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DEINDUSTRIALIZING SCHOOL: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER
ACADEMIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership and Organizational Development
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2018

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A Dissertation Approved on

October 16, 2018

By the following Thesis or Dissertation Committee

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to every educator who believes we always
can do better for our students. Also, to every working mom who
questions whether she can pursue her dreams.

For Nash and Reid

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller for your constant support, wisdom, and time. You came into this program at a pivotal point for me and your guidance has been invaluable. Also, thank you to Dr. Kyle Ingle for his ability to push me to become a better research and writer than I thought I could be. A huge thank you to Dr. Harrie Buecker for being my cheerleader when I needed it, and to Dr. Sarah Hitchings for going out of her way to provide insight for my study despite being one of the hardest working principals I know and having little time to share. I'm also so appreciative of my Cohort 18 family at the University of Louisville. We have had quite a ride together and I'm thankful for the love and knowledge we've shared. Finally, thank you to my parents Bob and Diana Barnes for instilling a drive and passion in me to pursue as many opportunities as I could and to never stop learning. To my husband, Mitch, for supporting me along the way and never making me feel guilty for the immensity of this commitment. Most importantly, to my two sweet boys, Nash and Reid. Although you may not know it yet, I've learned more about selfless love from you both than I could in a lifetime. You are the reason I want to make this world a better place.

ABSTRACT

DEINDUSTRIALIZING SCHOOL: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER ACADEMIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Terra Greenwell

October 16, 2018

Rooted in an antiquated curriculum, the traditional model of schooling remains a persisting factor in student disengagement at all levels, but especially in high school (Labaree, 2008). At a time when college and career readiness is vital to a school's accountability, principals must rethink ways to educate a diverse student population. Given the need to provide both academic and vocational aspects, career academies create career-themed small learning communities in an effort to increase student engagement, belonging, and post-secondary success. This study uses a multiple case study design to explore the much-needed perspective of high school principals as they collectively implemented career academies in their schools through the 2017 Academies of Louisville initiative. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven high school principals during their first year of implementation. Triangulation of the data was completed through readily available document analysis, member checks, and an interview with the program's district director. Both inductive and deductive coding using the conceptual framework of Crafting Coherence helped to structure the findings within a thematic

narrative (Honig & Hatch, 2004). The study shows that successful implementation of career academies is heavily dependent upon principals and districts to “bridge and buffer” needs through regular systems checks (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 26). This entails principals selling the vision to teachers and students, assessing facility needs, and implementing the model with fidelity, but also entails districts ensuring that it is a priority at the top level by guaranteeing fiscal support, appropriate training, qualified candidates for hire, and program equity.

Keywords: career academies, small learning communities, policy implementation, leadership

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, we must think anew and act anew (Lincoln, 1862, p. 84).

In the concluding remarks of his 1862 message to Congress, Abraham Lincoln expressed a timely message to the people of the United States. Though the context at the time concerned emancipation from slavery, these words are still relevant with regard to the role of traditional education in schools. Too often, when it comes to teaching our children, educators' practices are dictated by the dogmas of the past. Although the world has changed, the American education system has, for the most part, remained unchanged since the early 1900s. Legislators continue to pass laws that encourage conformity and a prescriptive curriculum that focuses on the attainment of Carnegie Units, or student credits toward graduation, to increase knowledge for knowledge's sake. Despite this tradition, there are people and movements that recognize the importance of embracing diverse populations, the unique occupational needs of our time, and the need to impart ingenuity and grit to our students. Therefore, in order to oppose unproductive traditions in matters of education and give our students the skills needed to thrive in a modern world, a restructuring of the purpose of schools should be considered.

Continued pressure from federal and state governments to increase student graduation rates and achievement scores has forced many school systems to rethink educational structures in an effort to create a more holistic and meaningful education experience (Allen & Steinberg, 2004). Small Learning Communities (SLCs) are one such way districts and individual schools are attempting to do this. SLCs have been shown to provide students with smaller schools-within-schools and allow them to feel connected to their teachers and classmates (Allen, 2008). Although SLCs create a positive and collaborative community, the burden of state accountability models and mounting concerns from community leaders to improve the workforce talent pool continue to emphasize a need for post-secondary success skills. Career academies take the SLC model one step further by creating schools-within-schools that allow students to pursue their interests; the career academies emphasize career opportunities, technical training, job shadows, and internships with the intent of providing students opportunities for post-secondary success (Kuo, 2010; Lee & Douglas, 2007; Strike, 2008).

