the paper version. On two different days, I sent participants who had not returned the survey a reminder of the deadline. After survey completions, I thanked all participants for their support and participation. No incentives were provided for participants. All electronic surveys were transferred from the online survey to an Excel file. Paper-versions of the surveys were inputted manually. Maxwell (1996) states that theoretical validation is achieved with presentation and discussion of emerging conclusions so I reviewed the findings multiple times to help crystalize the results. By doing this, I hoped to identify best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations to the field to empower practitioners in this work. The results of these conversations are outlined in Chapter 4 and 5.

100% of the responses came from school staff. One potential explanation for no community partners completing the survey was that since their programs were over and the school year officially ended, the partners did not feel the survey was relevant to them. Another possibility is that the partners did not see a strong reason for participating if they mainly interacted with students and did not set a goal set and collaborate with school leaders or staff. It would have been provided a layer of insight to hear their perceptions of how their programming works to support the overall education of students.

The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of eight questions (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). Five school leaders were selected by the Executive Director and the researcher to see which leaders would be best to interview. Each participant engaged in one interview that lasted between 30 to 50 minutes. When developing the interview protocol, the selection of questions was based on the literature. There was much consideration to align the interview protocol with the intent and direction of the research questions. The table below summarizes the data collection process for the interviews and the surveys.

**Table 2 Data Collection Summary**

<b>Data Collection Summary</b>	
Approximate time participants took to take the survey	15 minutes
Number of Interviews	5
<b>Interview information Summary</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conducted online</li> <li>● Interviews were recorded</li> <li>● Interview data responses were also put in a google form for analysis</li> <li>● Notes were taken on paper to help crystalize important points</li> </ul>	

The interview protocol was carefully crafted to solicit real contextual information to provide context to the qualitative data in exploring the perceptions, findings, and themes around school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs and their contribution to student’s overall education in a high-performing school. Vaismoradi et al. (2016) discussed the methodology of theme development in qualitative content and thematic analysis. The researchers noted that the theme development method and the process of selecting relevant literature helps with the interpretation of findings. The researchers' theme development method can be utilized to reduce ambiguities, and improve quality and rigor of data analysis. In the next chapter, I lay out the results in themes from the interviews to help inform education practice development for

school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs and provide strategies and interventions as Vaismoradi et al. (2016) did in their study.

**Table 3 Qualitative Interview Data**

Participant	Years on SLT
Executive Director	3
High School Principal	7
Middle School Principal	9
Director of External Relations	Unknown
Program Coordinator	1

*Note.* Average interview time: 45 minutes. Average years of experience: 5 years.

### **Procedures**

The disseminated survey included questions on the role that the staff member held at the school, grade level support, whether the staff is a member of the School Leader Team (SLT), as well as questions adapted from the School Improvement Perception Survey (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) and the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) School Improvement Tool. Fourteen survey responses were recorded via Google Forms and one via paper survey. One staff member of the 15 respondents declined to participate. Several staff took the survey then and others took the survey online at a time that was more convenient for them. All staff received a thank you email for their participation. Also, several reminders were sent out (a total of 4 times) to take the survey as well as a special email asking staff for their input noting that would help get more robust data. The survey stayed open for several weeks, especially since it was launched a few days before the end of their duty time for the school year. I also reached out to staff and community members via social media to get them to participate and stated that I would love their insight for study. The response rate was 28% but no community partners

participated. Sheehan (2001) noted that the mean response rate for a survey was 24% which is similar to the rate of the school stakeholder portion of the study.

The five interview participants talked in detail about the school-community partners and the supplemental education programs. Each participant highlighted the strengths of each. Three of the interview participants (60%) could only talk about either school-community partners or supplemental education because their capacity and role at the school limited them to focus on only one portion, however I do want to note that these participants did have a positive view of the school overall and the programs they provided. At times, I asked for some elaboration on the responses while ,other times, I was able to connect a thread between the responses of each participant to obtain more contextual information for a more robust response.

In terms of the school-community partners and the contribution to students' overall education, the following questions below were asked and four themes emerged from the responses. In Chapter 4, I explore the four themes: overall education, relationship with the local university, academic excellence, turning away partners, and collaborations and next steps.

- How does your school's collaborative partnerships influence your students and bring in academic and social excellence? How do you choose partners? Do you turn away partners, if so why? How are partners renewed and discontinued?
- How (if at all) does your school's partnerships contribute to the overall education of the students? How are your partnerships built upon day-to-day classroom instruction and if they played any part in supporting the needs of your students and the school? Do the partners collaborate with the classroom teachers and with school counselors? And if so, how?

Can you tell me about the expectations of your school's partnerships? How do the community partners work together? Is there a communication plan or strategic plan for the partners? Does this happen on a week to week basis?

## **Analysis**

For the data analysis, I did descriptive statistics. The data from the survey was entered by participants into a Google form which allowed me to view the data individually from the Google form or via a spreadsheet. In addition, Google forms provides a summary of the data with charts, tables, respondents, and percentages to quickly see the results, trends and any themes that emerge. In regard to the interview data collection, in addition to taking notes during the interviews and entered my recollection of the interview with key points and ideas into a Google form per interviewee. I also recorded each interview and reviewed the interviews for clarification and processing. From there I reviewed the information I inputted in Google forms which also went directly into a spreadsheet for easy identification into themes. Using the spreadsheets, I was also able to capture quotes to use in this paper to provide a rich recount of the discussion, to answer questions, and to provide answers to my research questions and emphasize any themes, points, or findings I made from my study. I organized the data in an Excel sheet, identifying patterns, themes, and frequencies, and then interpreting these findings to provide a clear, data-driven narrative in my research.

Descriptive statistics allowed me to summarize and organize the information from the survey responses. Descriptive analytics is the simplest type of analysis and the foundation for complex data analysis because it describes trends and relationships. The combination of the case study methodology with this statistical analysis, as Yin (2003) reminds us, allows researchers to have the ability to analyze research findings in relationship with other schools. I also analyzed overall trends and patterns of responses for the entire sample. For instance, my survey can identify how staff or school leaders feel about the school community and if they feel students are benefitting from the school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs.

Descriptive analytics helped me to determine how these stakeholders felt about school-community partnerships, supplemental education programs and academic/social excellence and if there is a correlation between grade levels or stakeholder roles. This helped me to describe the characteristics of the responses from the variables.

During the first stage of data analysis, I reviewed the dataset and looked for themes. I conducted general descriptive statistics based on all the data collected. Then I focused on conducting a thorough analysis to examine each of my research questions. Descriptive analytics helped to summarize my data set. For instance, my survey identified how staff felt about the school community and their perception of the school's support and collaboration efforts. This helped me to describe the characteristics of the responses from the perspective of the partnerships and programs provided. These insights can pave the way for diagnostic analytics if I follow up this research after my dissertation to explain why certain factors are correlated with the hopes of answering my research questions about the characteristics of high-performing schools serving predominantly underserved students and how school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs influence practices prevalent in high-performing schools.

### **Researcher Positionality**

As a researcher, I embrace a theoretical and epistemological position that approaches schools with a positive lens. I see schools as beacons of light in the community. In particular, I want to support the field of educators and provide lessons and best practices that are clear and easy to use and provide hope for a field that seems to be drowning with issues. I currently work at the United States Department of Education as a Management and Program Analyst in the

Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) supporting Managers and Supervisors to help build capacity of staff to award over \$1.2 billion in grants funds to postsecondary institutions. I also lead our department's work on strategic planning, workforce planning, and training and engagement. Prior to my current position, I worked in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) as a Program Officer where I guided States to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. I also helped to support States with their Title I, II, and III formula grants. Right before I transitioned from OESE to OPE, I was on the Evidence Based Policy team where I helped to roll out the Evidence Act and Evidence Based Strategies to improve schools and education across the country. In addition, I ran several grant competitions, one of which was former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' priority, Student Centered Funding, to help with innovative funding for districts to use a student-centered funding formula that fits the school's specific needs where Principals had direct control of how to use the funds allocated to them. I am a former Substitute Teacher and was an Intern for the county school system in which the school is located.

Over the past 30 years, I have had substantive experience in education in working with youth in the community through youth programs and organizations in the nonprofit sector, government, and public agencies. As a passionate Educational Program Manager and Community Advocate, I am committed to improving schools to benefit underserved students. As an advocate, I want youth to grow up to be their best selves, living their best lives. I want to see purposeful individuals that have reached their highest potential and are contributing to the world.

I have particular expertise in driving alternative educational options and life skill development that ensure that individuals can reach their potential. In addition to my expertise on the School, District, State, and Federal levels, I also have ample experiences on the development,

execution, and oversight of policies, programs, services, and initiatives that promote student growth and achievement. My previous experiences as a former teacher in PreK-12 suburban schools, my teaching at a Charter school in Southeast DC, at the university level, and as a former member of a School Improvement Teams (SIT), in several schools in Prince George's County and the school I taught in DC, has helped me form a solution-driven mindset around education equity. I have worked in senior leadership positions guiding staff, students, and volunteers through designing and facilitating challenging and inspiring curricula in schools and communities. My career has meant that I have developed skills and knowledge in critical areas including strategic planning, policy development, the design and implementation of education programs and services, strong partnership and relationships, grants management, mentorship, volunteer management, and community outreach. As a solutions-driven activist, I have a strong desire to support schools and communities because I have seen many successful programs and initiatives and I want to be able to support a process that will show the inner workings of a school. These experiences, combined with my survey expertise, provides me with the required theoretical and methodological tools to implement this study.

My positionality informed my interpretation of the interactions in Achievers Academy. While my commitment to supporting schools' improvement strategies is a potential bias, I strove to examine my participants' perspectives and experiences and review my results and findings with an open mind. In addition, I relied on a dissertation coach to review my work and help me to identify any potential biases. This outside perspective was a counter weight to my enthusiasm and commitment to the topic, serving to strengthen my interpretations of the data and enhance the overall objectivity of my research.

In addition to those experiences, I also serve as the Graduate Assistant and Liaison between the Achievers Academy with a local university, where I am an alumnus, and a current doctoral candidate. One of the great things about being in this position and conducting research there is that I had an inside view of the programs and inner workings at the school. I was able to get buy-in from staff and senior leaders about my project. On the flip side, because I love working there and I had an inside track to the data, staff, and senior leaders, I have positivity bias, which could cloud my judgment in a way where I focused more on positive information, experiences, and data while I downplayed or disregarded negative data I received. To counteract this, I implemented balanced data collection methods, actively sought counterexamples, and used triangulation to ensure a well-rounded analysis. Additionally, I remained mindful of this bias through critical reflection and peer debriefing with my dissertation coach to maintain objectivity.

In my experience, communities thrive when their schools and students excel. This is important because students need to learn at high levels and be career-ready to contribute effectively to society. By equipping them with the skills to address real-world challenges, we help prepare them to tackle global issues related to safety and security. I believe that high school is a pivotal time for students' academic and professional development, which is one of the reasons why my dissertation research focuses on this critical stage. More details on the reasons later in this chapter.

### **Ethical Procedures**

To be part of my study, I had to obtain informed consent to participate. I provided participants with the details to decide whether they wanted to participate in my research.

Informed, voluntary consent was obtained from all participants through a consent form written in standard American English (Appendix D). Agreements to gain access to participants or data via Institutional Review Board (IRB) application were processed before I started collecting data in the school (Appendix E). The consent process for the participants took place at the introductory meeting with the school stakeholders (or explained via email with the link to the survey) to discuss the parameters of the study. I informed participants about the nature and purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and what would be expected of them if consent was given. I let participants know that they can ask questions throughout the duration of the study and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

Most information and data were collected electronically and was kept on my personal computer and is only accessible to me via face recognition and password protected. Any printed material has been kept in a locked filing cabinet; this includes printed transcriptions, handwritten notes, and any written prompt responses from participants. Collected data will be kept for ten years and then deleted. Written data will be shredded after ten years.

When reporting the data, I categorized participants into groups, such as administrators, school staff, and community partners, to maintain anonymity and reduce confidentiality concerns. Please note here that this is not an anonymous study but the specific responses of the participants in the study are anonymous. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

### **Introduction**

In this study I explored how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented at Achievers Academy, a high-performing school, to increase student learning and overall well-being. The following research questions were addressed:

- How do teachers, school leaders, and community partners perceive that school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to student’s overall education in a high-performing school?
- How do Achievers Academy staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school?

Achievers Academy integrates school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs as central pillars to support and enhance student learning, especially for underserved students. Through intentional collaboration between teachers, school leaders, and community partners, these partnerships provide resources, learning opportunities, and support networks that extend beyond traditional academics, aligning closely with the school’s mission and action plan. In this chapter, I present an overview of my survey and interview results as well as my document review. From there I close out with the results from each research question.

Before I delve into the results, let me explicitly explain the difference between school-community partnerships and supplemental education opportunities and the relationship between the two. School-community partnerships are the collaborative relationships formed between the school and external organizations, while supplemental educational opportunities, lead by the supplemental education coordinator, are the enriched learning experiences, such as tutoring, mentoring, and academic clubs, which are made possible through those partnerships. Both are designed to extend student learning and support personal growth. The relationship between the two is interconnected: school-community partnerships provide the foundation and

resources, while supplemental educational opportunities represent the practical implementation of those collaborative efforts.

## **Results For RQs**

### **Research Question 1**

*How do teachers, and school leaders, perceive the contribution of partnerships and supplemental programs to students' education?*

As the subsequent analysis indicate, there is a shared belief among teachers, and leaders that partnerships and supplemental education significantly contribute to students' growth, both academically and socially at Achievers Academy.

### **Staff perspectives on school–community partnerships**

This section explores staff perspectives on how school–community partnerships impact student learning. Understanding staff perceptions and experiences helps strengthen the study's findings by connecting institutional goals with on-the-ground realities. This section also focuses on the structure, purpose, and impact of school–community partnerships as described by school personnel. Besides presenting how these collaborations support student learning, I also saw how the school-community partnerships set out to enrich the school environment, and align with the school's goals. This section highlights the critical role partnerships can play in enhancing educational outcomes and fostering a well-rounded learning experience.

### **Survey results**

The staff at Achievers Academy shared varied perspectives on school–community partnerships, revealing a more complex view compared to their overwhelmingly positive take on supplemental education (as I will discuss in the next section). School–community partnerships are defined as intentional relationships between a K–12 school or district and various local

organizations that support student success in and out of the classroom. These partnerships serve as a bridge to resources, expertise, and experiences that a school alone may not be able to provide (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

Responses on the partnership items varied more than in the supplemental education category, where 71–93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements. When asked about the school’s action plan and its emphasis on partnerships, twelve respondents agreed (86%) with the statement, “Our school’s action plan emphasizes the importance of school–community partnerships to enhance education.” For statements in the survey like, “Our community partners assess and monitor progress on indicators of student success,” opinions were more divided: seven agreed (50%), five respondents were neutral (36%), and two disagreed (14%). This distribution underscores a broader range of opinions on how staff perceive community partnerships’ effectiveness in supporting student success.

Several specific statements highlighted where staff see strengths and gaps in partnerships. For example, statements such as “Our school–community partnerships help families understand available services, advocate for student needs, and support their learning” and “Our school uses partnerships to implement a proactive approach to identifying students’ social, emotional, physical, and academic needs” received mixed responses: eight agreed (57%), four respondents were neutral (29%), and two disagreed (14%).

In the survey, staff shared reflections on how school–community partnerships benefit students, and their responses painted a picture of the school’s commitment to weaving these partnerships into the educational experience. Nine of the 14 respondents (64% of the total survey sample) emphasized that these collaborations help students explore their interests, broaden their worldviews, and discover potential career paths. For the nine staff members that

provided comments in the open-ended questions of the survey on how school-community partnerships benefit students' experiences, the respondents echoed the findings from the survey and the school's action plan underscoring the importance of these partnerships for enhancing education. The comments from the survey included statements that spoke about 1) the strength of specific partnerships with the local university, city, and health department. One respondent shared, *"these connections offer students a range of opportunities that help them grow into well-rounded individuals."* Another shared the importance of the partnerships for college and career readiness that leads to also fostering citizenship. A participant expressed that *"these partnerships equip students with practical experiences and resources to envision and pursue future goals."* An additional comment was about the support partnerships provide beyond academics, particularly in addressing students' social and emotional needs. A respondent stated that the school leaders *"would like to create more of a culture with these opportunities because they all work together to create their high performing school."*

The overall survey results suggest that participants recognized the relevance of establishing school-community partnerships. Also, while there are partnerships in place, staff are not fully convinced of their effectiveness in providing resources, interventions, and a more holistic approach to student support. There could be a number of reasons why participants shared mixed results regarding the effectiveness of partnerships. One explanation could be that staff are not aware of the school's efforts to create partnerships that are responsive to students' needs. These results could reflect problems with senior leadership to staff communication issues rather than a substantive issue with school–community partnerships.

### **Interview results**

Interview data revealed that school-community partnerships at Achievers Academy are viewed by leadership as integral to the school's educational mission and student success.

Participants emphasized that these partnerships are not surface-level collaborations, but intentional, sustained relationships that bring added value to both students and families. Several interviewees highlighted how the partnerships extend beyond academics, offering social-emotional support, career exposure, and community connection. Others pointed to the benefits of coordinated services provided by local health organizations, college access nonprofits, and arts-based programs, noting that such relationships allow the school to be more responsive to the diverse needs of its students. One leader noted, *“Partners help students with their overall education. It gives students opportunities that they normally don’t have.”*

Furthermore, the school’s senior leaders are looking to expand their school-community partnerships with a series of new and diverse initiatives. The school leaders pointed out that the local university and the district are prime partners and provide numerous opportunities to the students and families like with a local performing arts center that allows students to develop their theatrical, artistic, and musical interests. This is evidenced when one respondent brought up the connection with the local university. The participant stated that *“The focus is to build a relationship with our local university. The partnership allows for hundreds of opportunities with a plethora of opportunities.”* The leaders were especially excited about continuing and expanding their language offerings. They believe that offering more languages will not only enhance cultural awareness but also better prepare students for global opportunities and diverse career paths.

Achievers Academy also benefits from connections with diverse professionals. For example, the executive director’s husband, a global educator, spoke to students about career placement and advancement. This presentation gives students unique exposure to various careers, while new and continuing collaborations provide hands-on experience, like news

writing, sports, and music programs from local university groups. One leader explained, *“Our partnerships aren’t just extra, they’re woven into how we teach and support our students every day.”*

During an interview, one leader expressed that supporting the emotional and social well-being of students is a priority. The school’s professional counselor works closely with the school five days a week, coordinating with a local medical facility to provide comprehensive social-emotional support. The supports include monthly classroom “push-ins,” (where counselors provide therapy within the context of the classroom or during other naturally occurring events during the school day), college and career readiness training, and group sessions. Having partners that support students' mental health is key to help support student success. One respondent during the interview emphasized the value of these relationships, stating, *“Academic growth is important, but if students aren’t emotionally well, they can’t fully engage in learning.”* Another noted, *“We’re very intentional about creating safe, supportive spaces because we know that social-emotional health is the foundation for everything else.”* Another participant remarked, *“It makes the student more well-rounded; students can put it on their resume. It helps students find who they are and what they like.”* Through these partnerships, students gain exposure to experiences that deepen their education and help them build a diverse skill set and provide supports to increase their social well-being.

While interview participants were overwhelmingly positive about the presence and purpose of these partnerships, several also acknowledged areas for improvement. Some noted that while partnerships exist, communication and coordination could be more consistent. A few also expressed concerns about families not always being aware of available services. A few participants identified areas for improvement in taking a more proactive approach and providing

additional resources and services to strengthen school–community partnerships efforts they believe could enhance the school’s overall success. One senior leader mentioned, *“we have strong partners, but sometimes families don’t know everything we offer, and that’s a missed opportunity.”*

One leader shared, *“Our community partners help families understand available services, advocate for students’ needs, and support their learning.”* Another school leader noted, “Partners help students with their overall education. It gives students opportunities that they normally don’t have.” For instance, students participate in field trips that enhance academics, like the entrepreneur pitch program which is a “Shark Tank” like program for students to pitch their ideas, which has been a steady part of the school since its early days. The leader of this program even has personal ties to the academy; her daughter graduated in the school’s first class, illustrating how deeply these partnerships are woven into the community fabric. One leader remarked, “Keep building relationships, be consistent and supportive. You never know where the opportunities lie, how they will connect to the mission and vision later, and build to support the students.” Another remarked, “It makes the student more well-rounded; students can put it on their resume. It helps students find who they are and what they like.” Actions to create school-community partnerships are embedded throughout numerous documents and key building blocks to support student success.