Kemple and Snipes (2000) conducted multiple studies since 1993 to assess the impact of career academies on student achievement, graduation rate, and post-secondary success. Their work shows evidence of success for at-risk student populations in terms of graduation rates and even increased salaries after high school, but questions remain regarding their impact on student achievement scores and the reasons for their success (Stern, 2010). Career academies may show promise for building a sense of student belonging in high school, increasing graduation rates, and decreasing adverse behavior incidents, but there are many other factors, including principal leadership, district support, and the student's own desire to be part of a new way of schooling that impact their success or failure (Maxwell & Rubin, 2001).

Background

In order to understand the impetus for career education reform and the development of career academies, it is important to first take a step back. The industrial revolution played a pivotal role in the formation of modern schooling. Schools were formulated to prepare students for eighteenth-century industry, and today remain mostly unchanged despite our having advanced to a post-industrial society. Toffler (1970) stated, “Yet the whole idea of assembling masses of students (raw material) to be processed by teachers (workers) in a centrally located school (factory) was a stroke of industrial genius” (p. 362). At the time, preparing a uniform workforce for life outside of school made sense. However, this model is widely condemned as the very reason students are unsuccessful in schools today given the diversity of post-secondary opportunities. Toffler (1970) said, “The regimentation, lack of individualization, the rigid systems of seating, grouping, grading and marking, the authoritarian role of the teacher, are precisely those that made mass public education so effective an instrument of adaptation for its place and time” (p. 400). Century-old practices have remained unchanged, including school requirements and even the uniformity of assessments. Although the rhetoric of the school system may promote individualism, its actions preach conformity and assimilation.

The assembly line model of education has continued to stifle creativity and student choice in his/her learning. Static school institutions are in need of remodeling in order to increase student engagement and post-secondary success (Blomenkamp, 2009; Senge, 2012). As many school leaders and districts search for change, effective career and technical education programs using career academies to promote real-world learning are gaining momentum (Dixon et al., 2011; Kuo, 2010). Blomenkamp (2009) wrote of the importance of creating educational environments that promote “experiential learning as opposed to the

traditional industrial age school model” (p. 2). The use of authentic learning opportunities to engage students in school is a priority for many school districts as they work to provide relevant and meaningful learning for some of their most at-risk populations. Within the career academy model, “academies act as conduits for real world experiences that are rarely found in a traditional comprehensive high school” (Blomenkamp, 2009, p. 2). Given the current climate of education and the momentum of career academies, it is critical to understand the model from the perspective of the leaders who are currently working in these schools. If career academies truly are an answer to school reform, it is essential to learn from those already utilizing them.

Significance of the Study

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), in Louisville, Kentucky, contains the majority of the state’s priority (lowest performing) schools, according to Kentucky’s accountability formula, which takes into account test scores, graduation rates, and college and career readiness scores (Kentucky Department of Education, 2015). These schools have the weighty task of attempting to meet the needs of a diverse population of students while simultaneously increasing accountability scores (Simon & Johnson, 2013). The majority of priority students are considered at-risk and qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program, an indicator of their family’s low socioeconomic status (SES). In his discussion of the impact of poverty on student educational attainment, Jensen (2009) stated that “many low-SES children face emotional and social instability” that can lead to “poor school performance and behavior on the child’s part” (p. 15). Principals must rethink their approaches to dealing with a student body full of students with a variety of learning needs, backgrounds, and future goals. Priority schools have many obstacles and challenges in producing student achievement gains, but most importantly, strategies must focus on increasing student engagement.

Student engagement, an essential part of school improvement, can be viewed as a student's active and willing participation, as well as their motivation and interest in school activities (Reeve, Hyungshim, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004). In their research on engagement, Skinner, Marchand, Furrer, and Kindermann (2008) state, "students who are engaged in school are . . . more successful academically" (p. 765). This engagement factor can be influenced by repurposing schooling through career academies where students are taught according to their interests (Kemple & Snipes, 2000). Career academies take school improvement to the next level by changing the physical layout of the school to create a sense of community, reassigning administration to increase academy ownership, and giving teachers and students autonomy within their academies (Quint, 2008; Reeve et al., 2004).

In JCPS, despite multiple resources, years of low test scores for some priority schools indicate a need for a change beyond the curriculum and leadership; therefore, the significance of this research is to understand how principals have used career academy models to provide an authentic learning experience for all students, including those who are often marginalized due to their social backgrounds and who struggle to learn in the current structure of school.

Important implications for districts and leaders wishing to implement career academies may include utilizing existing successful models, providing additional and equitable funding to properly staff schools, and increasing professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators. As a practitioner and researcher, I sought to learn about the restructuring of schools into career academies from the perspective of the leaders who are doing it/have done it.

Purpose of the Study

In the fall of 2016, JCPS released a request for proposal (RFP) for a new Academies of Louisville initiative modeled after the existing Academies of Nashville launched in 2006.

Goals of the venture included a greater number of certifications for students, increased post-secondary success, as well as redesigning the career and technical education program already in place, and gaining consistent business and community partnerships for added academy stability. As a result, 11 high school principals submitted applications to be a part of the new endeavor.

As a practitioner already in JCPS, working in an academy model school, I hoped to gain insight into the experiences of principals as they implemented the model in their own schools. There was a need for principal perspective to develop a framework to guide the process of implementation (Dixon et al., 2011); therefore, one of the purposes of this study is to provide guidelines for future schools, principals, and districts that wish to utilize the career academy model. However, it was first important to understand how the model became a success in Nashville.

In 2006–2007, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), a comparable urban district in both size and student population to JCPS, decided to make some big changes to what they described as a struggling school system (MNPS, 2017). With a student population of over 86,000, including 73 elementary schools, 33 middle schools, 25 high schools, 18 charter schools, and 8 specialty schools, MNPS took on the task of transforming underperforming schools and low graduation rates by tackling the issue of student engagement in their high schools (Metro Nashville Public Schools Annual Diversity Report, 2017). With the help of each school principal and district leader, the district redesigned their 12 zoned (or district-assigned) high schools to house career academies that provided students with choice and differentiation based on their life goals and interests. The result was the creation of the Academies of Nashville—a program offering over 40 career pathways, from medicine to manufacturing—MNSP’s restructure of its school system in response to declining student

achievement and graduation rates (MNSP, 2017). Each school has a unique focus and diversified choices for students.

There have been studies examining student achievement after career academies, but few have examined the role and perceptions of the leader after implementation and during sustainability efforts (Gentry, Peters, & Mann, 2007; Kuo, 2010; Maxwell & Rubin, 2001; Quint, 2008). With JCPS being new to the career academy model, a study providing insight and valuable feedback to principals as they take on the challenge of rethinking school could be vital to the success of the Academies of Louisville. Therefore, the overall goal of this research study was to explore the perceptions of successes, failures, and lessons learned from the perspective of principals who led a school through the process. This study yielded findings that urban school districts like JCPS can use for a better understanding of the model as a whole, as well as insight into the implementation process, including both successes and failures.

Contextual Basis

Students living in poverty often lack role models who have been successful within the current structure of school. At-risk students, in particular, rely heavily on teachers and counselors to help them learn study habits, navigate college applications, and even find scholarships (ACTE, 2012). In order to increase student success, schools must provide consistency through modeling, support for students as they traverse the bureaucracy of education, and authentic learning opportunities to prepare them for post-secondary careers or further education. In fact, in a 2009 study on student disengagement, Yazzie-Mintz (2010) reported that 42% of students who considered dropping out “did so because they did not see the value in the work they were being asked to do” (p. 9). This points to a lack of relevant curriculum for students in our high schools. This engagement factor plays a pivotal role in the

success or failure of students who often struggle to find meaning in the traditional model of school (Felner, Seitsinger, Brand, Burns & Bolton, 2007; Strike, 2008). Career and technical education relies heavily on real-world learning and hands-on experiences for students. Given this, Bandura's social learning theory was the guiding theoretical framework for this research.