These insights suggest that although the foundation for strong school-community partnerships is in place at Achievers Academy, ongoing work is needed to ensure sustained engagement. Overall, interview responses affirmed that these partnerships are not only well-regarded but are actively shaping the school’s ability to serve its students holistically. As one senior leader stated, *“We’ve made a lot of progress, but maintaining strong partnerships*

*takes effort and it's not a one-time setup; it's continuous relationship-building that directly benefits our students.”*

### **Document review results**

Achievers Academy’s partnerships have become pillars of the school’s educational mission. Through carefully cultivated relationships as stated in their actions in their mission and vision statements as well as in their action plan, they offer students real-world learning, emotional support, and college and career preparation (as stated in their mission and vision statements, ultimately enriching students’ academic journeys and paving the way for lifelong growth (as stated in the goals statement for the executive director).

### **Views on Supplemental Education Opportunities**

This section highlights staff views on the availability, effectiveness, and impact of supplemental education opportunities at the school. Examining the supplemental education opportunities provides a deeper understanding of the support beyond the core curriculum students receive to improve achievement and engagement. It also helps identify areas of strength and potential improvement in expanding or sustaining these offerings. This section examines the role of supplemental education programs in supporting student learning beyond the traditional classroom. It includes staff insights on how these programs enhance academic achievement, provide enrichment, and address diverse student needs. Highlighting supplemental education emphasizes its importance in creating equitable and engaging learning opportunities for all students.

## Survey results

The staff views on supplemental education demonstrated a strong consensus of support. The overall sentiment leaned overwhelmingly positive. Seven statements in this category rated 79% agreement (N=11), and five statements with over 86% agreement (N>12) noting that staff viewed supplemental education programs positively. The staff at Achievers Academy perspectives on supplemental education opportunities were overwhelmingly positive. Supplemental education opportunities for students are defined as a range of programs and activities that aim to enhance learning beyond regular school hours, usually after school. Out of 14 survey questions (see Appendix A for the statements in this category) gathering data about staff perspectives about supplemental education, at least one staff member disagreed, though no more than two staff members (14%) responded in this way to any one item. Certain statements garnered particularly strong agreement. For example, 93% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that “Students in our school choose from a range of supplemental education programs that reflect student needs, goals, and learning profiles,” with only one staff member (7%) expressing strong disagreement.

Likewise, on the statement in the survey, “Supplemental education activities at our school aim to build student civic and social responsibilities” was responded with 93% approval, and “Our school leaders collaborate with teachers to implement supplemental education activities to ensure student learning improvement” had 86% agreement (N=12). These responses reflect the alignment of staff views with the school’s mission and vision, underscoring their belief in supplemental education as a foundation for academic excellence.. The agreement with these statements coincides with the programs at the school that embody the school’s mission to provide students with pathways to learn at their own pace, earn college credits, and prepare for higher

education opportunities. In the school's vision statement, it is noted that their goal is to become one of the most rigorous college-prep schools nationwide by blending academic culture, personalized learning, and extracurricular is evident in their approach to supplemental education.

Another significant component of the school's community engagement is enhancing signature and afterschool programs. In addition to these programs, the leaders talked extensively about the signature programs that are modeled after some of the majors from the local university that provide gateways to careers and majors. A staff member shared, "*working with the university has given our kids access to things we just couldn't do alone—like journalism and music workshops led by college students.*" One item from the survey captured the enthusiasm participants shared for the school's efforts to provide tailored educational opportunities noting the strong connection to learning goals, programming, and a diverse curriculum. Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents expressed agreement with the statement, "Students in our school choose from a range of supplemental education programs that reflect student needs, goals, and learning profiles." Another key item showed a high level of support with 86 % of respondents agreeing with the assertion that "Our supplemental education activities provide opportunities for students to develop critical-thinking, reasoning skills, and problem-solving competencies."

### **Interview results**

Interviews with school leaders confirmed the alignment between supplemental opportunities and the curriculum is necessary to provide a well-rounded education experience for students covering student support factors. The interview with leaders emphasized how supplemental education programs help students become well-rounded and prepared for college admissions by fostering critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills.

In terms of the supplemental education activities in the school, there were three different types of responses from the senior staff: 1) the importance of supplemental education programs,

2) the goals of the supplemental opportunities, and 3) the planning and execution of the supplemental opportunities. The Executive Director's role is to look at supplemental education opportunities from a bird's eye view and focus is on her meetings and engagements on supporting supplemental opportunities. School leaders noted that the main goal of the supplemental opportunities is to enhance the student's experience. Interview participants see these activities as essential in helping students stay motivated and connected to their learning. *"These programs give our students exposure they might not get otherwise, and they come back to the classroom more motivated and curious,"* said one school leader, emphasizing how enrichment can boost both engagement and academic interest.

Another goal is to align the supplemental opportunities with the needs of the students. An A school leader noted during that interview that the Executive Director also focuses more so on academics and tries to cultivate and connect with partners to expand the student's portfolio so they can be ready for college and careers, be appealing to admission's offices (and not just have a good GPA) and get into the academic programs to which they apply. Supplemental programs are seen as a strategic way to offer personalized learning and pathways for student success. As one leader explained, *"The goal [of supplemental education] is to give students access to opportunities that broaden their view of what's possible, whether it's earning college credit, exploring a career path, or just learning in a different way."* Programs are often piloted in afterschool spaces before being considered for integration into the school day.

School leaders also shared that Achievers Academy has a plethora of programs. Some of the typical programs include cheer, dance, Model UN, PBIS college tours, field trips, virtual trips, and an afterschool program. Other programs that the leaders called out were flag football, sisters in stem, spades, UNO tournaments, ultimate frisbee, an engineering program, and an after

school study club. The school leaders mentioned that supplemental education programs are very important to support students. Some leaders noted that the programs *“takes the burden off of school staff to reduce burnout and help invigorate students with a different perspective.”*

Another school leader also noted that another goal of these opportunities was to “make the student more well-rounded” meaning that students can put the programs they are involved in on their resume and can help students find who they are and what they like. These supplemental programs, including expanded language offerings, serve as valuable extensions of the core curriculum by bringing in outside expertise and fresh approaches that enrich student learning and support staff capacity.

An important supplemental program, that is a valuable extension to the Math curriculum, is the Math Club. Not only does the school has an extensive approach with utilizing and maintaining a good Math teacher to support their math goals, but the school leadership wanted to make sure that students had opportunities like the Saturday program for Math because the statewide math assessment scores are lower than the school leaders would like them to be. and it is an area of focus. The school leaders believe that the Summer Math Club will strengthen the Math program for the following school year and help to improve math test scores and proficiency. Math courses are also supplemented with a Math Coach who help students become more confident users of mathematics.

Another example of a great supplemental education opportunity, as a school leader noted, *“was the screening of Jim Henson’s movie.”* The movie was complemented with the *“pitching for Jim Henson day to help students know more about imagination, puppets, stagehands, etc. and it created a lifelong partnership for students.”* Other examples of supplemental education opportunities include a physics presentation, hands on projects, extra hands in the classroom,

times when the students support the teacher, and when guest speakers add depth to the teacher's lesson.

The widespread support from school staff for supplemental education reflects the leadership's commitment to creating enriching, meaningful opportunities for students that will benefit them long after graduation. In one interview, a school leader noted that *"The activities do overlap. I focus on high level tasks related to supplemental education opportunities and focus more so on academics. I cultivate and connect with partners to expand the student's portfolio so they can be ready for college and careers, be appealing to admission's offices (and not just have a good GPA) and get into the programs they apply for."* One school leader expressed during the interviews that securing activities is key for the school. In other words, supplemental education programs at Achievers Academy are designed *"to give students a competitive edge by helping them build a diverse and impressive portfolio that goes beyond grades alone."*

According to my research, the presence of the supplemental education coordinator is vital in facilitating robust educational opportunities through community partnerships. The success of these programs, however, hinges on the availability of qualified staff to oversee the work of the programs. . When there is a lack of staff to manage the programs, either due to availability or capacity constraints, opportunities can be delayed. One respondent noted, "sometimes we have really great ideas for programs or community partners ready to support us, but if we don't have a staff member who can oversee the activities the students, we just can't move forward with it."The supplemental education coordinator explained the planning and execution process of the opportunities that the school offers. It was described that a weekly message is sent out to students, parents, and families to provide an update on the programs offered. The coordinator also evaluates the implementation of the programs on a weekly and monthly basis. The

coordinations also explained that students from the local university run the program, not school staff. There is a before and after care tutor program and the robotics afterschool program is run by local university students free of charge. A school leader mentioned that the students pay for the afterschool program, and they would like the program to be free but did not mention if this held other students back from participating in the program. This highlights the critical role staff play in ensuring that these initiatives are sustainable and effectively meet student needs.

Even though supplemental education opportunities play a vital role in Achievers Academy, there is currently no strategic plan that provides a roadmap for stakeholders or partners specifically around the goals for the supplemental educational opportunities. In the interviews, two of the school leaders identified a need to put together a School Improvement Plan to support their supplemental education program to strengthen the impact. Additionally, the two principals highlighted the need for more opportunities like interscholastic, athletic teams, and club sports which could provide additional venues for students interestThe leaders stated in the interviews that they are selective about opportunities because of schedule, timing, and/or bus availability. The supplemental education opportunities also depend on students' interests. One school leader noted, *"If no one is available to supervise, even a great program might not run. It really depends on having the right people in place to get it off the ground."* Some programs start after a teacher's tenure because they can implement it but other programs may start after the teacher leaves but had the idea and their legacy lives on to support the students.

### **Document review results**

After my review of the school's mission and vision, I see that the mission and vision statements are aligned with the school's focus which is central to staff support for supplemental education. There however is a yearly goal plan that school leaders follow to reach their goals.

The school's primary supplemental education program is its after-school initiative, which serves as the main avenue for students to extend and enhance their learning beyond the regular school day. The School's Board is responsible for the oversight of Supplemental Education at the school while the Supplement Education Coordinator oversees the program and a school leader noted that is part of the Board's work and their goal is to make sure that there is "*sound fundamental programming that adds value to the school.*" This is part of the school leadership's broader vision to intensify academic and experiential offerings, a strategy that aligns well with their partnership with a curriculum provider that also supports for students outside the school day. By using a tailored curriculum, the school aims to ensure that learning materials meet high standards and address student needs directly, preparing them for future academic success.

To support the Board's work, the Executive Director's focus is to perform high level tasks like prioritizing complex, strategic, and impactful responsibilities which can include developing policies, overseeing large-scale programs, making data-driven decisions, and implementing initiatives that influence education at a broad level which includes providing academic support and increasing test scores and student achievement. When deciding on what programs to incorporate, the leadership team discusses the option to bring a program to the school and they figure out if the opportunity is a good fit for the school. Lastly, it is extremely important to note that supplement opportunities that might not be included in the school's budget so it might be hard to navigate, maintain, and retain these opportunities for the long haul so they may be short lived and students might not get to experience these programs.

## **Research Question 2**

*In what ways do Achievers Academy staff and community partners build these partnerships and supplemental activities?*

### **School-community partnerships**

Achievers Academy staff and community partners build school–community partnerships through intentional alignment with the school’s mission, strategic planning, and strong communication. Staff members actively collaborate with local organizations and universities to co-create programs that enrich student learning beyond the traditional classroom. These partnerships are often initiated through outreach from school leadership and facilitated by the supplemental education coordinator, who helps ensure programs meet student needs and align with academic goals.

### **Survey results**

The participating staff at Achievers Academy shared how partnerships positively impact students’ education. Across the board, respondents emphasized that these collaborations help students explore their interests, broaden their worldviews, and discover potential career paths. For instance, students participate in field trips that enhance academics, like the entrepreneur pitch program, which, as I stated earlier, has been a steady part of the school since its inception. Survey responses reveal that Achievers Academy staff play a meaningful role in building and maintaining school–community partnerships through collaboration and shared decision-making. Over half of the staff respondents (57%) agreed that their perspectives are valued when decisions about partnerships are made, indicating a school culture that supports inclusive input in developing external relationships. Staff noted that successful partnerships are often built on clear communication and mutual alignment with the school’s mission and goals. However, 29% of respondents disagreed with this sentiment, suggesting that not all staff feel consistently included in partnership planning, which may impact the sustainability or reach of some initiatives.

Overall, the survey results highlight that when staff are involved in shaping school-community relationships, the partnerships are more likely to be strategic and beneficial to the school community.

### **Interview results**

It was outlined in an interview with one of the school leaders that the work of the school's professional school counselor and how that role works closely with the school five days a week, coordinating with a local medical facility to provide comprehensive social-emotional support. The counselor's role includes monthly classroom visits, college and career readiness training, and group sessions. The role for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), was also explained as to how the counselor works with teachers and the IEP team to meet specific learning needs, providing a strong foundation of support. One school leader during the interview noted, *"Partners help students with their overall education. It gives students opportunities that they normally don't have."*

School-community partnerships provide a road map to success beyond the classroom or school walls. Respondents noted that their partnerships provide role models to students that they do not usually get to see in a regular classroom. The school leaders noted that they meet on a regular basis to talk about their partnerships and expectations to promote and encourage academic excellence for all students and for the integrity and promotion of their school. The school's senior leaders are looking to expand on this partnership with new and diverse initiatives. Each school leader separately expressed that they're incredibly excited about continuing and expanding their language offerings, such as through Spanish Interns and potentially reintroducing languages like Chinese and Swahili. In one interview, a school leader explained,

*“We’ve had as many as seven languages in the past, and we’d love to offer more via an app.”*

This renewed focus on language variety aims to foster a richer cultural education for students.

Another significant component of the school’s community engagement is enhancing signature and afterschool programs. The Signature Programs at Achievers Academy are the essence of the partnership with the local university because Achievers students focus their coursework on a particular field of study aligned with the local university’s major to amplify their high school experience. This is part of the school leadership’s broader vision to intensify academic and experiential offerings, a strategy that aligns well with their partnership with a curriculum provider. By using a tailored curriculum, the school aims to ensure that learning materials meet high standards and address student needs directly, preparing them for future academic success. For instance, Achievers Academy has a writing club that brings in university students to support the high school students and the high school students support the middle school students. In summary, Achievers Academy’s partnerships have become pillars of the school’s educational mission. Through carefully cultivated relationships, they offer students real-world learning, emotional support, and college and career preparation, ultimately enriching students’ academic journeys and paving the way for lifelong growth.

All the school leaders were adamant that they did not turn away partners but sometimes partners do not work out. The reasons that were cited for not working out were because of scheduling, the partnership did not align, the partners cannot meet their needs, or if it is not allowed by the school district. Other reasons that were cited was if there were too many of those opportunities at the school already or because of lack of student interest. One example was they couldn’t establish a partnership for karate because they only had 4 students who were interested.

Other reasons were because of the limitations because of testing, lack of funding, and or lack of space. For example, there is a partnership with a local tennis program at the tennis building but the school does not have space for tennis at school.

In addition, partners have to go through the vendor process and get on the vendor list to become a partner and that may be burdensome to some partners. When programs do not come back it is usually because of the partners with time issues or resources. In the past, there were also times that the team provided trial activities like instruction in languages, such as Japanese or Arabic. The leaders noted in their response that they are always looking for opportunities for their students and they turn over every stone to support students and they never stop looking for opportunities.

### **Document review results**

The school leaders think about and plan for what the value added that students can experience or that would benefit them. This means that the school leaders carefully consider and plan for the unique value that students can gain from their educational experiences whether through academic opportunities, skill development, or personal growth. According to four school leaders, they noted in the interviews that the community partners set the school apart from others, particularly with unique positions such as the university-school liaison. This role, along with others, is essential to the school's success, as it fosters strong partnerships that create valuable supplemental education opportunities for students. In addition, the school collaborates with the discovery district and partners with companies and local non-profits on common interest projects to support each other. These components are outlined on the schools website and were expressed throughout the interviews with all the senior leaders. Some examples are the “Good Neighbor Day” event (a collaborative partnership between the local university, the neighboring

city, the local park and planning commission, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the county that hosts service opportunities to engage and support the community), tutoring competitions, and an outreach arts program. I believe these partnerships give students unique exposure to various careers, while new and continuing collaborations provide hands-on experience, like news writing, sports, and music programs from local university groups. These experiences are noted on their website, in the activities they provide, and in the goals of their yearly action plan.

### **Supplemental Education Opportunities**

Achievers Academy staff and community partners build supplemental education opportunities by fostering strong, collaborative relationships that extend learning beyond the classroom. They work closely with local organizations, educational institutions, and volunteers to design and implement enrichment programs such as tutoring, STEM workshops, college readiness initiatives, and cultural experiences. These activities are tailored to meet students' academic and developmental needs, often aligning with the school's curriculum while also exposing students to broader learning opportunities. Through consistent communication (with senior leaders and the Board), shared goals, and a commitment to student success, these opportunities provide valuable academic support and help reinforce a culture of achievement.

### **Survey results**

Survey responses show that staff at Achievers Academy recognize the value of supplemental education programs and actively contribute to their development and implementation. A majority of respondents agreed that the school encourages collaboration with external partners to provide enrichment activities such as tutoring, arts, STEM, and college prep

programs. Staff noted that these opportunities often emerge when there is open communication between educators and the supplemental education coordinator, who plays a key role in connecting the school with outside resources. However, survey data also revealed that the success and continuity of these programs often depend on staff availability. Respondents mentioned that without teachers or staff members to sponsor or supervise activities, some programs cannot be launched or maintained. This highlights the importance of internal commitment and logistical support in sustaining high-quality supplemental education for all students.

### **Interview results**

Interviews with staff and school leaders revealed that Achievers Academy takes a strategic and relational approach to developing supplemental education opportunities. Leaders described how partnerships often begin through outreach to local organizations and universities, followed by collaborative planning to tailor programs to student needs. As one leader stated, *“We work with partners who understand our mission and are willing to build something that fits our students, not just a one-size-fits-all program.”* Staff also explained that the afterschool program serves as a space to pilot new initiatives, with the goal of eventually integrating successful ones into the regular school schedule.

The supplemental education coordinator was frequently mentioned as a key figure in managing partnerships, handling logistics, and facilitating communication. To help boost academic excellence, the tutoring programs do have access to Connexus to see what gaps, strategies, and activities to help support the students’ learning. Some of the programs include a Math Club, Model UN, and a study club. The partners also help with a variety of subjects and topics like future language skills, wellness women, and an engineering program which was

started by the president of the local university to help all students learn more about engineering. Another activity is a basketball program that teaches skills for male students. Some partners are one off opportunities like the Rotary club, which according to the school's website, is an organization that *"provides service to others, promotes integrity, and advances world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders."* In hearing stories from the school leaders during my interviews, they noted that various students participated in the Rotary clubs, and they noted that students say that they get to be involved in and demonstrate citizenship and make a difference in their community. They also stated that they gain leadership, project management, teamwork skills, and similar skills that helped them later in life especially in finding a job or continuing their higher education.

The school also has a social justice program which in my experience is known to help people to contribute to and to benefit from the common good and encourages individual self-development and self-determination. Members, including students and the students at Achievers Academy have access to this program and their experts. These examples were provided by the School Leaders during the interviews because they wanted to convey the message that their school is an option for any scholar in the county to attend and that it has a rigorous program. These insights underscore that while supplemental education is highly valued, its sustainability depends on coordination, staffing, and alignment with school priorities.

It was noted in the interviews that staff make intentional efforts to implement supplemental education activities that bring added depth and relevance to students' learning experiences. Participants described how these initiatives go beyond standard instruction to reinforce academic concepts and support skill development. For example, multiple interviewees

referenced after-school enrichment opportunities such as academic clubs, guest lectures, and community-led workshops as critical tools for extending learning. One school leader highlighted the importance of curriculum integration, stating, *“Our partnership with an external curriculum provider allows us to raise the level of academic rigor, ensuring that what students experience in the classroom aligns with college- and career-ready standards.”* This finding is further supported by survey data, where 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school uses supplemental programs to reinforce student learning and support critical thinking. Together, these responses illustrate how partnerships enable mentoring, hands-on projects, and curriculum support that collectively enhance the academic depth offered to students at Achievers Academy. These programs and experiential learning projects give students real-world applications of their studies, such as a chemistry professor from a local university leading students in a research project to help solve real-world problems which helps to instill skills that are relevant beyond the classroom.

### **Document review results**

The document review confirmed that supplemental education is a central component of Achievers Academy’s mission and strategic planning. The FY 23–24 School Action Plan outlines specific goals to enhance learning beyond the traditional classroom, including strategies for extended day programming, culturally responsive enrichment, and university partnerships. These documents show that supplemental education is embedded in the school’s overall vision for student success, not treated as an extracurricular add-on.

Supporting materials, such as the Executive Director’s goals, school website, and public profiles highlight concrete examples of supplemental activities, including writing programs, music instruction, and sports, highlight programs led by community and university partners.

These recurring programs demonstrate that the school is intentional about building long-term relationships with organizations that can offer high-quality, student-centered learning experiences. The consistent appearance of these programs in planning documents and public reports affirms that supplemental education is both a strategic priority and a reflection of Achievers Academy's commitment to holistic education.

Achievers Academy builds its partnerships through continuous engagement with families and community organizations. This involves proactive communication and strategic outreach, ensuring struggling students receive timely support. From the survey I conducted, approximately 86% of staff agreed that the school reaches out to the families of students facing academic challenges, which could lead to more partnerships and educational opportunities. The consensus from the interviews is that teachers also regularly contact parents to discuss student progress, further strengthening family involvement. The school's partnerships include collaborations with local businesses, universities, and social services, creating a network that supports student learning and personal development.

In summary, Achievers Academy's action plan reinforces these supplemental education practices by prioritizing relationships with families and the community. During my document review of the plan, I see that it ensures that these partnerships are not just supportive but integral to the educational process. For example, the action plan outlines specific strategies such as extended learning opportunities, culturally responsive teaching, and active collaboration with external partners to support student learning beyond the traditional classroom environment. The approach to prioritize partnerships and supplement education programs is reflected in Achievers Academy's overall mission to provide students with diverse learning experiences, preparing them not only academically but also for the life challenges and opportunities ahead. By embedding

these strategies into daily practices, Achievers Academy exemplifies a model for high-performing schools seeking to elevate student achievement through community partnerships and supplemental education. This model not only enriches students' educational experience but also serves as a valuable approach for other schools aiming to foster well-rounded, supported, and engaged learners.

### **School Characteristics: Collaborations and Involvement**

This section explores staff perceptions of the school's culture of collaboration and communication among educators, administrators, and external partners. It highlights how open communication and teamwork contribute to the success of school initiatives and partnership programs. Including "*Collaborations and Involvement*" as a subheading highlights the active role of staff, families, and community partners in supporting the school's mission and student success. It emphasizes how shared efforts and meaningful engagement strengthen both academic outcomes and the overall school environment.

### **Survey results**

Achievers Academy builds partnerships and supplemental education activities by strategically engaging the community, aligning with the school's goals, and creating diverse opportunities that address both academic and social-emotional needs. Through these intentional partnerships, the school staff ensures that each student's experience is enriched and supports their journey toward well-rounded success. One of the key ways staff build and maintain these partnerships is by actively involving community organizations and aligning the organizations with the school's mission and action plan. This collaborative approach is reflected in staff perceptions: 57% of the 14 respondents agreed that the school values their perspectives in

decisions about school–community partnerships, while 29% disagreed and 14% remained neutral. Despite these varied responses, the school’s FY2023 goals and objectives for the Executive Director, the plan reflects a commitment to gathering input, making staff engagement a part of partnership development. For example, item 1a of the document stated that the Executive Director will work with the school staff to make strategic, data-based decisions to deliver a high quality education. 3g of the plan states that the school will seek partnerships that enhance student opportunities.

Through both strategic planning and dedicated outreach, the school creates a well-rounded learning environment that extends beyond the classroom. The staff widely believes in the importance of family support, with 100% of respondents in the survey agreeing that effective family involvement significantly impacts student learning. This commitment to family engagement drives the staff to keep in close communication with parents, particularly when students face academic challenges. For example, 86% of respondents noted that the school makes a special effort to contact families of students who are struggling, emphasizing a proactive approach to academic support.

Achievers Academy also collaborates with a variety of community organizations, with 79% of staff agreeing that these partnerships positively contribute to student development. This effort aligns with the school’s vision of creating meaningful opportunities and access points for students, allowing them to engage in supplemental programs like mentoring and after-school enrichment activities. These community partnerships bring in valuable resources and mentors that supplement the academic curriculum and offer real-world applications, helping students build skills that extend into career and college readiness. Additionally, the school provides comprehensive information to families on how they can further support their children’s

educational success, with 79% of staff acknowledging in the survey the school's efforts in this area. Teachers also maintain frequent contact with students' parents, enhancing the network of support available to students. However, when asked about the role of parents as volunteers or community partners in the survey, responses were mixed. Only 50% agreed that parents are actively involved as volunteers and 36% were neutral. This suggests that while family engagement is strong, there may be fewer formal roles for parents within community partnerships.

### **Interview results**

Staff members are dedicated to enhancing learning through supplemental education activities that extend beyond traditional academics. These activities enable students to explore various interests and potential careers. Senior leaders at Achievers Academy continually work to broaden language and extracurricular offerings, bringing in language interns, exploring digital language apps, and providing enrichment programs. Additionally, they collaborate with curriculum providers to ensure students have access to high-quality, rigorous materials that are tailored to their needs.

In addition to academic enrichment, the school values partnerships that address students' social and emotional well-being. By collaborating with mental health professionals and employing a full-time counselor from local hospitals were helpful collaborations for students. Achievers Academy uses community partnerships and supplemental education programs to offer well-rounded, supportive, and meaningful learning experiences, ensuring that each student can thrive academically and personally. During the interviews it was revealed that the high school counselors went to the local university and that helps with partnerships, collaboration and

communication because knowing the history and the programs are beneficial to support the students on an individual basis.

In the interviews, some of the senior leaders expressed that the effort of bringing in partners as well as meaningful supplemental opportunities reflect the school's action plan, which prioritizes strengthening family and community ties as essential elements of student success. By embedding family engagement and community support into its programs, Achievers Academy successfully enhances educational outcomes and provides students with the foundational skills, support, and experiences they need to thrive.

### **Relationship With the Local University**

This section examines the school's partnership with the local university and how it contributes to student learning and program development. It highlights initiatives such as mentoring, enrichment programs, and staff support facilitated through this collaboration. Including this section demonstrates how strategic university partnerships can enhance educational opportunities and strengthen the school's overall mission.

### **Document Review**

In the school's mission, it is noted that the school was founded as a partnership with the local university. This school–university partnership is the most important relationship of the school which was intended to increase opportunities, accessibility, and the number of college credits earned by students to enhance academic rigor. This relationship also enhances academic excellence (as the students get merit scholarships) and over the years, they have seen an increase in the school's graduation rate because of the completion of college credits. The main expectation of the school–university partnership is to provide students with opportunities to see the campus, increase enrollment at the local university, and help students to be college and career

ready. Students have access to tours and get to experience nonacademic experiences at the university including sports and clubs. The focus is to build a relationship with the local university because it is multifaceted and robust as it provides hundreds of opportunities with a plethora of opportunities and the school has many partners within the university.

An aspect of the partnership that some respondents wanted to highlight is the Partnership Coordinator position and the Liaison position to help develop the partners. The Coordinator and the Liaison support the students to go to campus, assist with touring the academic colleges, facilitating sitting in classes, and connecting students to talk to university students with various majors and backgrounds. In addition, it was noted that the local university has interns that use their student teacher hours in classes at Achievers Academy. These student teachers work with teachers of record to teach classes and amplify what the teacher taught. I wanted to note here that with the scope of my study, I did not track the number of interns or the number of partners at the scope of my study.

According to the school's website and the strategic goals document of the school it is noted that the partnership with the local university is a daily integrated partnership. Achievers Academy has signature programs that are aligned to several majors at the university and are a great collaboration with the colleges of the university. Students take classes and are involved in activities with the college like tours, meet the staff, and information that help students decide whether they want to go to the local university or another college, but it provides a gateway to career preparation and access. A majority of Achievers Academy students take the Advanced Placement (AP) exam. According to the school's website, 60% of their students take AP classes which also helps with college preparation and can strengthen the relationship with the local university because the more prepared students are for the college, the higher the enrollment rate

at any college but particularly at this university because of the relationship and the proximity. One respondent in the interviews stated that their school might have the highest percentages of students going to the local university because of the partnership from middle school through high school. In my review, I did not see any evidence as to how many students have participated and my guess is that this is an estimation based on the grades at the school (6-12) and the relationship with the local university.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

In this chapter I discuss how school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs are implemented in a high-performing school to increase student learning with interviews, a survey, and a document review. I employed a convergent mixed methods case study design to answer the research questions with the hope to inform similar educational practices to improve the educational experiences of underserved students. I explored the following research questions: How do teachers and school leaders perceive Achievers Academy partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school’s students? In what ways does Achievers Academy staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school?

I examined a high-performing school in hopes to provide examples of best practices in school-community partnerships and supplemental education opportunities to improve education across the country. I want to note that researchers have found important mechanisms through which high-performing schools benefit student learning and academic outcomes. For example, Parrett and Budge (2012) found that high-performing schools tend to increase community

involvement, community progress, and a sense of pride. Add another empirical study that talk about the benefits of high performing schools

In terms of the layout for this chapter, I discuss the summary of my findings and their relevance within the broader educational landscape. I begin by interpreting the results in relation to my research questions, with particular focus on how school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to student success in a high-performing school setting. I highlight emerging patterns, themes, and unexpected outcomes, and connect these insights to the existing literature. This chapter also explores the implications of the findings for practice, policy, and future research, while acknowledging the study's limitations. I conclude by emphasizing what is at stake for public education today, particularly at a time when the role of public education is being debated across the country.

### **Summary of Main Findings**

Achievers Academy staff and community partners implement partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school to improve the educational experiences of students. This was done by having a school goal of establishing school–community partnerships, building partners, and making partners a priority to support the overall education of students. My research shows a strong relationship between school–community partnerships, supplemental education programs, and that when you have intentional partnerships and create a culture of opportunities for students, which staff believe creates a positive effect on the educational acumen for their students. My research demonstrates a strong relationship between school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs, showing that when schools intentionally

cultivate partnerships and create a culture of opportunity, staff believe this has a positive impact on students' educational growth and achievement.

Survey responses recognized the importance of supplemental education agreeing that such programs contribute to student learning, critical thinking, and civic engagement. Interview participants reinforced this enthusiasm, describing how after-school enrichment, academic clubs, mentoring, and summer bridge programs provide students with personalized learning experiences that go beyond the traditional curriculum. One school leader noted that these opportunities are essential for helping students build their portfolios and prepare for both college and careers.

Secondly, the most robust partnerships are seen in the before- and after-care programs. If partners are willing to pilot their initiatives in these extended-day settings and the programs prove successful, they may be transitioned into the core school day. The survey and interview data in this study strongly complement one another, reinforcing a shared narrative about the value of school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs at Achievers Academy. Survey responses revealed moderate to high levels of agreement (71%–100%) with statements regarding the school's outreach efforts, collaboration with partners, and support for student success, suggesting a broad, schoolwide favorability. These quantitative results were further supported by qualitative interview data, where participants offered detailed examples and personal insights into how these partnerships operate in practice. For instance, survey participants indicated that the school works closely with community organizations, and interviews provided deeper context, describing partnerships with the local university and civic agencies that provide mentoring, tutoring, and career exposure opportunities. Together, the datasets highlight alignment between staff perceptions, school-community-partnerships as well

as supplemental education opportunities emphasizing the intentional design and impact of these collaborative efforts.

However, data also reveal slight contrasts, particularly regarding the depth of engagement of school programs and areas for growth. While most survey respondents reported agreement with statements about communication and coordination of the partnerships and programs, interviewees more openly discussed challenges in the current relationships, such as the need for improved consistency with programs, opportunities, and partners and the ability to offer these venues for students.

Another important point that emerged from the data was around family engagement, notably not connecting with families for ideas or opportunities for them to be partners or for them to provide their services, which could lead to increased school-community partnerships and supplemental educational opportunities. These contrasting details suggest that while staff generally view the school's partnerships and supplemental education efforts positively, there may be underlying operational or communication gaps that are not fully captured in survey responses. The interviews helped to surface these nuances, providing insight into how school leaders and staff experience and navigate the complexities of implementing these initiatives. This complementarity between the datasets strengthens the validity of the findings and underscores the importance of using a mixed-methods approach to capture both broad perceptions and in-depth understanding.

However, another finding noted from the interviews revealed nuances not captured in the survey, such as concerns about equitable access, program sustainability, and the challenge of aligning some supplemental activities with classroom instruction. These insights suggest that while supplemental education is highly valued, ongoing coordination and evaluation are needed

to ensure that all students benefit consistently. Thus, the interviews not only supported the positive trends seen in the survey but also added depth and context to areas where further development may be needed.

### **Research Question 1**

***How do teachers and school leaders perceive that Achievers Academy partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to the overall education of the school's students?***

#### ***Being Intentional and Systemic to Help Students***

Partnerships and programs create a positive effect on the educational acumen for their students if conducted intentionally and in a systematic way. There is also strong evidence that school leaders have built consistency and stability with school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs and this helps to create a culture and climate where the staff and school leadership want to help students to be their best and by having partnerships and supplemental education programs, schools can enhance the learning and experiences of their students. My findings underscore the critical nature and delicate balance of implementing and creating school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs that support student's overall education and the school set out to increase student achievement. It is evident that these partnerships and programs can influence student achievement and academic excellence but it must be done with intentionality, planning, as well as staff, leadership, partner, and student buy-in and consistent participation. This is evident not only in the positive responses to the survey questions about school leaders' collaboration to ensure student learning improvement, but also, in the fact that students can choose from a range of supplemental education programs that reflect the students' needs, goals, and learning profiles. It is also noted that the supplemental education activities aim to build student civic and social responsibilities. These three survey

questions (about school collaboration, a range of programs, and building student civic and social responsibilities) showed up as common themes and a common thread through the interviews with the senior leaders. These findings are in line with the research of Parrett and Budge (2012), who found that high-performing schools have high standards, have diverse partnerships and resources, and prioritize systems learning. Although the focus of my study is on school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs, the intersection with the markers of a high-performing school show similarities with this case where there are robust partners and programs; each helps to facilitate improved learning and academic achievement. Lastly, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) identified that schools that had a clear and shared focus, tended to do better academically, had more effective school leadership, and a stronger learning environment which shows up in most of the survey responses and is also echoed in the conversations with the school leaders. For example, think about the work at KIPP schools. Their website stated that they have a robust plan to help students. They have extended day hours to commit to more learning, Saturday school time to support students academically, and they work with partners to support learning and educating children by being intentional about developing students and supporting them to go to college and find careers. Now think about the work of community schools that work with local and national partners to support the unique needs of the children in the community. These schools rely on partnerships for academic support, youth development, family support, physical health, mental health and social services that lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. According to Blank et al. (2009), community schools use schools as hubs that bring together many partners to offer a range of support and opportunities in an intentional and systematic way that speaks to this finding.

## **Research Question 2**

***In what ways do Achievers Academy staff build partnerships and supplemental education activities in their school?***

### ***Forming and sustaining partnerships and supplemental education activities***

Partnerships and programs help students become well-rounded and more competitive for college and careers as they build student civic and social responsibilities. This finding from my study points back to the importance that Knudson and Cantor (2020) argued that schools need to learn how to encourage and support collaborative partnerships because these partnerships support a well-rounded educational approach. These researchers also echoed the importance of a more unified approach across the nation. Scholars such as Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012) have long asserted that school–community partnerships are critical for addressing the holistic needs of students and improving academic outcomes, particularly in under-resourced schools. Similarly, Ishimaru (2019) emphasized that authentic, equity-centered engagement with families and communities contributes to more sustainable school improvement and meaningful gains for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. Participants acknowledged the intricacies of coordinating partnerships and making them relevant to students as well as supporting the school’s rigorous mission. This finding helped me to see the need for partnerships and supplemental programs support across the nation and how it could assist with youth development and could become the norm to have school and community partnerships intentionally in every school. For example, if a school leader wanted to implement this the use of school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs, I would urge the leader to cultivate community-school partnerships and programs by 1) embedding partnerships and programs in the school’s action plan or improvement plan, 2) having a specific partnership or

program project plan with a communication/collaboration plan to help strengthen the relationships and get on on page, and 3) using the communication/collaboration plan to collaborate and meet on a regular basis to establish best practices and lessons learned to help the students reach their goals and to increase student achievement. This coordinated effort will be beneficial to all stakeholders and could improve the overall educational factors for all students.

With the three major findings of having a strong intentional relationships between school–community partnerships, supplemental education programs, and create a culture of opportunities for students, having robust partnerships in all aspects of the school experience, and aligning equitable access, program sustainability, and the challenge of aligning some supplemental activities with classroom instruction are key to my study results to be lifted up for future use to help schools build out their partnerships and programs.

The survey data revealed strong support among staff for Achievers Academy’s school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs. Out of the 14 questions focused on these areas, between 10 and 13 respondents (71%–93%) either agreed or strongly agreed with each statement, indicating broad alignment with the school’s mission to provide holistic and enriching learning opportunities. The highest agreement (100%) was observed on the statement that students learn more through effective family support, underscoring the value staff place on home-school collaboration. Additionally, 86% of respondents affirmed that the school takes intentional steps to reach out to families of academically struggling students, and 79% indicated that the school works closely with community organizations to support student needs. A smaller proportion of respondents (7%–14%) expressed disagreement or neutrality on questions related to parent volunteerism and the visibility of community partners, highlighting areas where partnerships could be strengthened or made more inclusive. Overall, the survey

results align closely with qualitative findings and suggest that both supplemental education and community partnerships are key contributors to the school's high performance and student readiness for college and careers.

These open-ended responses to the survey and reflections from staff during their interviews underscore the idea that school–community partnerships are more than just collaborations; they are an integral part of the school's mission to provide students with a comprehensive, well-rounded education that prepares them for future success. Through these partnerships, the school continues to create enriching experiences that support not only academic growth but also personal development, laying a strong foundation for students' future endeavors. Based on the high neutral scores, partnerships are time consuming and need to be managed. I also want to note the tension between the idealized version of incorporating school–community partnerships to create better schools and the notion that there is no silver bullet to make students or schools better. The insights and strategies that I present here bring forward different affordances and challenges that have to be navigated and supported; however, as the literature states, it can have a huge impact for the future well-being of students.

The semi-structured interviews with school leaders revealed a shared understanding of the value that school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs bring to Achievers Academy. Three primary themes emerged from the data: 1) partnerships expand opportunities for students beyond the classroom, 2) supplemental education supports both academic achievement and personal development, and 3) these initiatives align closely with the school's mission to prepare students for college and careers.

The five interview participants talked in detail about the school-community partners and the supplemental education programs. Each participant highlighted the strengths of each. Three of the interview participants (60%) could only talk about either school-community partners or supplemental education because their capacity and role at the school limited them to focus on only one portion, however I do want to note that these participants did have a positive view of the school overall and the programs they provided. These staff members were great sources of data because of their responsibilities in the school, their years of experience and well as their knowledge of not only school-community partnerships and supplemental education opportunities but also because of their knowledge of the school's goals, mission, vision, and commitment to the learning outcomes of the students.