The foundations of Bandura's theory rest in the fact that students learn from models and observe their surroundings. Bandura (1965) argued that this type of modeled learning, where students can experience a job first-hand, is highly engaging and impactful. Sears (1975) supported Bandura's work and understandings of how children learn best. Grusec (1992) suggested that Bandura's "theoretical effort was expended on developing an understanding of the way children come to internalize, or take on as their own, the values, attitudes, and behavior of the culture in which they are raised" (p. 777). Students learn from the world around them, further supporting the need for relevant learning in high schools.

This understanding also lends itself to the model developed by Ford Next Generation Learning concerning the implementation of career academies (See Figure 1). It is important to distinguish between vocational education and the career academy model, as the former focuses purely on job training and the latter on a collaboration between academics and student career interests. The Ford model seeks to show the process of learning for students as it relates to meaningful in-class experiences, personalized learning, and community partnerships that are then applicable in students' future endeavors.

Figure 1: Ford Next Generation Learners three-strand model.

Reprinted from *Achieving educational equity and justice in career academies: Challenges and promising strategies* (Kantrov, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

In order to implement a system that supports a new way for students to learn, principals and districts must have similar beliefs and priorities. Honig and Hatch (2004) discussed the concept of “crafting coherence” (see Figure 2) to explain the process by which district central office staff and principals must work together to implement strategies and policies that they believe are best for students, while still navigating the bureaucracy that educational politics can bring (p. 19).

Crafting coherence as a conceptual framework is defined by Honig and Hatch (2004):

- (a) Schools establish their own goals and strategies. These goals and strategies typically are specific and open-ended, as well as adaptable, and developed through sustained and managed school-based participatory activities.
- (b) Schools use their

goals and strategies as the basis for deciding whether to bridge or buffer external demands. (c) District central offices support these decision-making processes by continually searching for and using information about schools goals, strategies, and experiences to inform their own operations (p. 26).

This model is especially important to understand during the implementation of career academies, as the Nashville model was a top-down initiative, whereas the Academies of Louisville was done through an application and voluntary process. Each principal received information (see Appendices A and B) describing features of the academy model, requirements, and a specific career pathway, depending on their location and school needs, but the principals were the ones charged with implementing the model, selling it to teachers, and selling it to students, while still meeting accountability requirements and state guidelines. This careful balance of taking in district mandates and creating new systems within a school to implement these initiatives is often easier said than done and requires effective “bridging and buffering” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 27) on the part of the principal.

Figure 2: Crafting coherence.

From “Crafting coherence: How schools strategically manage multiple external demands” (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

According to researchers Rutledge, Harris, and Ingle (2010),

In the context of schools and policy implementation, bridging consists of activities in which schools respond to external policy demands by instituting programs and initiatives to achieve policy goals. Buffering activities occur when schools choose not to enact policy demands but rather to orient themselves around their own priorities and goals (p. 217).

For the academy model, this means understanding the role of the district in communicating policy expectations, the role of the principal in carrying out the policy, and how each entity balances their own needs with the needs of specific stakeholders— teachers for principals, meeting state accountability requirements for districts.

Research Questions

As an assistant principal within the district, I sought to add to current research on the career academy model by providing a much-needed perspective from the principal during and throughout academy implementation (Gentry, Peters, & Mann, 2007). The purpose of my study was to understand the roles that leaders play during new initiatives, but also to yield findings that could provide a practical guide for principals who are in the first year of career academy implementation, in the hope of improving practice within my own school district. This study can aid the development of policy regarding successful career academy implementation within other districts as well, especially those with high levels of at-risk students.

This qualitative multiple-case research study employed a semi-structured interview protocol with principals in the Academies of Louisville. The sample of principals was drawn

from the original 11 high schools participating in the Academies of Louisville. District leaders offered support by providing principal contact information; although, many principals previously stated their willingness to participate, once approved.

The following research questions guided the design of the study:

- What beliefs do current career academy principals have concerning the purpose for career academy implementation?
- What are the principals' perceptions of program successes, barriers, and the supports needed for career academies?
- What are the principals' perceptions of whether the model achieves its intended purpose and what do they recommend for the future?