Participants frequently described how intentional partnerships with local organizations, including the local university, city agencies, and nonprofits allow the school to offer diverse learning experiences. One school leader explained, "*Securing a variety of activities helps to build a student's portfolio so they can be ready for college and careers, be appealing to admission offices, and get into the programs they apply for.*" Another respondent noted that these programs are not just academically beneficial but also transformative, stating, "*Working with community partners creates a web of experts that reinforces the school's efforts but also helps students see the real-world value in what they do.*" While the overall sentiment was overwhelmingly positive, a few participants mentioned the need for stronger coordination between school staff and external partners, as well as greater outreach to families. Nevertheless, the interview findings reinforce the survey data, underscoring that partnerships and supplemental education opportunities are key strategies that help Achievers Academy meet its high standards and support student success.

During the interview, one staff member detailed how partnerships provide “career preparation, cultural enrichment, enhanced learning, real-world applications, resource sharing, and support services.” Another respondent during their interview, commented on how partnerships help build a culture and climate where students can “be their best,” describing how school leaders have worked to create consistency and direction. These relationships give students a glimpse into the future, helping them see how their educational experiences connect to real-world applications and prepare them for life beyond school. Reflecting on the limitations faced by schools, especially during challenging times like the pandemic, staff during these interviews acknowledged the critical role community partners play in supporting student well-being. One respondent during the interview process observed, “working with community partners creates a web of experts that reinforces the school’s efforts but also helps students to see the real-world value in what they do.” Another example a school leader provided, highlighted a chemistry professor at a nearby university who involved students in a long-term research project, imparting skills they will carry with them beyond the classroom.

As part of my dissertation research, I conducted a document review to examine how Achievers Academy integrates school-community partnerships and supplemental education into its educational model. This review revealed that these partnerships are not merely supportive, but integral to the school’s mission of providing diverse and enriching learning experiences. Key documents included the school’s FY 23–24 Action Plan, the Executive Director’s annual goals, and the school website highlight strategies such as extended learning opportunities, culturally responsive teaching, and collaboration with external partners to support student growth beyond the traditional classroom. Additional sources, such as Achievers Academy’s profiles on GreatSchools.com, Niche.com, and U.S. News and World Report, further support the school’s

status as a high-performing school. To deepen this analysis, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with five senior leaders to contextualize these findings and connect them to survey data (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). Together, these sources underscore Achievers Academy's model as a compelling example for schools aiming to elevate student achievement through meaningful school-community partnerships and supplemental education programs.

### **Explaining the findings in context**

Achievers Academy had a great plan in place starting from the foundation of embedding the school–community partnerships in their action plan. The school leaders were intentional about their plan, finding opportunities for students to become more well-rounded, increasing student achievement and helping students to be college and career ready. The school leaders even brought in mental health partners that in my experience is rare. Some schools neglect and forget about the importance of supporting students' mental health. Programs and partnerships like the one I studied along with providing opportunities to receive additional assistance beyond regular classroom instruction provide a common framework to spark a national commitment to systematically foster local collaborative partnerships that can improve the education, mental health, and a variety of needs of American school students (Kolbe et. al, 2015).

Kolbe et al. (2015) explained further that the schools of the past were not expected to solve the health and social problems of the day by themselves; different sectors of the community pitched in to support students. The researchers recognized that schools have not been able to provide solutions without the cooperation and support of families, community institutions, the healthcare enterprise, and the political system and therefore need to establish more school–community partnerships systematically and expeditiously to measurably improve both education and health outcomes (Kolbe et. al, 2015). It is clear from this finding that

Achievers Academy staff believe that school–community partnerships provide a road map to success. These findings echoed the sentiments from the work of Kolbe et al. (2015) where the authors noted that programs and partnerships provide opportunities to receive additional assistance beyond regular classroom instruction and provide a common framework to systematically collaborative partnerships that can improve the education, mental health, and address a variety of needs of American school students.

Respondents noted that their partnerships provide role models to students that they do not usually get to see in a regular classroom and their partnerships and expectations promote and encourage academic excellence for all students and for the integrity and promotion of their school. This finding highlights the school’s position to create an atmosphere where students learn, grow, and develop to help them to be globally ready for college and careers. I concur with the thoughts surrounding the perceptions of partners providing opportunities for students and after listening to each response and analyzing the data, I can see that the school leaders were intentional in creating a connection to their academics with the supplemental education programs and school–community partnerships because it creates a positive effect on the overall education for their students. I will take a dive deeper into this issue by exploring the implications of my study. Let us look at patterns, unexpected results and contradictions in my study.

### **Patterns, unexpected results, and contradictions**

The patterns of the positive effect of partnerships and programs create a positive effect on students, partnerships and programs helping students become well rounded and more competitive are key to the work the school intended to support through their action plan, and I uncovered some work that could be done to help the schools support their students better and directly

answer my research questions. Utilizing survey results helped me to glean insights from group data and identify relationships between variables and trends. Perception surveys are useful to determine respondents' thinking at a point in time. The results provided data for school improvement planning. I disaggregated the survey data by stakeholder status, allowing me to compare and contrast the responses among these diverse groups. By aggregating the data, I aimed to identify commonalities and potential areas of disagreement between stakeholders. This approach enabled me to pinpoint the specific concerns, priorities, and expectations of different groups within the partnership, thus providing a more comprehensive and insightful assessment of the dynamics at play at the school.

It was noted that most school partners support students on a quarterly basis and most partners that come try to complement the classroom activities. The school has days set aside for partnerships and enhancement activities on the 2nd Wednesdays at 7th period (called the Red, White, and Gold days). In looking for opportunities and ways to improve, the school leaders did note a few things to add in the future. Regarding working with the teacher of record, partners do not work with them because it is more about the student and not lesson plans or objectives. Most partners work during the instructional day. There was some ambiguity if partners collaborated with counselors. It was noted that the Principal meets with the local mental health hospital on a weekly basis. School leaders noted that their ongoing plan is to continue building and strengthening partnerships, and they believe their current coordination efforts have been effective. They base this conclusion on the fact that most community programs and partners consistently return to work with the school year after year, indicating strong relationships and mutual benefit. Looking ahead, there are plans to integrate partner-led activities into the regular school day. Currently, the most robust partnerships are seen in the before- and after-care

programs. If partners are willing to pilot their initiatives in these extended-day settings and the programs prove successful, they may be transitioned into the core school day. Two staff respondents specifically mentioned that the school is developing a community partnership plan aimed at maximizing student benefit, which may include a 'Best Practices Meeting' to strengthen and align collaboration efforts.

Currently, the SLT discusses what the partners and what they provide. In the future the team stated that they look at what kind of benefit or exposure this will provide for the students and if there is a good fit. The goal is to focus on opportunities the partners provide. A future opportunity is working with the Math department and working with the local finance park, a place where students get a curriculum and a simulation program that helps with personal financial planning and career exploration, which helps students make intelligent financial decisions that last a lifetime, including decisions related to income, expenses, savings, and credit. This experience is incorporated with their Social Studies textbook and the information is infused in the class. The team said they want to be more intentional about building in Math and Social Studies in their experiences. It was also noted that another key for their partnerships and programs is that the school leaders try to hire staff with a background or experience with the local university because it enhances and creates greater possibilities because of their knowledge of the aforementioned programs.. An example of this currently existing at the school is that several of the school's counselors went to the local university and they have brought a lot of partners because of the experience there and the knowledge of those things are really beneficial knowing the history and having access to the programs. The leaders in the interviews stated this trend will continue and increase because of the success and they noted that several teachers went to the local university too and it helps enhance the premier partnership and strengthens it as well.

In my opinion, the premise of the school's mission and vision as well as the agreement with the aforementioned statements line up well with the national recognition that Achievers Academy has earned as one of the best high schools in its state, a distinction awarded by the U.S. News & World Report based on six criteria: college readiness, proficiency and performance in reading, math, and science, performance among underserved students, the breadth of college curriculum, and graduation rates.

### **Connection to Literature**

#### **RQ1: Being intentional and systematic to help schools (partners and programs)**

Padilla et al. (2020) underscore the importance of a cohesive and well-organized school system in supporting student success. Their findings suggest that excellence in schools emerges when leadership, instruction, professional development, and community involvement are interwoven into a unified framework. In the context of this study, Achievers Academy exemplifies this approach by embedding supplemental education opportunities and community relationships into the school's daily operations, rather than treating them as isolated or optional components. These efforts reflect a structured commitment to student development, where academic enrichment and partner collaboration are intentionally planned to reinforce core educational goals.

Bryk's (2010) research further illuminates how internal systems and external connections must work in tandem for meaningful school transformation to occur. His study highlights the critical role of school climate, leadership capacity, and relational trust in establishing conditions that allow reforms to take root. At Achievers Academy, the design and implementation of supplemental programs appear to mirror this model, where internal school efforts are intentionally complemented by external partnerships. This synergy supports student learning and

engagement, suggesting that thoughtful coordination, not improvisation, is what elevates student outcomes in high-performing environments.

Moreover, Bryk's emphasis on meeting students' foundational needs before academic strategies can succeed points to the necessity of school practices that are both compassionate and comprehensive. Achievers Academy's integration of mentoring programs, academic support services, and health-related partnerships demonstrates an intentional responsiveness to the broader realities students face. Rather than viewing supplemental programs as add-ons, the school positions them as essential mechanisms that create equity and access. This illustrates that school-community partnerships, when designed with a clear strategy and purpose, become vehicles for systemic support that empower students to thrive both in and beyond the classroom.

## **RQ2: Forming and sustaining partners and supplemental education programs**

The formation and sustainability of school–community partnerships are increasingly seen as critical strategies for advancing student achievement and promoting equitable outcomes. Epstein et al. (2018) emphasize that establishing effective partnerships requires a deliberate framework, grounded in research and practical action steps that are consistently implemented across schools and districts. In the context of my research, this perspective aligns closely with how Achievers Academy has intentionally built and maintained its community collaborations, not simply as outreach initiatives, but as structured, long-term strategies to meet educational goals. These partnerships are integrated into the school's culture and routines, reflecting a commitment to shared responsibility between the school and its external partners. Rather than forming ad hoc connections, the school's relationships with community organizations are cultivated through ongoing communication, mutual planning, and alignment with student needs amongst the senior leadership team.

Beyond simply forming partnerships, researchers like Epstein et al. (2009) and Sheldon (2019) have noted the significance of access to tangible community resources, such as materials, services, and knowledge in enhancing the academic experience. The example of First Book demonstrates how a well-placed partnership can not only address material inequities, but also support cognitive development and literacy through increased access to books at home. At Achievers Academy, supplemental education opportunities, whether in the form of tutoring, mentoring, or cultural enrichment, function similarly by extending learning beyond the classroom and equipping students with the tools to thrive. These efforts are not incidental; they are the product of carefully chosen collaborations that reflect the school's vision for comprehensive student support. This systematic approach is consistent with the literature advocating for schools to maintain public visibility of their partnership practices and to incorporate them into school-year planning.

Critically, scholars like Noguera (2001) and Montoya-Ávila et al. (2018) challenge schools to move beyond surface-level collaboration and instead cultivate inclusive, culturally responsive partnerships rooted in mutual accountability. Their research emphasizes that authentic engagement with families, particularly from Black and Latinx communities can strengthen educational equity and improve academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes. My study contributes to this dialogue by examining whether such intentional partnerships at a high-performing charter school reflect these values and yield similar benefits. The emerging data from Achievers Academy suggest that when partnerships and supplemental education programs are built with respect for cultural context and community voice, they become powerful levers for advancing student achievement and school transformation. This reinforces the idea that forming and sustaining partnerships is not just an administrative function, but a moral and educational

imperative. Let us look at what my study results mean to the existing body of research and what could be future areas of research for me or other researchers.

### **Implications of the Study**

Based on the findings from my study, I purport that there are several considerations for schools in terms of school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs. Based on the evidence compiled, at least in the eyes of school staff, such partnerships and programs support overall learning and increase student achievement. However, it should also be noted that these partnerships and programs must be a good fit for the school, must be coordinated and vetted, and the school must be intentional about using these avenues. The school I studied was originally established through a school–university partnership, and its annual goals reflect a continued commitment to that collaboration. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to ensure that these partnerships and supplemental programs are implemented and sustained each year. Staff noted that in building relationships, you must be consistent and supportive and how it must be connected to the mission and vision of the school. From the findings, there is also evidence that school leaders have built consistency and stability and this helps to create a culture and climate where the staff and school leadership want to help students to be their best, and by having partnerships and supplemental education programs, schools can enhance the learning and experiences of their students.

In terms of programming, the Executive Director acknowledged the need for a formal year-end review process to regularly evaluate partnerships and programs. While the afterschool program currently lacks a written strategic plan, the program coordinator noted that staff meet daily to check in due to the high volume of activities. Respondents also indicated that there is no structured coordination among partners at this time, though this is being considered for the

future. However, any coordinated effort would depend on the nature of each partnership, as partners often work independently, bringing distinct roles, goals, and contributions to the school.

Lastly, I want to note that the evidence also points to the strong connection to academics that not only creates rigor for the students but it helps support a well-rounded education that is vital for the success of their school and community. These supplemental education programs and school–community partnerships create a positive effect on the overall education for their students. For example, the school is entering its 12th year of operation, the leaders noted that the school–community partnerships are most important for rising juniors as they can take advantage of the partnerships the school has with other local community colleges as well as local universities.

Schools should consider not only supplemental education programs like the Rotary club that enhances college and career readiness but also having partners and program leaders meet with teachers and counselors the coordination of partners, meetings with all partners, developing a project plan, having best practices meetings, developing a school improvement plan, conducting year end reviews, and performing program evaluations to help manage and create more effective relationships with the community partners. Parrett and Budge’s (2012) research reminds us that schools that have high standards for all students, that have diverse partnerships and resources, and that prioritize systems and have these practices in place will help strengthen the linkages between academics, programs, and partnerships that is much needed in the community web.

For schools and districts that want to develop school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs, they should take into consideration the vetting process for the organizations. In Achievers Academy, most of the partnerships come through trusted

stakeholders affiliated from the local university or parents or staff members so this did not come into play at their school, but schools cannot let anyone partner with the school because it may not be a good fit. The vetting process is key to help align the mission and goals of the schools and the partners or programs. In addition, schools and districts may want to start with a pilot program to see if the programs are a good fit with the school and students. It would be a great idea to talk to student leaders or a focus group of students to get their input on the programs. In my study, it was noted that the school did survey the students and they asked students to sign up. If there were only a few students, like in the case where only four students signed up, then the partnership is not brought into the school.

School–community partnerships and supplemental education programs could be viable for all schools. Schools would have to figure out the balance of partnerships and programs that their school staff can manage effectively. These partnerships are also ways to create a better or positive culture at the school by providing robust relationships and a layer of commitment and support for students to help them feel included, involved, and heard. These opportunities could serve as a connection between academics, college, and careers that could be magnified and tapped into to help students build a stronger foundation to be college and career ready, well-rounded, and globally competitive in the marketplace. For example, the college major program is still building and the coordinator of the program left as I was completing my study and as I mentioned throughout this paper, there is no central hub of the volunteers and partners to communicate and connect. Oftentimes school staff create their own partners and/or get their own interns so it was hard to track these numbers and get a real sense of their data to expand on the nature and intensity of their collaborative efforts. It is definitely something for me as a researcher or someone at the school to follow up at a later date.

These considerations are in line with Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) research on community partnerships, building learning communities, and building networks. The authors stated that school–community partnerships provide multiple benefits and resources designed to have a systemic and sustained effect on student learning outcomes and overall well-being; checking all these boxes by having a plan from preconception to evaluation will help reinforce the connections of school, community, and programs to help increase student achievement. Furthermore, staff believe that school–community partnerships led to positive outcomes including greater windows into children's learning and empathy between families and teachers. Nguyen et al. (2022) found that this work can lead to positive outcomes and has significant implications for how families and schools can move forward to leverage these practices to be more equitable, collaborative, and authentic family-school partnerships in learning and much more as I saw in my findings. The practical implications of my study are that if we build school–community partnerships and provide supplemental education programs in an intentional and systematic way, schools could better serve students in their needs academically, and support their mental health, career, college, and development needs to help them to be more well-rounded and more prepared for the future needs of the country and the world. For example, staff believe that working with students in the STEM field or bringing engineering partners or programs could lead to more students going into those fields and those students could be a future engineer that design a building that would be better for our environmental needs or lead to a scientist that creates a plant that helps to clean the air better for our society. Exposure and support are the key that has been emphasized throughout my study.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The validity of the findings may have been influenced by staff bias. The staff and leaders were proud of their school and their work. They spent years dedicating their time to their students. It was noted that many of the staff have ties to the local university in which the partnership was a major factor in Achievers Academy being founded so staff may have a bias as to how good things are at their school and their impact.

Additionally, I launched my survey near the end of the school year where staff were finalizing grades and checking out for the year. I might have had higher participation in the survey if I launched the survey a week before but I did get a 28% turnout for the survey. In regards to the community partner survey, since most of the partners ended their support the week before and school was wrapping up, I feel that partners checked out and did not respond to my survey because their programs were mostly over and they already stopped their services. It would have been nice to get the perspective of community members to see their perceptions and scores for the questions but that did not happen. Community partners contribute to the school but did not participate in the survey which could mean that they don't understand their role with the school leaders and are more focused on direct student contact and outcomes. My findings capture just one side of what is happening in school-community partnerships. In the interviews, some of the leaders pointed out that the partnerships and program create rigor for the school and help the students to be college and career ready so it would have been nice to see the results directly from the community partners and additional research would be helpful in providing a fuller portrait of the school and these programs.

A future study can focus on the community partners and a survey could be completed. If the school had a survey in place already, I could have used the data from that survey to get

feedback and could have incorporated the document review in my findings. That would have added some more context and insight into perceptions of the community and how they think their program works to support the overall education of students but also on how their work increases student achievement.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In terms of future studies, it may be a good idea to hear from students and parents and see what their perceptions are of the school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs. Do the students believe that the partnerships enhance their learning? Would the students like additional programs? Why do only a few students sign up when a new opportunity is brought to the school? Was the sign-up time too short or was the survey given at a time where students were studying for the SAT or more concerned about college admission or homecoming? Are there other opportunities that the students would like to bring to the school?

Another consideration for schools is to partner more with parents to see what programs and partnerships can be made through the parents and guardians of the students. Would those partnerships be stronger and longer lasting? Will those partnerships only be offered while the children of those parents are in the school and will they go away when the student leaves the school or graduates? It is important for schools to consider the consistency, longevity, and sustainability of the programs and partnerships and to create a plan based on a 1, 3, 5, 10 or 15 year model to support the school for a specific time frame so schools can get the most out of the time they partner with an entity. This is why it would be great for schools to have an action plan, a school improvement plan, or even a school–community partnerships and/or supplemental education program project plan to support the work to increase achievement or educational

outcomes with specific steps including how to build, maintain, tweak, and sustain these programs. A final recommendation is to have partnership and education program best practices meetings not only at the school level but at the district level to help manage the programs and to help establish guidelines and good business practices to help the school and the larger community so staff and community members can learn from each other to reach the end goal of helping students to achieve.

## **Conclusion**

This mixed methods study examined how teachers and school leaders perceive that school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs contribute to student’s overall education and how these partnerships and programs increase student achievement. To support learning and achievement, having a system in place is crucial. As the needs of students increase, school staff should find ways to support learning not just in the classroom but outside the classroom too.

Recent shifts in the national political landscape have placed long-standing federal commitments to equity, school improvement, and educational research at risk. For decades, policies such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and subsequent reforms recognized the importance of reducing achievement gaps for students from low-income backgrounds and historically marginalized communities. These policies supported family engagement, community collaboration, and the development of supplemental education programs as critical levers for improvement. However, the current administration has signaled a departure from these values, proposing the rollback of policies that support low-income and non-white students and even suggesting the potential elimination of agencies like the U.S.

Department of Education and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. This political shift threatens to undermine both the infrastructure and incentives that have historically enabled schools to form meaningful partnerships and implement research-based practices that serve underserved students.

In light of these challenges, the findings of this study become even more timely and significant. Despite political uncertainty, the evidence from Achievers Academy reinforces the critical role that intentional school–community partnerships and supplemental education programs play in fostering academic success particularly for students who have historically been excluded from high-quality learning opportunities. The literature confirms that these approaches are not merely supportive but essential to educational equity and school transformation (Montoya-Ávila et al., 2018; Sanders, 2001). As schools continue to navigate social, economic, and public health disruptions, the demand for effective, community-rooted educational strategies will only grow. This study contributes to the field by providing a real-world example of what is possible when schools commit to equity-driven partnership work. Regardless of changes at the federal level, there is a pressing need to sustain and expand research in this area to ensure that progress toward equity is not lost but strengthened for future generations.

The insights provided by this research suggest a plethora of opportunities for this to happen as well as challenges and strategies to creating this system of support. Findings suggest that schools and districts should consider a system of support to widen the net to help all children exceed in school. By supporting every school to have school–community partners and robust supplemental education programs, it would help schools to be more equitable, collaborative, and authentic and schools will have the tools to support students as an evidence-based what works

strategy to support schools and my hope is that these school community-partnerships and supplemental programs will become nationwide for all students everywhere.

## Appendix A: School Improvement Survey Tool: School Staff

The purpose of this survey is to explore your views on the intentional use of school–community partnerships and supplemental education to increase student achievement and create high-performing schools.

**Definitions: School–Community Partnership** An intentional effort to create and sustain relationships among a K–12 school or school district and a variety of both formal and informal organizations and institutions in the community (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

**Supplemental Education:** Services that improve student learning outcomes, especially low-income or minority students (NCLB). Examples include: tutoring, academic enrichment services. These services are provided outside the regular school day—before or after school, on weekends or in the summer.

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1

Do you wish to participate?

- Yes, continue to Section 2
- No, go to Section 15

### Section 2

What is your main role at the school?

- School Administrator (Principal/Vice Principal)
- Teacher
- Support Staff
- Community Partner/Member
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of the School Leader Team (SLT)?

- Yes
- No

### Section 3

#### SLT Team

How long in years have you served on the SLT at your school? \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 4

Select your role to determine your next section...

Which is your role in the school?

- School Personnel (Principal or Assistant Principal, Classroom teacher, etc.), go to Section 5
- Community Partner/Member, go to Section 11

## Section 5

### Teacher and Leader Survey

#### I would like to explore your views on Supplemental Education

**Supplemental Education:** Services that improve student learning outcomes, especially low-income or minority students (NCLB). Examples include: tutoring, academic enrichment services. These services are provided outside the regular school day—before or after school, on weekends or in the summer.

Please rate each item on a scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

Implementation of supplemental education programs are a cornerstone of our school action plan.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school integrates health and well-being into the school's ongoing activities, professional development, curriculum, and assessment practices.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school helps students to understand the connection between supplemental education activities and learning success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school takes a well-rounded (holistic) approach to develop supplemental education activities for student learning.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

At our school we utilize student data to analyze our supplemental education programs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our supplemental education activities, which include extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based programs, provide knowledge and skills that are relevant for higher education and future work goals.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our supplemental education activities provide opportunities for students to develop critical-thinking, reasoning skills, and problem-solving competencies.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Supplemental education programs at our school are responsive to student development and learning needs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Supplemental education activities at our school aim to build student civic and social responsibilities. Our school leaders collaborate with teachers to implement supplemental education activities to ensure student learning improvement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Students in our school have access to a range of supplemental education programs which includes a wide array of extracurricular and cocurricular activities.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Students in our school choose from a range of supplemental education programs that reflect student needs, goals, and learning profiles.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

At our school, parents provide information to develop supplemental education activities.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Community partners are key players in implementing supplemental education programs.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

## Section 6

### I would like to explore your views on School–Community Partnerships

**School–Community Partnerships:** An intentional effort to create and sustain relationships among a K–12 school or school district and a variety of both formal and informal organizations and institutions in the community (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

Our school’s action plan emphasizes the importance of school–community partnerships to enhance education.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Our school uses school–community partnerships to implement a proactive approach to identifying students’ social, emotional, physical, and academic needs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school uses school–community partnerships to design coordinated interventions among service providers.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school–community partnerships offer a range of opportunities for students to participate in the community based learning, including service learning, internships, and apprenticeships.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school–community partnerships help families understand available services, advocate for student’s needs, and support their learning.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our community partners assess and monitor progress on indicators of student success.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school staff (teachers, coordinators, and senior leaders) welcome all families as partners in their student’s education.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our school staff knows of the diverse community resources that are available in the school to support student learning.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Our school staff identifies relevant school–community partners to support student learning.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Our school staff works collaboratively with community agencies, service providers, and organizations to meet specific goals for students.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Our school staff, community-based service providers, families, and other adult stakeholders share research and utilize appropriate data to provide a holistic school experience for each student.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

## Section 7

### School Staff Questions

What grade(s) do you teach or work with? (Check all grades that apply)

- 9th Grade
- 10th Grade
- 11th Grade
- 12th Grade

How many years have you worked at the school? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been a teacher/administrator? \_\_\_\_\_

In the past 5 years, have you received professional development/training related to school–community partnerships? \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

### Section 8

The survey questions on the following pages were developed to generate discussion that can help your school improvement efforts in relation to collaborations and community engagement. Think about your school as you read each of the statements below then select the best option that describes how much you agree with that statement.

#### Collaboration/Communications

Please rate each item on a scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

The school routinely obtains school staff perspectives when making decisions about school–community partnerships.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Section 9

#### Family & Community Involvement

Please rate each item on a scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

The staff believes students learn more through effective family support.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The school works with many community organizations to support its students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The school makes a special effort to contact the families of students who are struggling academically.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Teachers have frequent contact with their student's parents.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

The school provides ample information to families about how to help students succeed in school.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

Many parents are involved as volunteers at the school.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree   Not Applicable

### Section 10

Please comment on how collaborative partnership between schools and their communities influence high-performing schools.

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**School Staff, go to Section 15**

### Section 15

Do you know anyone else at the school that would be interested in participating in this study? If so, please provide their email(s) below or reach out to Denise M. Joseph at [dmjoseph@terpmail.umd.edu](mailto:dmjoseph@terpmail.umd.edu).

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**Section 16**

**Thank you for your time and contact me if you have any questions.**

## Appendix B: School Improvement Survey Instrument: Community Partners Survey

The purpose of this survey is to explore your views on the intentional use of school–community partnerships and supplemental education to increase student achievement and create high-performing schools.

**Definitions: School–Community Partnership** An intentional effort to create and sustain relationships among a K–12 school or school district and a variety of both formal and informal organizations and institutions in the community (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

**Supplemental Education:** Services that improve student learning outcomes, especially low-income or minority students (NCLB). Examples include: tutoring, academic enrichment services. These services are provided outside the regular school day—before or after school, on weekends or in the summer.

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1

Do you wish to participate?

- Yes, continue to Section 2
- No, go to Section 15

### Section 2

What is your main role at the school?

- School Administrator (Principal/Vice Principal)
- Teacher
- Support Staff
- Community Partner/Member
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of the School Leader Team (SLT)?

- Yes
- No

### Section 3

**SLT Team**

How long in years have you served on the SLT at your school? \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4**

Select your role to determine your next section...

School Personnel (Principal or Assistant Principal, Classroom teacher, etc.), go to Section 5

Community Member, go to Section 11

**Section 11**

**Community Partner/Member**

What type of support do you provide to the school?

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How many years have you partnered with this school? (As an official school–community member/partner)

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**Section 12**

**I would like to explore your views on Supplemental Education**

**Supplemental Education:** Services that improve student learning outcomes, especially low-income or minority students (NCLB). Examples include: tutoring, academic enrichment services. These services are provided outside the regular school day—before or after school, on weekends or in the summer.

**Please rate each item on a scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree**

Supplemental education programs have a rigorous curriculum to support student learning.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

School leaders advocate for effective supplemental education activities for all students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

School leaders seem to hold staff accountable for improving student learning via supplemental education activities.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Teachers recommend supplement education activities to help students meet high academic standards.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Students participating in supplemental education activities are expected to achieve high standards.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Section 13

#### I would like to explore your views on School–Community Partnerships

**School–Community Partnerships:** An intentional effort to create and sustain relationships among a K–12 school or school district and a variety of both formal and informal organizations and institutions in the community (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

Please rate each item on a scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

The school works with many community organizations to support its students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The school makes a special effort to contact and partner with the families of students who are struggling academically.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The school provides ample information to families about how to help students succeed in school through community partnerships.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Student learning improves because of school–community partnerships.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Many parents and community partners are involved as volunteers at the school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section 14**

**Frequency of visits to the school to provide services/support to students:**

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often

Please comment on how collaborative partnerships between schools and their communities influence student experiences.

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**Community Partners go to Section 15**

**Section 15**

Do you know any other staff or stakeholders at the school that would be interested in participating in this study? If so, please provide their email(s) below or reach out to Denise M. Joseph at [dmjoseph@terpmail.umd.edu](mailto:dmjoseph@terpmail.umd.edu).

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**Section 16**

**Thank you for your time and contact me if you have any questions.**

## **Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Protocols**

### **Semi-structured Interview Protocol (School Staff)**

1. How does your school's collaborative partnerships influence your students and bring in academic and social excellence? How do you choose partners? Do you turn away partners, if so why? How are partners renewed and discontinued? (RQ1)
2. How (if at all) does your school's partnerships contribute to the overall education of the students? How are your partnerships built upon day-to-day classroom instruction and if they played any part in supporting the needs of your students and the school? Do the partners collaborate with the classroom teachers and with school counselors? And if so, how? (RQ1)
3. Can you tell me about the expectations of your school's partnerships? How do the community partners work together? Is there a communication plan or strategic plan for the partners? Does this happen on a week-to-week basis? (RQ1)
4. How important is it to have the community partners involved in helping to educate students and in what ways are they involved? Please provide examples of these. (RQ2)
5. Can you describe how (if at all) the supplemental educational opportunities at your school and
6. how these opportunities are built upon in day-to-day classroom instruction and if they played any part in supporting the needs of your students and the school? How do you choose the opportunities? Do you turn down opportunities? How are opportunities renewed and discontinued? (RQ2)
7. Can you elaborate on how supplemental education activities influence your school and bring in academic and social excellence? Do any of the activities overlap? Is there a strategic plan for the activities? Does this happen on a week to week basis? If not, how often? (RQ2)
8. Is there anything else you would like to share about your school especially as it relates to your supplemental education programs, being a high-performing school, or school-community partnerships?

### **Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Partners)**

1. Can you describe how your partnership with CPA contributes to the overall education of the students and how you think your partnership played in supporting the needs of the students and the school? How was your partnership selected to work with the school? (RQ1)
2. Can you tell me more about your expectations of your partnership with CPA? How did you come up with these expectations? (RQ2)
3. Can you tell me why you think it is important to be involved and in what ways you are involved with CPA? Please provide examples of these.

## Appendix D: Consent Form



### Institutional Review Board

1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • [irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu)

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

<b>Project Title</b>	Examining a high-performing school and their school–community partnerships and supplemental education and how these practices show up in the daily practices of the school.
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by <b>Denise M. Joseph</b> at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because your high school is ranked as one of the best high schools in your county with high achievement and is high-needs school that caters to high-needs students. I chose this school based on the online reviews and reports, the schools seemed to be engaged with improving the educational opportunities of minoritized students. The purpose of this research project is to examine how school–community partnerships and supplemental education and how these practices show up in the daily practices of the school to increase student achievement.
<b>Procedures</b>	The procedures involve a survey to members of the school community. You will be asked questions about school–community community partnerships, supplemental education, and academic/social emotional excellence employed by the school that result in student achievement. The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Participants will either complete the survey online or via paper, which the researcher will email the survey link or drop off a physical copy at the school.
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research. You can still skip any question you do not wish to answer, skip any activity, or stop participation at any time.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how school–community partnerships and supplemental education can support student achievement.

<p><b>Confidentiality</b></p>	<p>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data password protected computer and only the PI will have access to the data.</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. The collected data will be destroyed after 10 years of retention.</p>
<p><b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b></p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your employability at your institution will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or nonparticipation in this study. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Denise M. Joseph</b>  <b>dmjoseph@terpmail.umd.edu</b>  <b>240-427-5350</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dr. Claudia Galindo</b>  <a href="mailto:galindo@umd.edu">galindo@umd.edu</a>  <b>301-405-4546</b></p>
<p><b>Participant Rights</b></p>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park  Institutional Review Board Office  1204 Marie Mount Hall  College Park, Maryland, 20742  E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a>  Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>For more information regarding participant rights, please visit:  <a href="https://research.umd.edu/research-resources/research-compliance/institutional-review-board-irb/research-participants">https://research.umd.edu/research-resources/research-compliance/institutional-review-board-irb/research-participants</a></p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of</p>

	Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b> [Please Print]	
	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	

## Appendix E: IRB Exempt Letter



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall  
College Park, MD 20742-5125  
TEL 301.405.4212  
FAX 301.314.1475  
irb@umd.edu  
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: November 10, 2023

TO: Denise Joseph, PhD  
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1995649-1] Exploring School-Community Partnerships and the Whole Child Approach to Create Schools that Make a Difference

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: November 10, 2023

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 45CFR46.104(d)(2)(i-ii)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or [irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

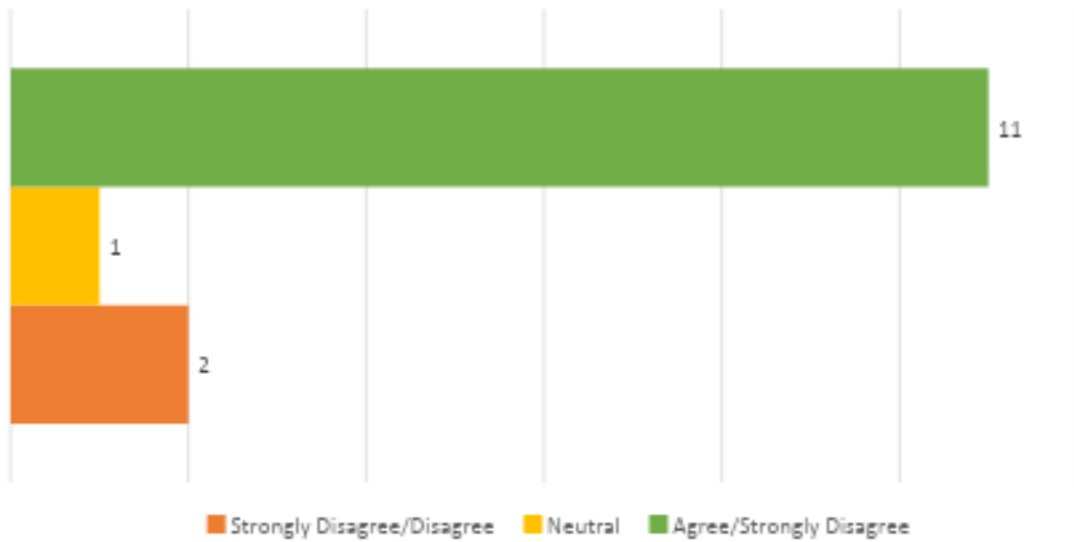
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

## Appendix F: Charts

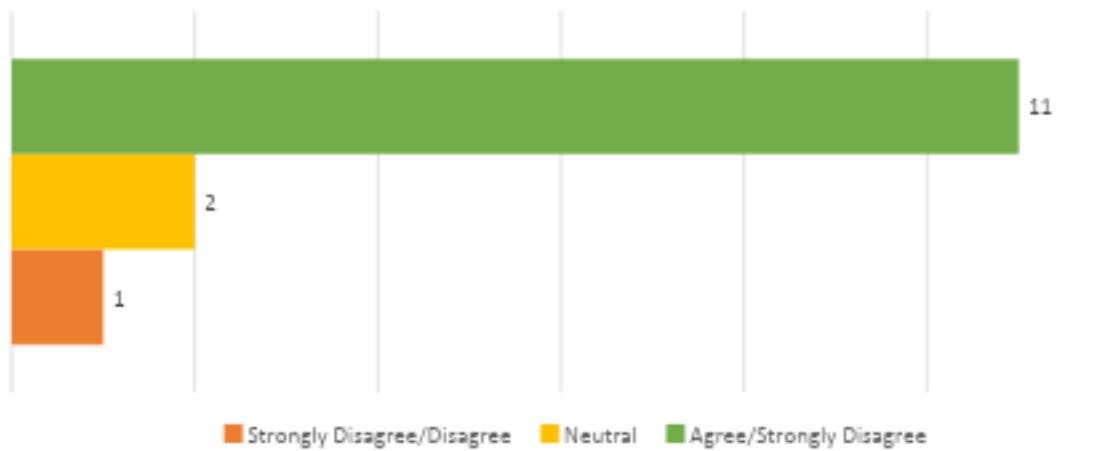
### Section 5: Supplemental Education Program

Survey question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Implementation of supplemental education programs is a cornerstone of our school action plan.	1	1	1	3	8
Our school regularly reviews the alignment of our supplemental education policies and practices to ensure the health, safety, engagement, support, and challenges of our students.	0	1	2	6	5
Our school helps students to understand the connection between supplemental education activities and learning success.	0	1	2	6	5
Our school takes a well-rounded (holistic) approach to developing supplemental education activities for student learning.	0	1	3	7	3
At our school, we utilize student data to analyze our supplemental education programs.	0	1	2	6	5
Our supplemental education activities, which include extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based programs, provide knowledge and skills that are relevant to higher education and future work goals.	1	0	1	7	5
Our supplemental education activities provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, reasoning skills, and problem-solving competencies.	0	1	1	9	3
Supplemental education programs at our school are responsive to student development and learning needs.	0	1	2	7	4
Supplemental education activities at our school aim to build student civic and social responsibilities.	0	1	0	8	5
Our school leaders collaborate with teachers to implement supplemental education activities to ensure student learning improvement.	1	1	0	7	5
Students in our school have access to a range of supplemental education programs, which include a wide array of extracurricular and co-curricular activities.	1	0	2	6	5
Students in our school choose from a range of supplemental education programs that reflect student needs, goals, and learning profiles.	1	0	0	10	3
At our school, parents provide information to develop supplemental education activities.	0	1	3	7	3
Community partners are key players in implementing supplemental education programs.	1	0	2	6	5

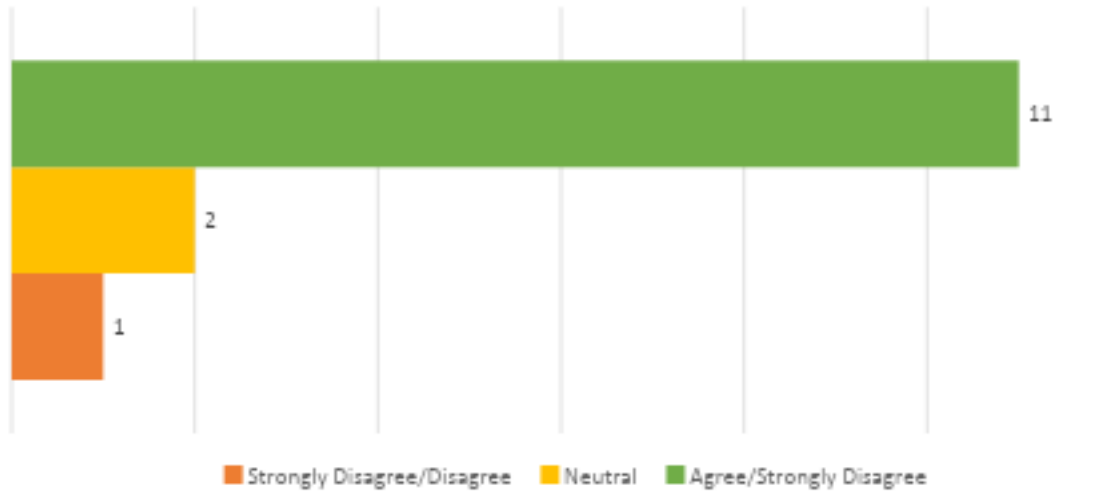
Implementation of supplemental education programs are a cornerstone of our school action plan.