Scope

The study focused on the experiences of volunteer participant principals from the 11 original high schools chosen for the Academies of Louisville within JCPS. Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol in an effort to understand from their perspective why participation was necessary, how the district supports the academies, general feelings of success or failure, and whether the model meets its intended purpose.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included general access to the principals. Some schools were late to joining the academy model and started later in the year than others. However, the participant pool did include principals from the 11 original schools.

Delimitations

This study was limited to the 11 original high schools. These high schools were purposefully selected, as they were the only high schools in the Louisville area that participated in the academy model for the 2017–2018 school year. All Academies of

Louisville principals were given the opportunity to participate in the study in the hope of having a 50% participation rate. Interview participants were limited to principals who were in career academy schools at the time of the study.

Assumptions

I assumed that all participant responses were honest and accurate to the best of their ability. I also assumed that, because all schools in the study were following the Academy of Louisville model, the core attributes of the model were used within each school in the study (including the use of multiple and diverse career academies, academy principals, academy coaches, and community partnerships). Finally, the researcher also assumed that the literature used to support the research in this study is unbiased and truthful.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms were used in the context of this study:

Vocational education is a term used to reference a type of education originated in the early 1900s that was intended to prepare students in school for “direct entry into full time work—not for college or university” (Stern, 2010, p. 1).

Career and technical education refers to the more recent switch from vocational education to an educational emphasis that combines both academics and technical training for students. Students enrolled in a career and technical education program will complete both occupational pathway requirements and traditional academic coursework in order to graduate (Stern, 2010).

Small learning communities (SLCs) can be defined as schools-within-a-school that exist to provide a sense of inclusion and belonging for students who share similar interest in a particular theme or career pathway within a larger high school. They can be characterized as having a more personalized learning environment (Allen, 2008).

An at-risk student is one in danger of not graduating, or declining academically, due to a variety of circumstances including socioeconomic factors, learning disabilities, and other personal or familial support issues (Grant, Strong, Popp, 2008).

Priority schools or, most recently, comprehensive support and improvement schools (CSIs), are defined by the Kentucky Department of Education (2018) as being in the lowest 5% of schools in the state in terms of accountability ratings. The state is required by law to provide additional financial and staffing support in an effort to bring the school out of this status.

Career academies are found in high schools, serving students in grades nine through 12, often in an urban setting (United States Department of Education, 2004). The purpose and structure of the career academy is threefold: 1) career academies are divided into small learning communities to serve a smaller population of students with similar interests; 2) career academies work to incorporate both technical and vocational education into core content in an effort to increase student engagement; 3) career academies rely heavily on community and business partnerships to provide relevant and authentic curriculum and post-secondary opportunities for students (Kuo, 2011).

Engagement is a behavior that shows a person's motivation and interest in a particular event, activity, or subject. In education, this can be a predictor of student success, as increased motivation may lead to enhanced learning (Reeve, Hyungshim, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004).

The Academies of Nashville includes over 40 program choices within Metro Nashville Public School System's 12 zoned high schools. The academies were designed in the 2006–2007 school year in response to declining academic statistics including student achievement and graduation rates. The academies are intended to give students choice in their

learning environment and adapt learning to their interests through career exploration, field trips, job shadowing, and internships (Metro Nashville Public Schools, 2017).

The Academies of Louisville was started in the 2017–2018 school year within the Jefferson County Public Schools system, aiming to replicate the general successes found in the Academies of Nashville, including increased graduation rates. The academies include 11 participating high schools from around the district and include multiple career pathway options for students. The purpose of the Academies of Louisville is to provide students with deeper learning in the classrooms, connect them to business partners, and enhance their educational experience with authentic opportunities including job shadowing, internships, and post-secondary career help (Jefferson County Public Schools, 2017).