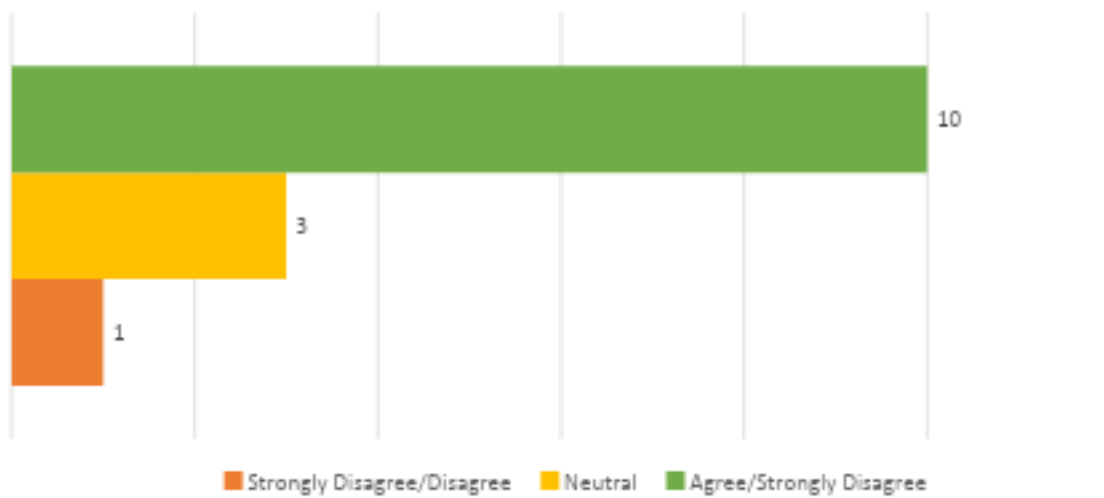
Our school regularly reviews the alignment of our supplemental education policies and practices to ensure the health, safety, engagement, support, and challenges of our students.



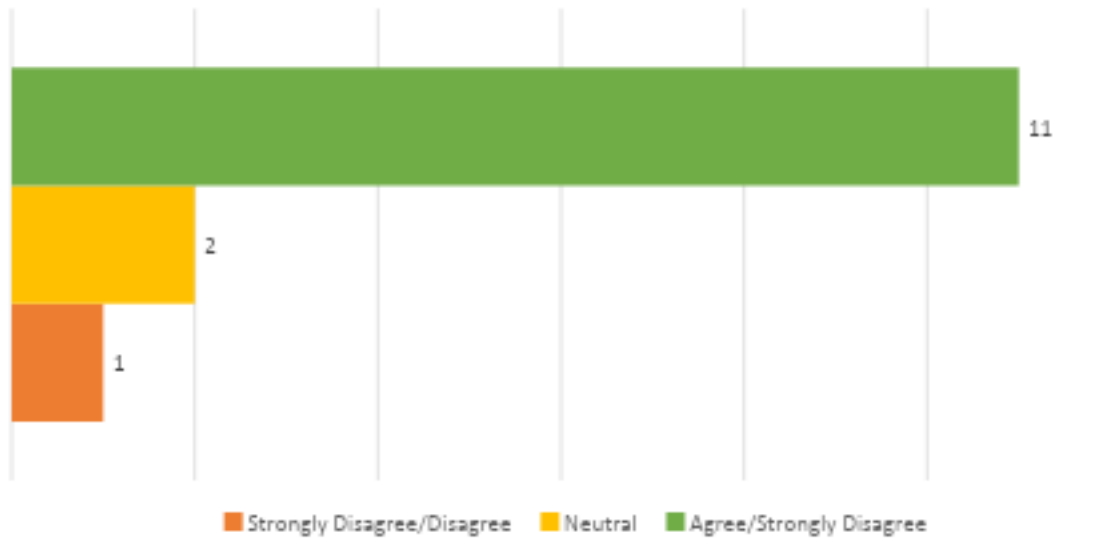
Our school helps students to understand the connection between supplemental education activities and learning success.



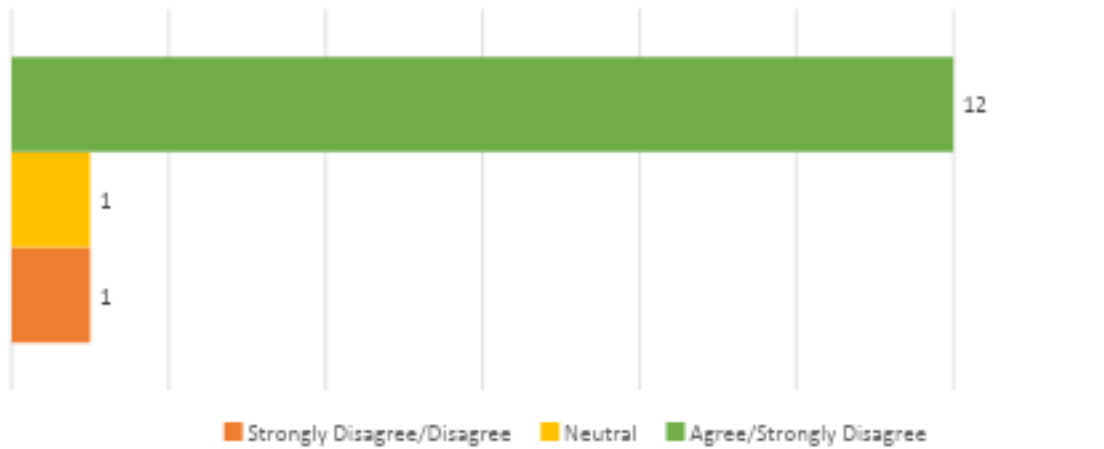
Our school takes a well-rounded (holistic) approach to develop supplemental education activities for student learning.



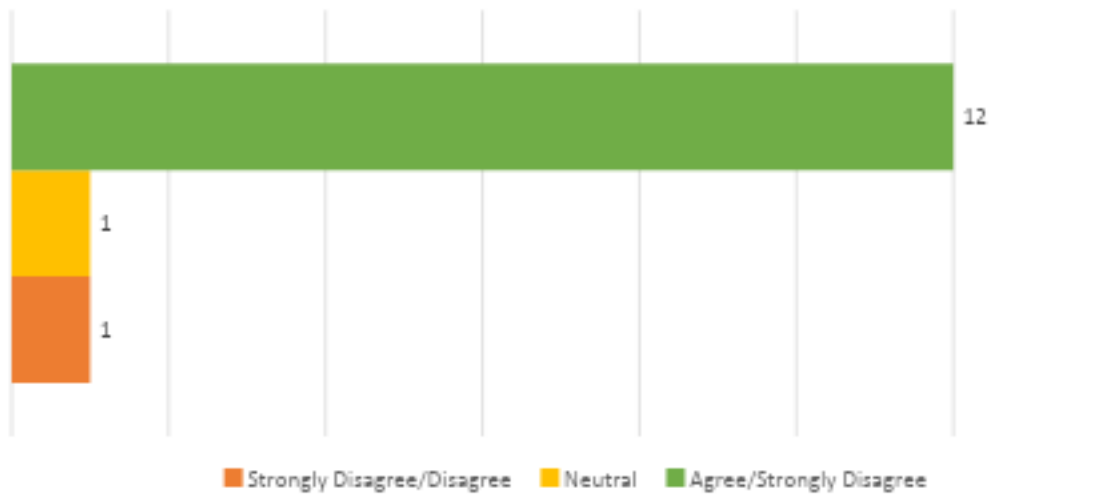
At our school we utilize student data to analyze our supplemental education programs.



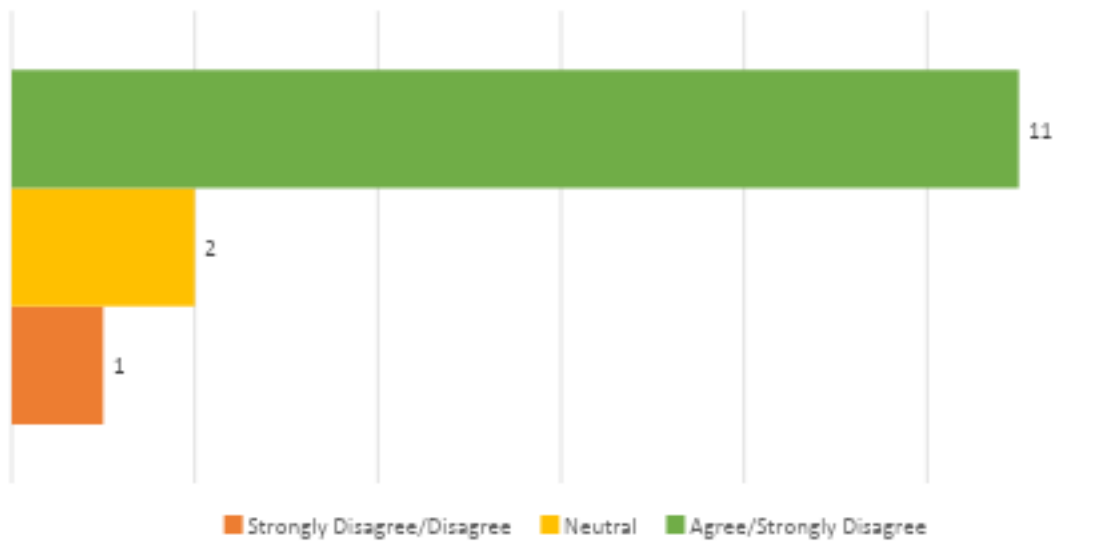
Our supplemental education activities, which include extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based programs, provide knowledge and skills that are relevant for higher education and future work goals.



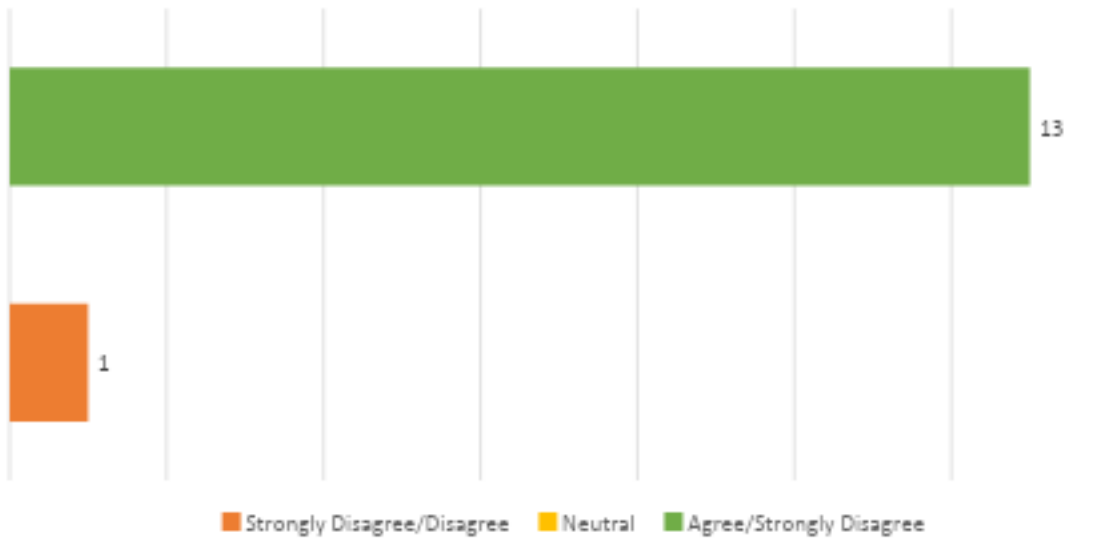
Our supplemental education activities provide opportunities for students to develop critical-thinking, reasoning skills, and problem-solving competencies.



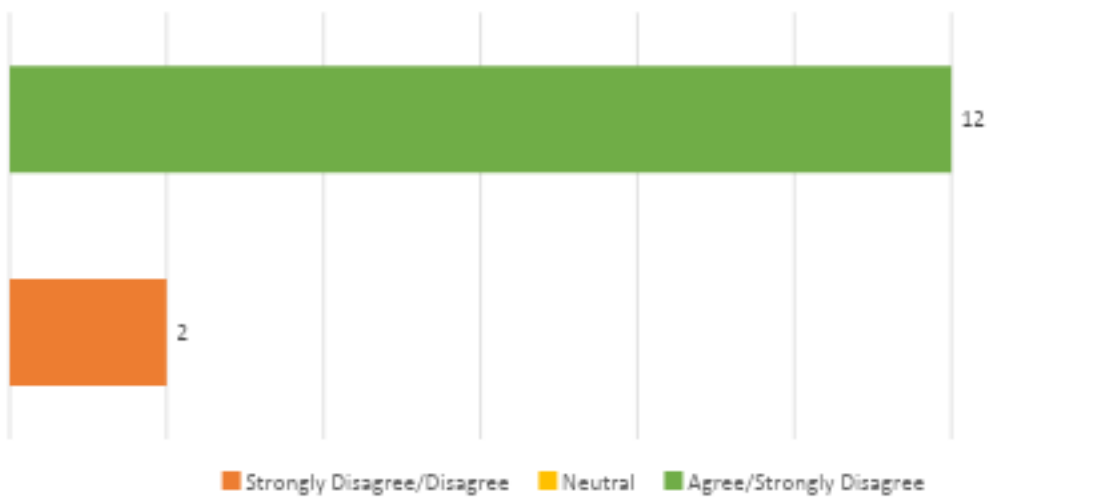
Supplemental education programs at our school are responsive to student development and learning needs.



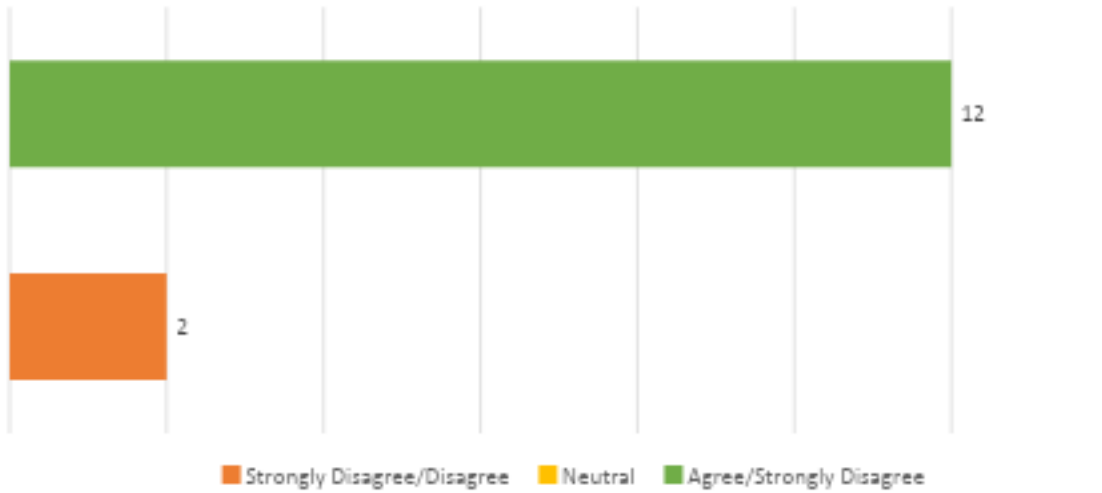
Supplemental education activities at our school aim to build student civic and social responsibilities.



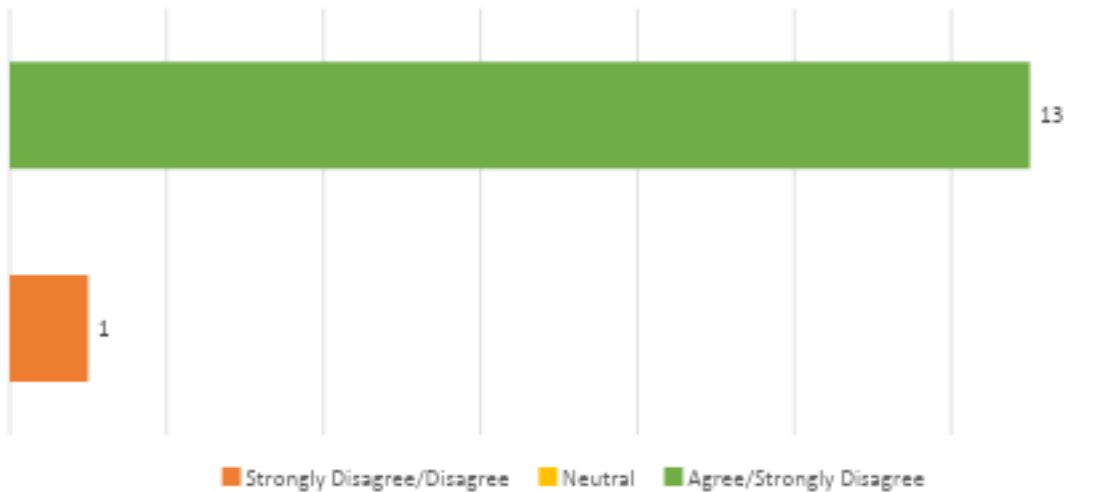
Our school leaders collaborate with teachers to implement supplemental education activities to ensure student learning improvement.



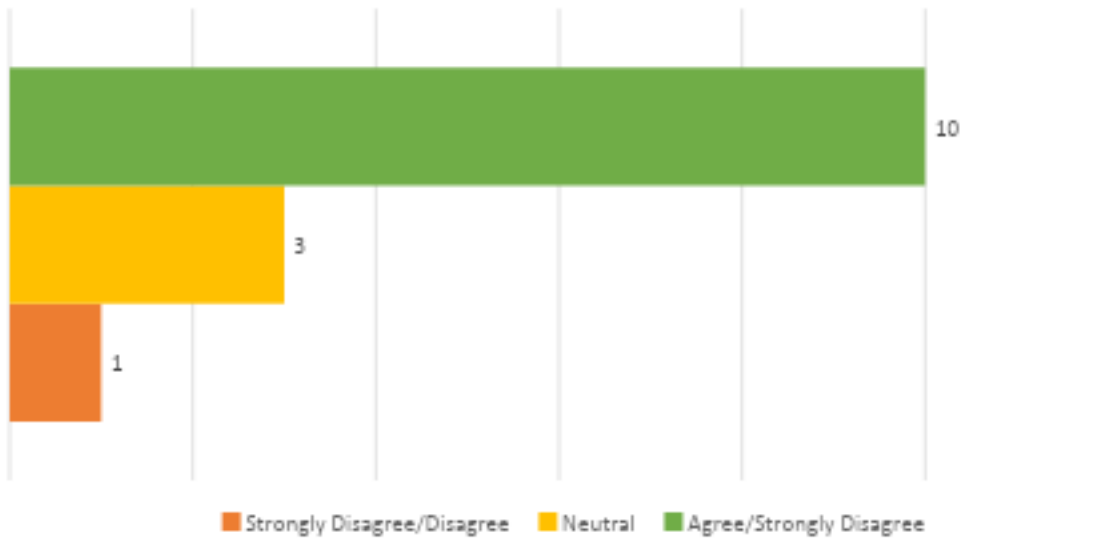
Students in our school have access to a range of supplemental education programs which includes a wide array of extracurricular and cocurricular activities.