Organization of the Study

This report is divided into five chapters, including an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions. The introductory chapter provides background on the study, including the purpose and significance, research questions, scope and definition of terms. The second chapter, the literature review, provides context through a comprehensive look into previous research on the topic as well as policy implications that have dictated the direction of career academy implementation for principals today. Chapter 3 explains the design of the study, including the setting, interview subjects, and methodological choices. Chapter 4 provides the results of the qualitative study. Chapter 5 discusses findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future work.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this qualitative study, I sought to examine principals' perceptions of the purpose of career academies, support needed, program success or failure following implementation of career academies in their schools, and perceptions of the sustainability of the model.

Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

- What beliefs do current career academy principals have concerning the purpose for career academy implementation?
- What are the principals' perceptions of program successes, barriers, and the supports needed for career academies?
- What are the principals' perceptions of whether the model achieves its intended purpose and what do they recommend for the future?

These questions were formulated after a careful review of literature, which is detailed in this chapter. The review of literature is divided into four sections. The first section is a brief history of career and technical education. The next is a discussion of the development of research on small learning communities and its impact on the development of subsequent career academy models for schools. The third is an exploration of the concept of student engagement and the relevant research on this topic, focusing on the role of school leaders and

districts in facilitating student engagement through the academy model. This chapter ends with a summary of the literature review.

A History of Career and Technical Education Reform

Understanding the impact of prior reforms and learning from the past can be a valuable practice for educators wishing to transform current school models (Kuo, 2010).

Vocational education is one such reform that has taken shape over the past century.

Vocational education is an aspect of school reform that has been around since the early 1900s when the focus of education was on producing large numbers of employees for a generally industrial society. Perry and Wallace (2012) wrote: “Public schools of the early 1900s, funded by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, bore the responsibility for preparing compliant and reliable workers to meet the demands of factories, mill, offices, and stores” (p. 35). Given the need for more workers, the purpose of most schools split between a traditional academic pathway and vocational apprenticeship.

The space race played a large role in the transformation of career education. While Americans feared being left behind as Russia launched Sputnik, they soon enacted multiple policies designed to make them more competitive, policies including the National Defense of Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 and the creation of the National Science Foundation (NSF). Cha (2015) saw “the Soviet launching of Sputnik and educational reform in the early 1960s in the U.S. as a cause and effect relationship” that can be attributed to the focus on career education and specifically post-secondary education reform (p. ii). As a result, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 was passed.

This model remained intact through much of the century until the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), refocusing the need for school reform. The release of that

contentious report came after many feared a decline in the U.S economy due to a failing school system (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). The report emphasized the need to increase academic rigor and academic cohesion by portraying it as a national emergency. There were multiple outcomes of the report including measuring schools based on student achievement, rethinking the curriculum to make it more cohesive, focusing on closing the achievement gap, and increasing standardized testing (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). Although *A Nation at Risk* made indirect connections between an underprepared workforce and failing economy, the shift toward career education reform did not happen until 1988 when *The Forgotten Half* report showed that American education was ignoring vocational and career options (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988). The report reemphasized a need to prepare all students for life, not just college (Perry & Wallace, 2012; Stone & Lewis, 2012).

With the focus of education shifting to the development of a well-rounded student, additional reforms were needed to ensure vocational education did more than move students directly into a low paying job, but rather, prepared them for a successful post-secondary life where they could provide for their needs, which could include college, a vocation, or a military career. Therefore, the current landscape of career education was most recently shaped by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 and continued amendments to the act (i.e., Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998; Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006), which provided funding to career and technical education programs in schools (Aliaga, Kotamraju, & Stone, 2014; Perry & Wallace, 2012). More importantly, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994 melded the two distinct pathways of traditional schooling and vocational schooling to allow for both academic requirements and a technical and career-based focus, if desired by students and school systems (Kemple & Snipes, 2000); Perry & Wallace, 2012).

Given the now-combined purpose of educating and preparing students for post-secondary success, a model was needed to ensure this happened. The creation of small learning communities that restructured schools and provided a more individualized learning experience became one medium by which this new career and technical education model could be implemented.

Small Learning Communities

It is important to understand the basis for the career academy model before we apply the model to the issue of school reform. Restructuring schools into small learning communities (SLCs) is meant to encourage student success in high school, especially for at-risk populations. SLCs are about more than reducing class sizes or making schools smaller. They emphasize a school-within-a-school model to create a sense of community and increase student success in large schools (Kuo, 2010; Lee & Douglas, 2007; Strike, 2008). The notion is that SLCs allow for better advising and a familial feel, thus fostering higher graduation rates and general student success (Felner et al., 2007).

Although defining SLCs has sometimes been up for interpretation based on the needs of the school, the one aspect that researchers seem to agree upon is the need for personalization of student learning (Felner et al., 2007; Kuo, 2010; Strike, 2008). Teachers in SLCs have the unique opportunity to work with students who have common goals in an environment that gives them the time to get to know the needs of student. In other words, SLCs promote learning environments that emphasize student interests, as well as choice and relevance in learning.

SLCs are more than just a device by which to improve engagement; SLCs are a way to rethink education and how students learn best. As districts seek new and innovative ways to

structure schools, SLCs have grown in popularity as a “central strategy for improving teaching and student learning” (Supovitz & Christman, 2005).

The Project on High Performance Learning Communities used a three-decades-long study to analyze the impact of SLCs on generalized student success, including social, emotional, and academic success (Felner et al., 2007). The study, guided by a transactional ecological model of development, analyzed multiple data sets over 30 years. Felner et al. (2007) sought to identify “what works” (p. 212) in education reform by utilizing multiple methods and analyzing multiple data sources in studies of SLCs, including over 3,000 annual school assessments, and multiple studies on reform efforts. Their conclusion highlights the need for “fidelity” of implementation for the following dimensions: structural/organizational characteristics; attitudes, norms, and beliefs of staff; climate/empowerment/experiential characteristics and features of the school and districts; capacity/skills; practice/procedural variables (Felner et al., 2007, p. 214).

In reporting their findings, Felner et al. (2007) emphasized the importance for districts and school leaders to “carefully consider whether the changes, as implemented, are adequate for enabling the emergence of the full set of impact sought” (p. 220). Furthermore, Felner et al. (2007) found that SLCs can have a significant impact on the motivation and engagement of students from minority or poverty backgrounds if school leaders consistently implement all of the dimensions suggested by the research model. The importance of implementation with fidelity by leaders, along with district support, are essential dynamics that will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Although SLCs are not a guarantee for student achievement, they have been found to increase a sense of belonging and motivation in students and are, therefore, viewed as a step in the right direction for educational reform, especially for students of low socioeconomic

status (Cotton, 2001). SLC proponents seek to help students in finding the right fit and by putting them with other students and teachers who share their passions and career aspirations. Strike (2008) proposed that “the core problem that small school advocates have identified (or should identify) is student alienation and disengagement. The core solution is community” (p. 176). SLCs have aided in creating positive cultures within larger school settings to increase the chances that students graduate successfully and on time (Kuo, 2010).

The Impetus for Changing the Structure of Schools

School reform has been attempted from many different approaches, but how often do educators slow down enough to learn from past initiatives before employing a new technique? Although school accountability has traditionally focused on academics in core content subjects, there also exists a need to rethink the purpose of high school and the focus on graduation requirements and testing. SLCs are one way to start the transformation, but, in order to increase career readiness, the purpose of each learning community must shift to a focus on career education. This often requires changes to legislation and graduation requirements that allow for more flexibility in scheduling and coursework.

The career academy movement, as part of a focus on small learning communities, has been present since the 1970s, mainly in the form of vocational programs as an alternative for students who struggled to find meaning in traditional schooling (Kemple & Snipes, 2000). However, the career academy movement gained momentum in 1993 with a more-than-a-decade-long study by the United States Department of Education to understand the “implementation and long-term impacts of career academies” (Kuo, 2010, p. 393). Career academies were viewed as SLCs with an emphasis on a student’s vocational interest within their core academic and career and technical education courses. Results of the 1993 study showed a positive impact on the employment status of all students involved, but even more

significantly on minority students, considering that 86% of the study participants were from a minority group (Kemple & Snipes, 2000). Additional findings on the success of career academies have shown that they help to create a community feel, lower drop-out rates, and increase career readiness (Dixon, Cotner, Wilson, & Borman, 2011; Fletcher & Cox, 2012; Kuo, 2010).