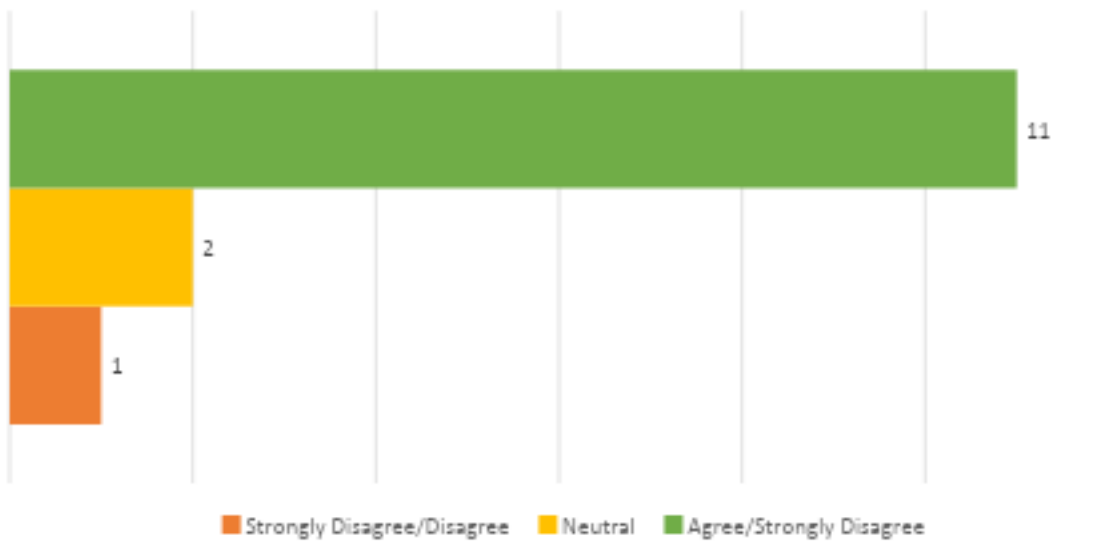
Students in our school choose from a range of supplemental education programs that reflect student needs, goals, and learning profiles.



At our school, parents provide information to develop supplemental education activities.



Community partners are key players in implementing supplemental education programs.

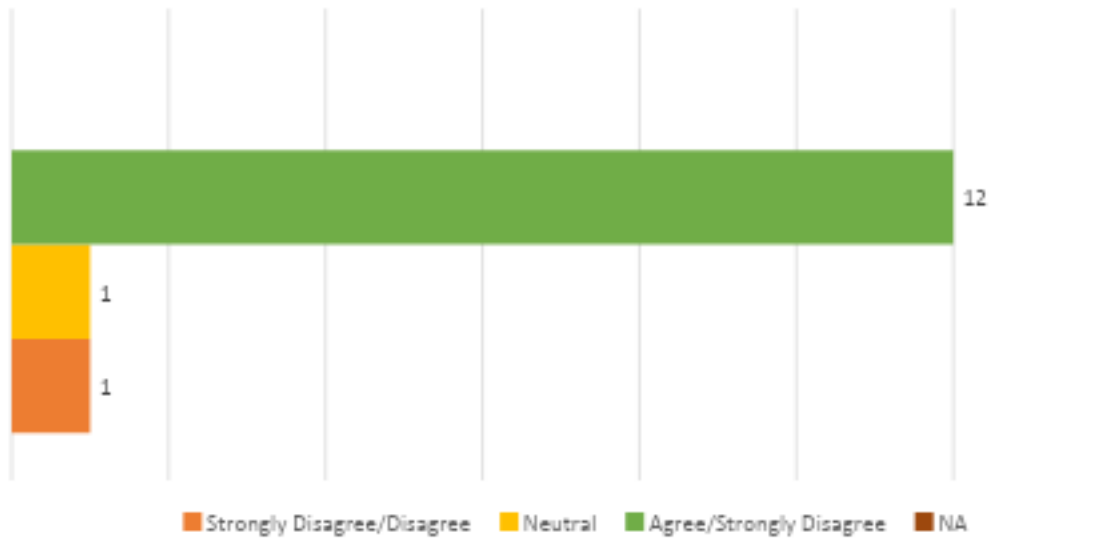


success

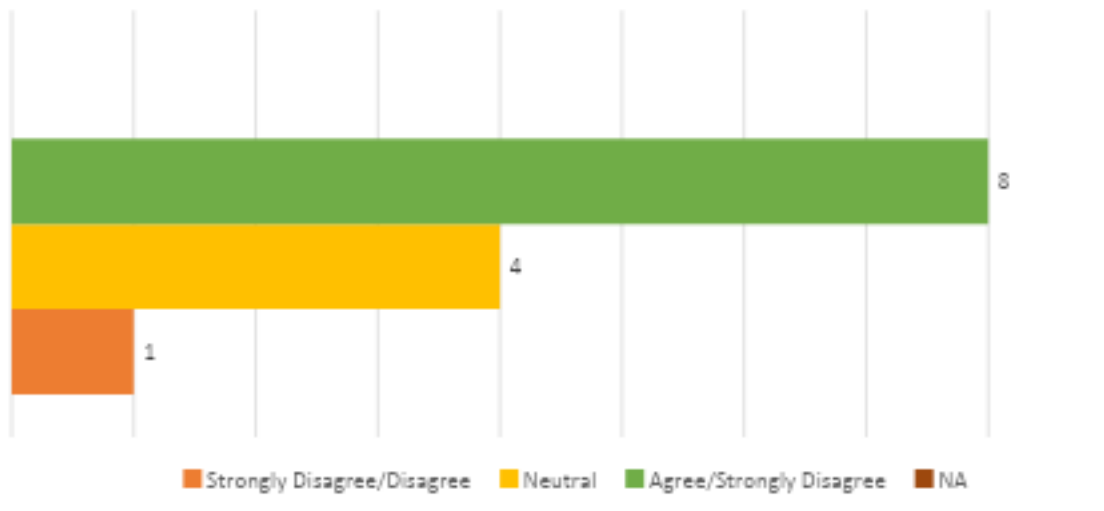
## Section 5: Supplemental Education Program

Survey question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Our school’s action plan emphasizes the importance of school–community partnerships to enhance education.	0	1	1	6	6
Our school uses school–community partnerships to implement a proactive approach to identifying students’ social, emotional, physical, and academic needs.	0	1	4	4	4
Our school uses school–community partnerships to design coordinated interventions among service providers.	0	2	4	4	4
Our school–community partnerships offer a range of opportunities for students to participate in the community based learning, including service learning, internships, and apprenticeships.	1	0	3	5	5
Our school–community partnerships help families understand available services, advocate for student’s needs, and support their learning.	0	1	4	4	4
Our community partners assess and monitor progress on indicators of student success.	0	2	5	4	3
Our school staff (teachers, coordinators, and senior leaders) welcome all families as partners in their student’s education.	0	0	4	4	6
Our school staff knows of the diverse community resources that are available in the school to support student learning.	0	3	2	6	3
Our school staff identifies relevant school–community partners to support student learning.	0	1	3	5	5
Our school staff works collaboratively with community agencies, service providers, and organizations to meet specific goals for students.	0	1	2	7	4
Our school staff, community-based service providers, families, and other adult stakeholders share research and utilize appropriate data to provide a holistic school experience for each student.	0	1	5	5	3

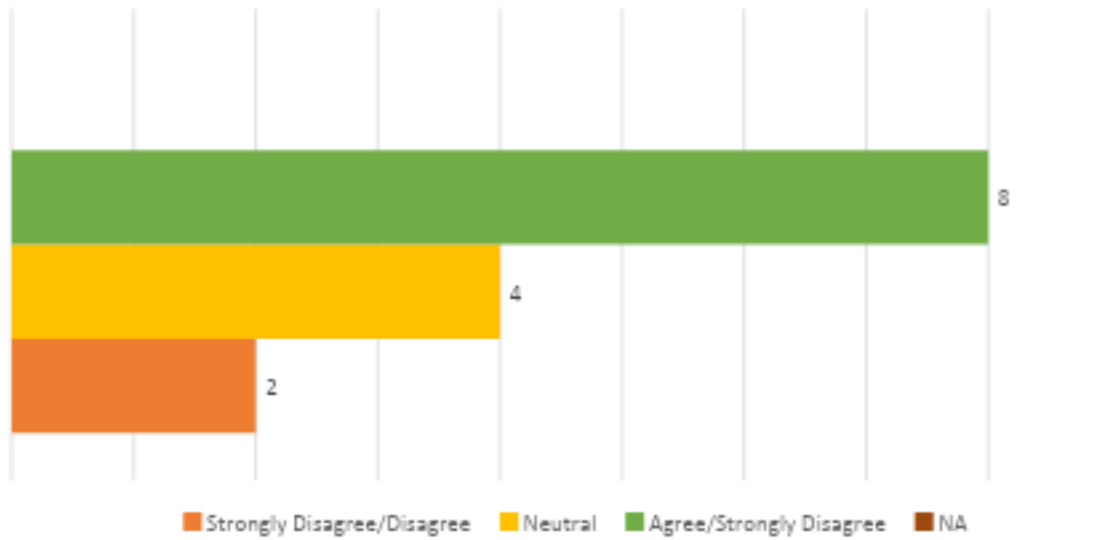
Our school's action plan emphasizes the importance of school–community partnerships to enhance education.



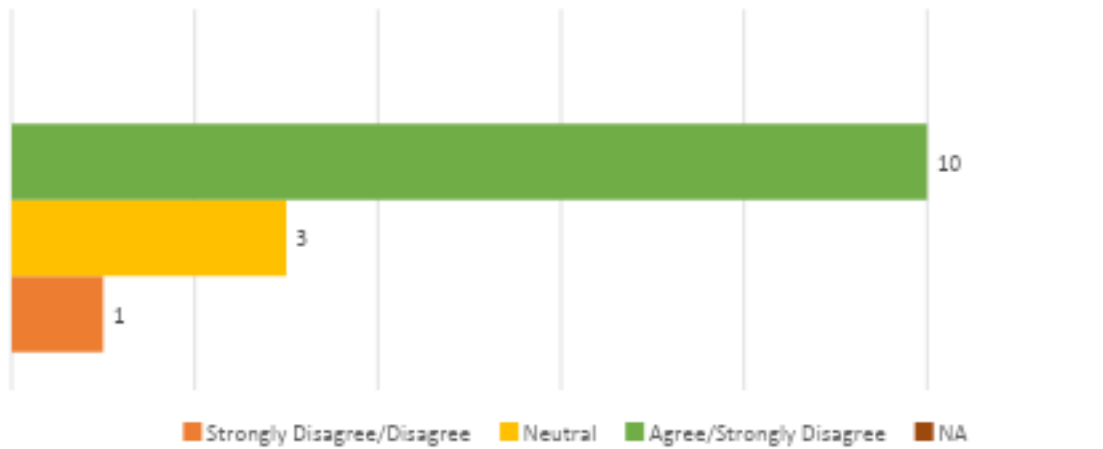
Our school uses school–community partnerships to implement a proactive approach to identifying students' social, emotional, physical, and academic needs.



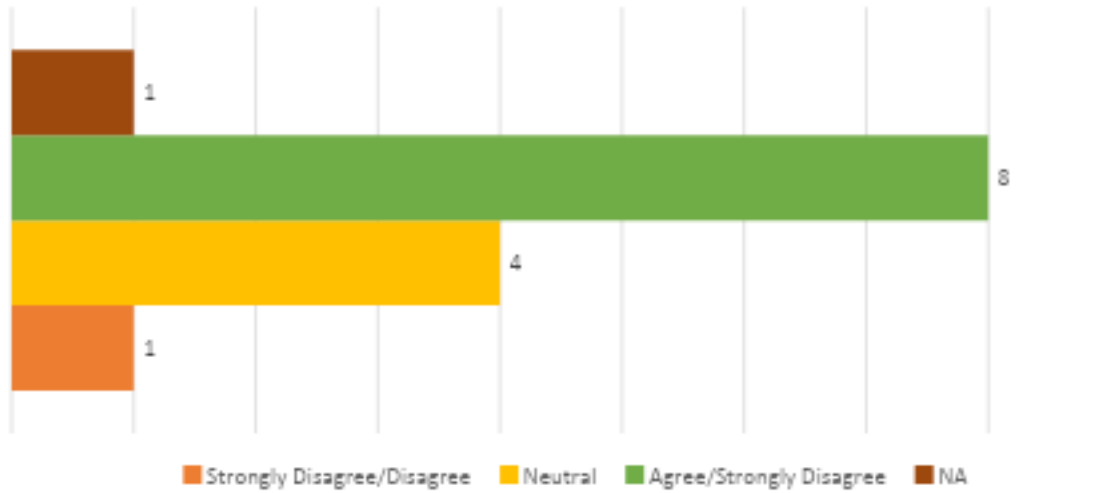
Our school uses school–community partnerships to design coordinated interventions among service providers.



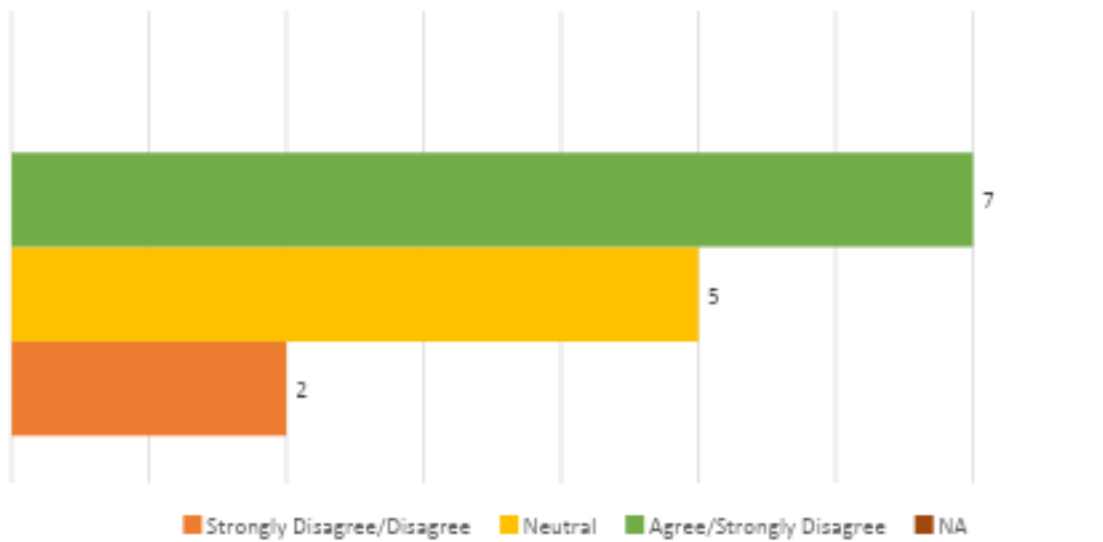
Our school–community partnerships offer a range of opportunities for students to participate in the community based learning, including service learning, internships, and apprenticeships.



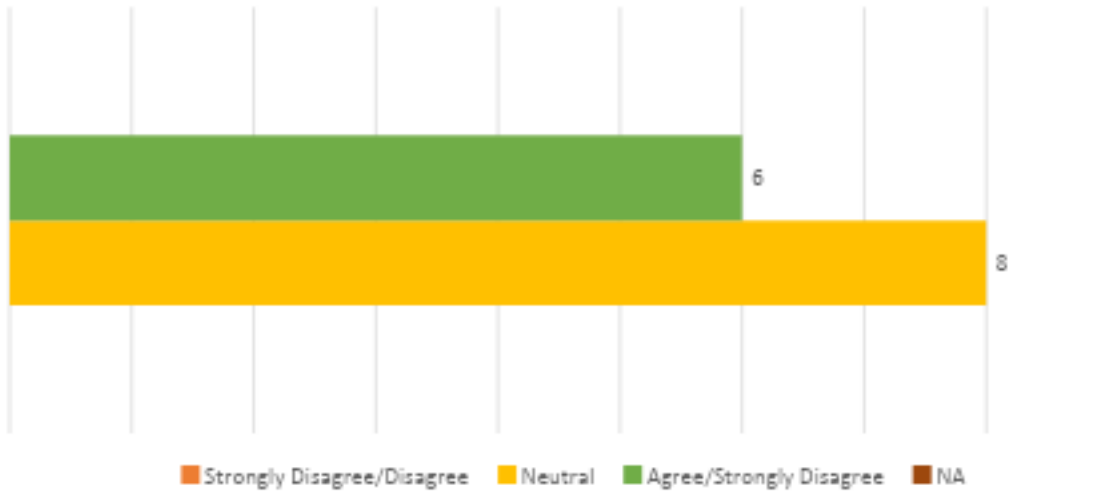
Our school–community partnerships help families understand available services, advocate for student’s needs, and support their learning.



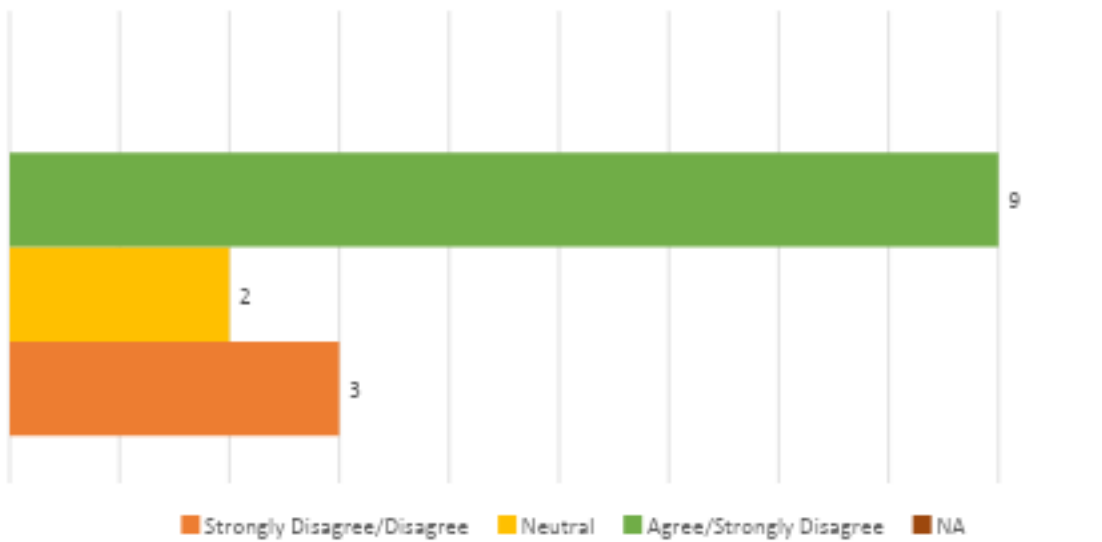
Our community partners assess and monitor progress on indicators of student success.



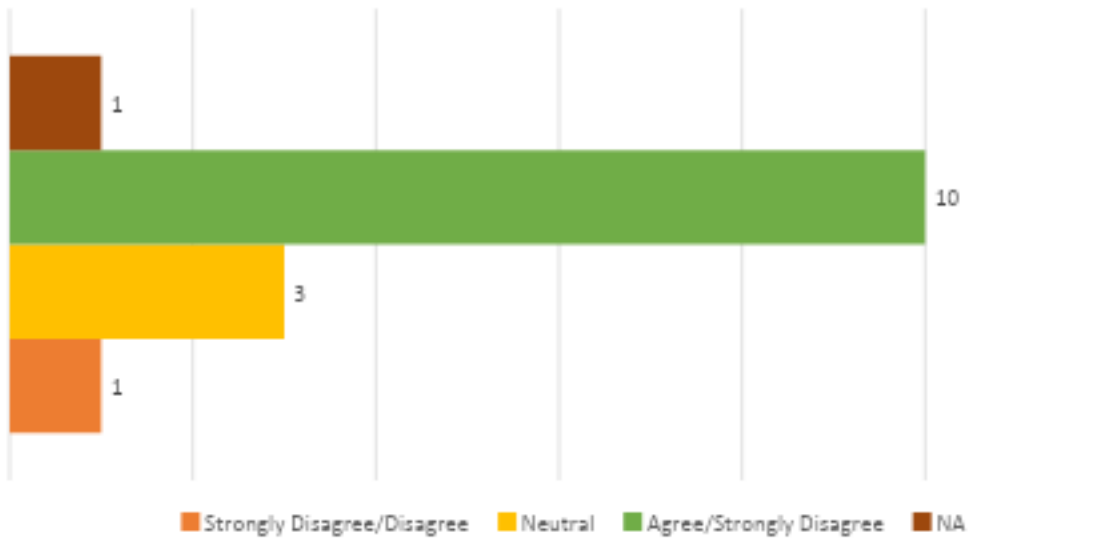
Our school staff (teachers, coordinators, and senior leaders) welcome all families as partners in their student's education.



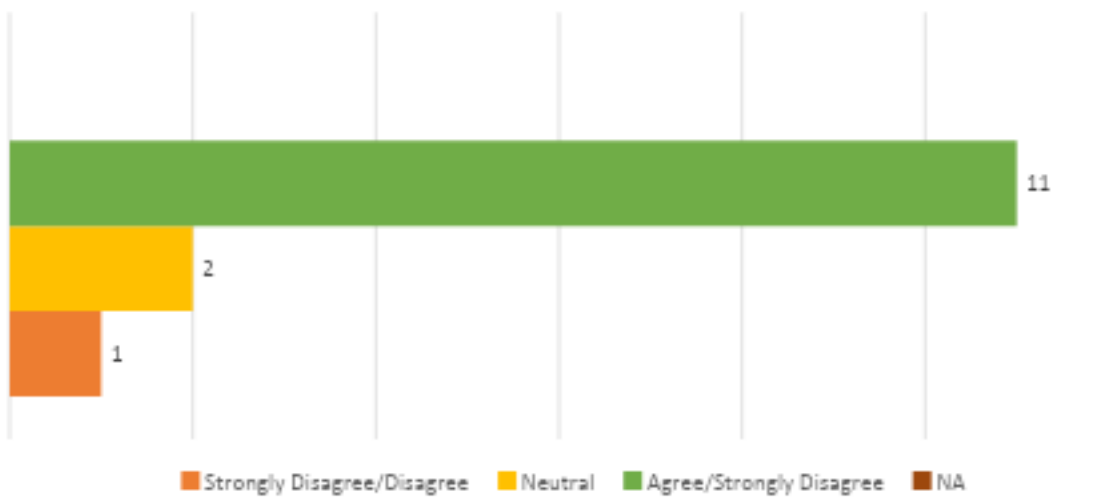
Our school staff knows of the diverse community resources that are available in the school to support student learning.



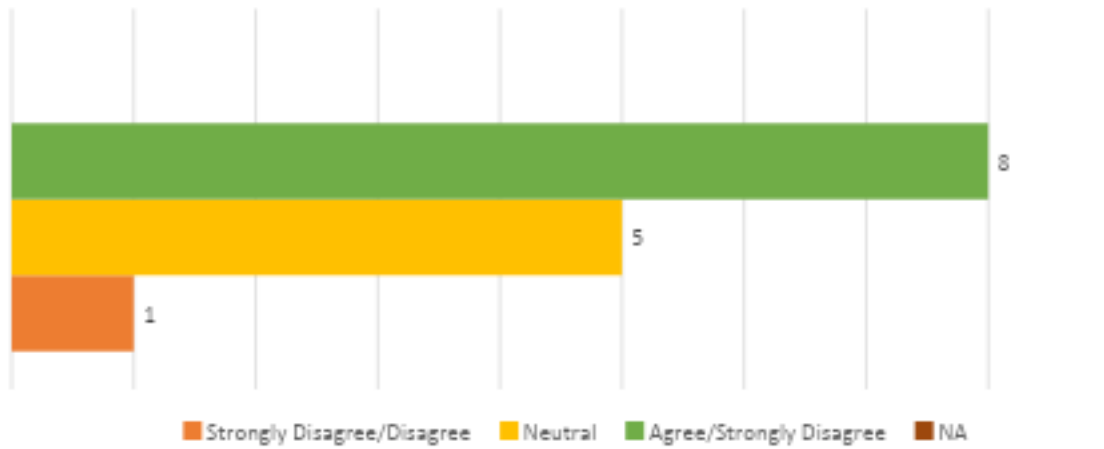
Our school staff identifies relevant school–community partners to support student learning.



Our school staff works collaboratively with community agencies, service providers, and organizations to meet specific goals for students.

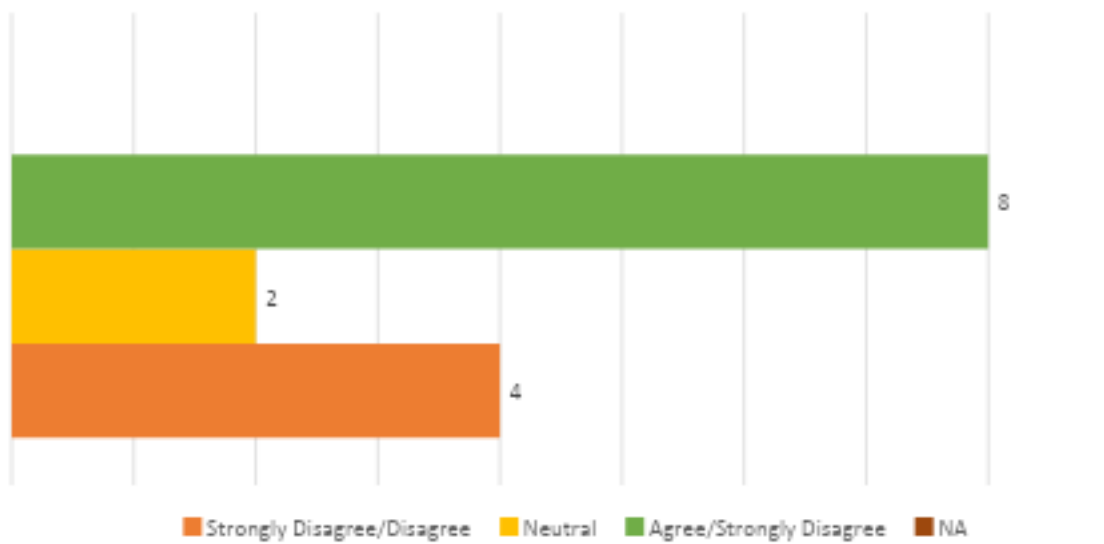


Our school staff, community-based service providers, families, and other adult stakeholders share research and utilize appropriate data to provide a holistic school experience for each student.



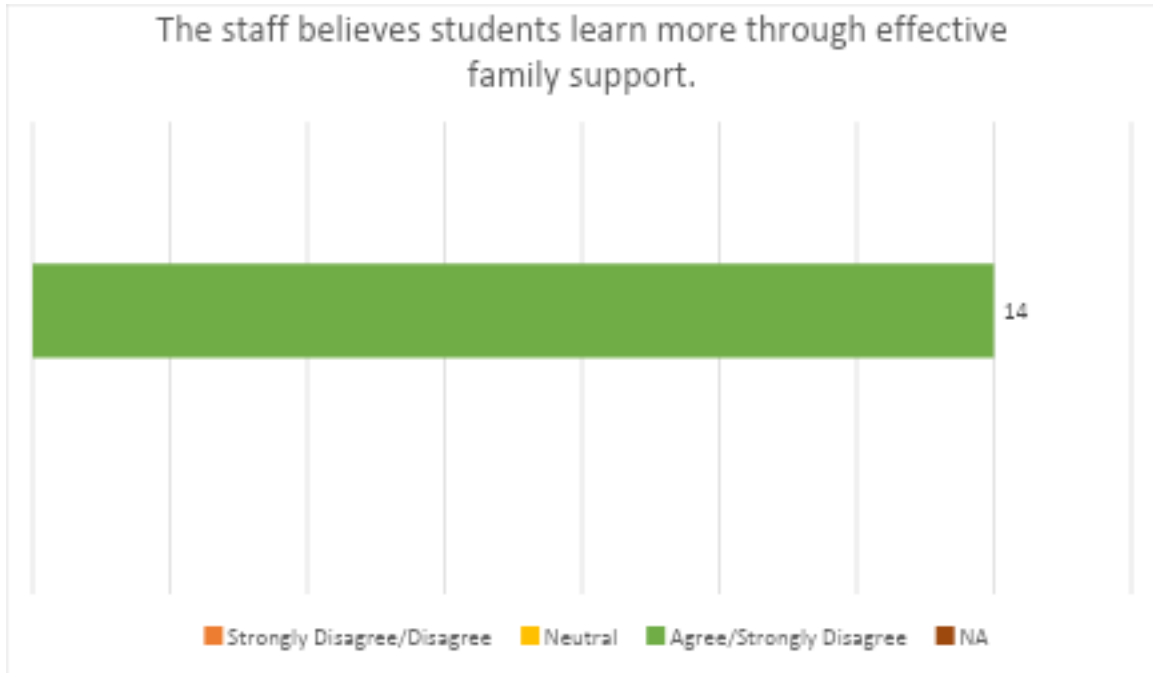
Section 8 Collaboration/Communications						
Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
The school routinely obtains school staff perspectives when making decisions about school–community partnerships.	1	3	2	4	4	0

The school routinely obtains school staff perspectives when making decisions about school–community partnerships.

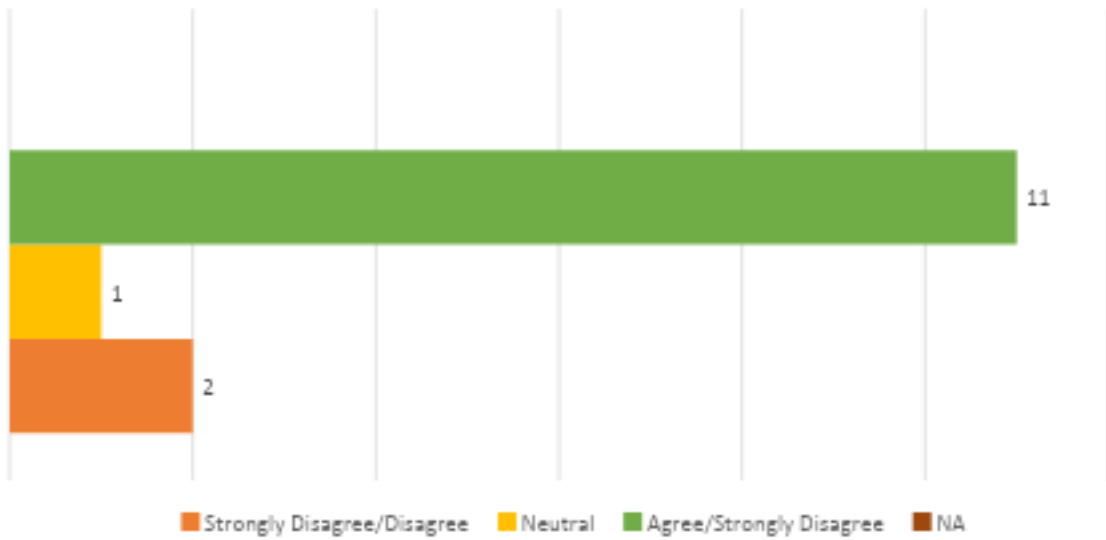


## Section 9: Family and Community Involvement

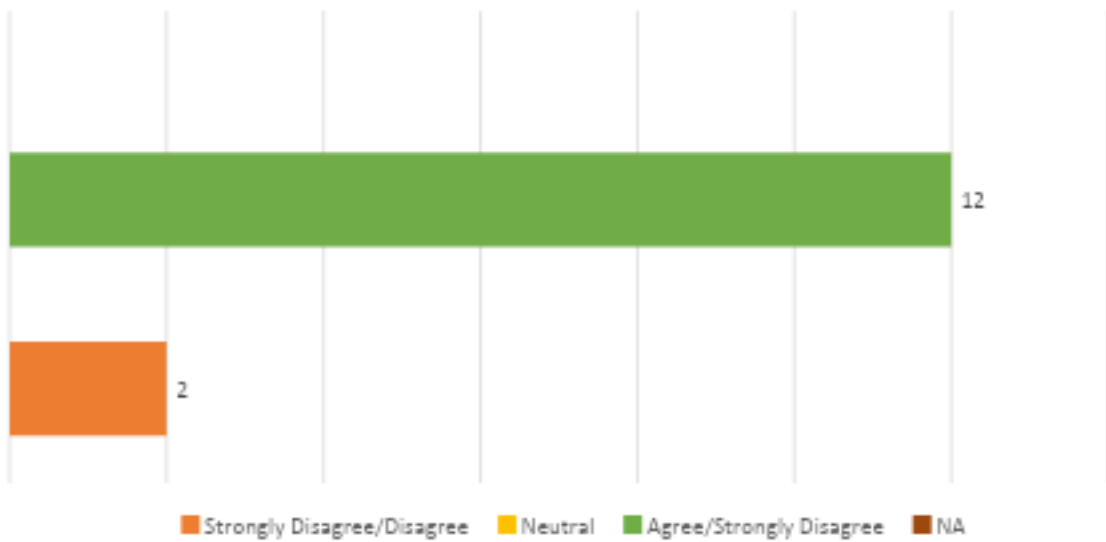
Survey question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The staff believes students learn more through effective family support.	0	0	0	8	6
The school works with many community organizations to support its students.	0	2	1	6	5
The school makes a special effort to contact the families of students who are struggling academically.	0	2	0	4	8
Teachers have frequent contact with their student's parents.	0	1	1	4	8
The school provides ample information to families about how to help students succeed in school.	0	1	2	4	7
Many parents are involved as volunteers at the school.	1	1	5	4	3



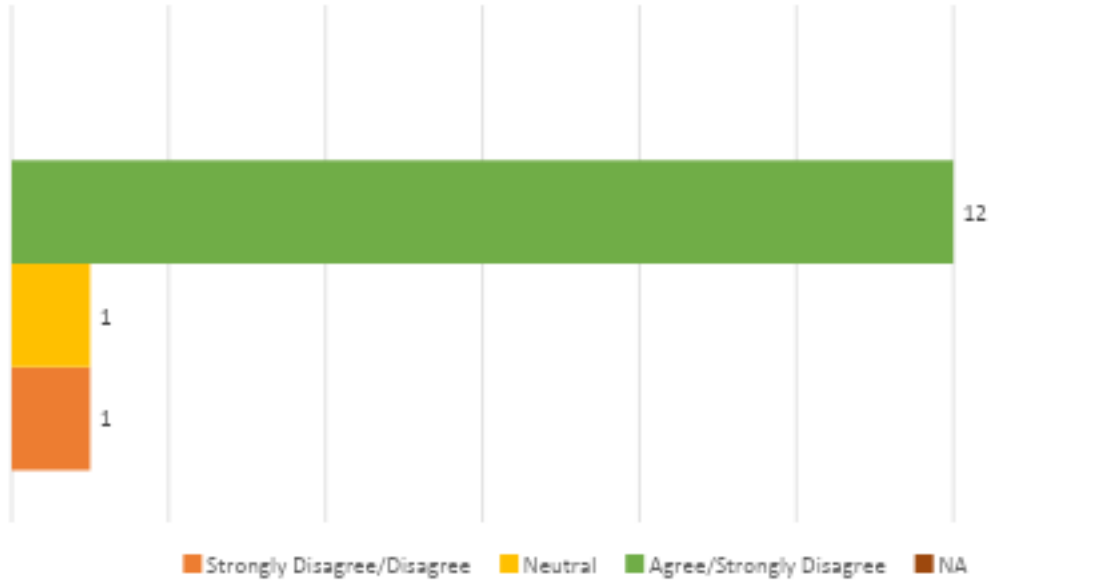
The school works with many community organizations to support its students..



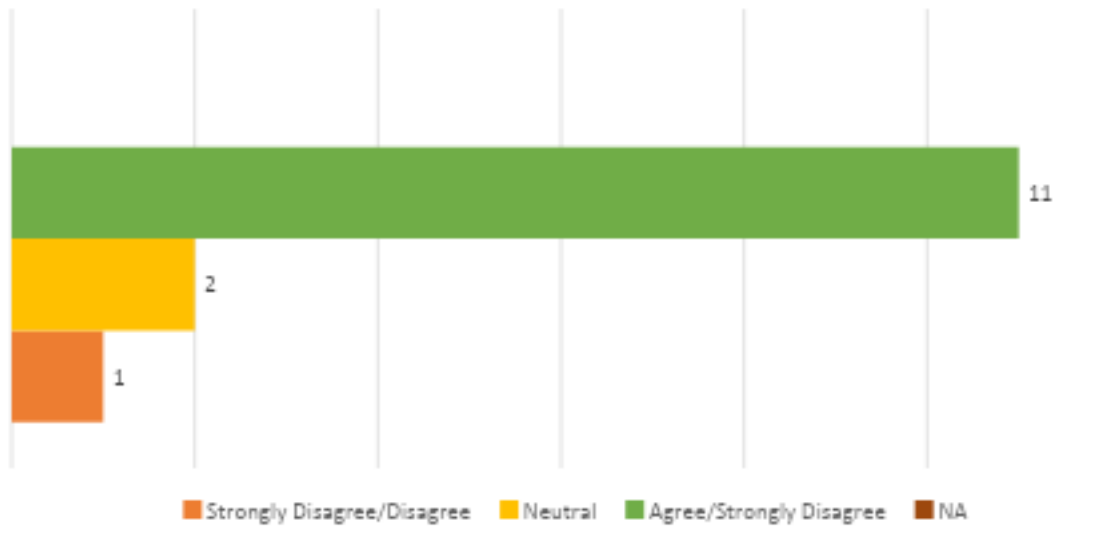
The school makes a special effort to contact the families of students who are struggling academically.



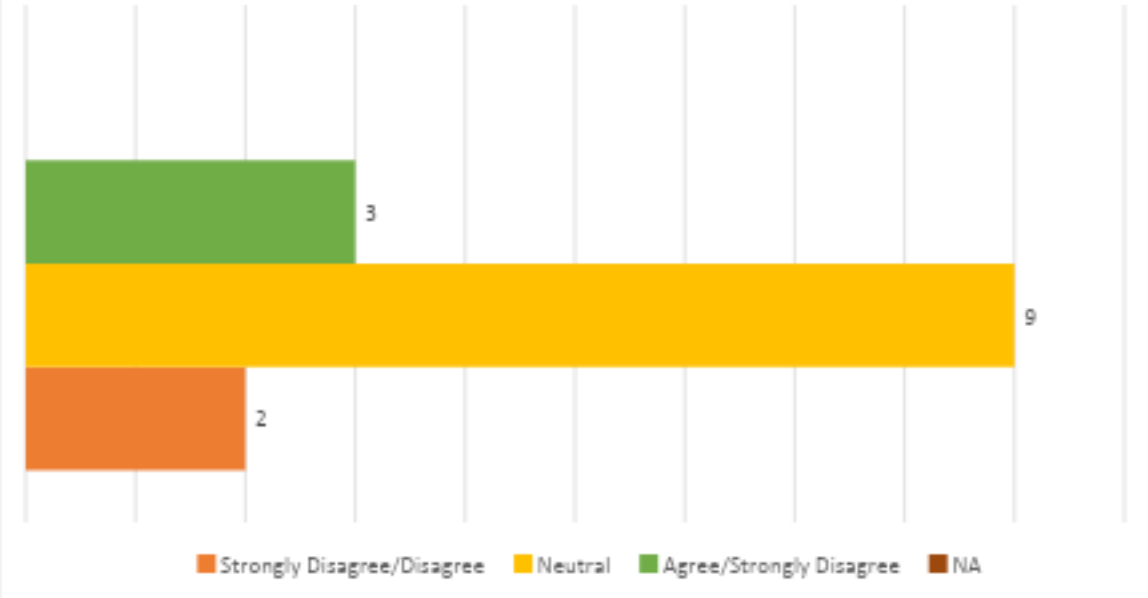
Teachers have frequent contact with their student's parents.



The school provides ample information to families about how to help students succeed in school.



Many parents are involved as volunteers at the school.



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