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, the focus on college and career readiness remained strong, yet the language changed to allow states more flexibility in determining what represents a “high quality education” (ESSA, 2015, p. 91). This is an important distinction from the prescriptive program once dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). Therefore, it is up to states to understand the need for career education and how it can benefit students. Reform in career and technical education (CTE) has grown at both the national and state level since the 1993 study. CTE programs moved to the forefront of policy as a growing number of people saw a need for change and repurposing of school. According to Zinth (2013), interest in CTE programs is driven by

- (1) A pervasive gap between workforce needs and the skills of entering workers
- (2) The projected growth in skilled occupations requiring technical certification or a credential beyond a high school diploma
- (3) interest in improving high school graduation rates by helping students see connections between programs of study and career opportunities in high-wage, in-demand fields (p. 1).

The seminal work of Kemple and Snipes (2000) was a continuation of the original 1993 study on the effectiveness of career academies. In the updated study, the researchers highlighted the impact on student engagement and the performance of 1,700 students enrolled in career academies compared to those who were not. Their findings showed that career

academies reduced dropout rates, created a more supportive school environment, increased work-based learning opportunities, and increased engagement among at-risk populations, which they defined as those students who struggle in a traditional school environment (Kemple & Snipes, 2000).

Issues Facing the Current School Model

Although current accountability measures under ESSA and NCLB and federal legislation under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act call for career and technical education requirements in all secondary schools as a graduation requirement, there are still disconnects. The notion that increasing the amount of coursework is beneficial was perpetuated when *A Nation at Risk* (1983) detailed the lag in American education and lack of competition with other countries. One of the many results of the NAR report was an increase in the number of course requirements for core content areas, in order to make American education more rigorous (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). NCLB (2002) has also continued the emphasis on traditional subject areas such as math, science and English. However, additional credit requirements have not produced increased academic performance, especially in the desired areas of math and science (Stone & Lewis, 2012).

Given the strong hold of traditional schooling requirements, the need for nontraditional schooling is even more evident, judging from both statistics on poor graduation rates and when looking at labor needs (Perry & Wallace, 2012). High school dropout rates are at an all-time high, specifically in urban schools with high concentrations of “low income, racial, and ethnic and minority youth” (Perry & Wallace, 2012, p. 34). The need for alternative graduation requirements and pathways for increasing student engagement and, thus, future success have been part of new career education policy, but those policies have failed to provide a clear structure for schools to follow. The divide between vocational

schools and academically-tracked schools since the Smith–Hughes Act of 1917 still exists, but to a lesser extent. Career education reform in the 1970s tried to meld vocational and academically tracked schools to enhance “occupational relevance in education” (Perry & Wallace, 2012, p. 36).

Instructional practices are the cornerstone of student success, especially for challenged populations (Scott et al., 2014). However, the same rhetoric concerning how students learn best has been used for decades now with little change. Studies on student engagement conducted by Newmann (1992), in collaboration with the National Center for Effective Secondary Schools, show that researchers have been asking the question of whether the focus of education should be on “authoritative knowledge” or “construction and production” of a student’s own understanding (p. 6). According to Newmann (1992), “the most immediate and persisting issue for students and teachers is not low achievement, but student disengagement” (p. 2). This disengagement finds itself rooted in a curriculum established over a century ago (Labaree, 2008). Instead of adapting to the diverse needs of students in the 21st century, schools still teach the prescribed core subjects, often as they have always been taught.

Therefore, as an alternative to traditional schooling and the result of a search for relevance and connectivity for students, career academies have gained additional attention. Career academies started with the original intention of decreasing dropout rates and increasing school participation for many at-risk student populations (Kemple & Snipes, 2000). Given the fact that career education has become a priority in the United States, with the fastest growing needs in the areas of science and technology, it is imperative for legislative bodies to rethink the focus of education beyond the traditional curriculum shifts and transcript requirements to form a more comprehensive and relevant understanding of the purpose of school (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

The Career Academy Model

Educators are tasked with preparing young people for the real world through a well-rounded education, but many find that as students get older they become less engaged in the work because they see little purpose in it (Skinner et al., 2008). The use of CTE programs that connect learners to careers outside of school can give students motivation to be successful while in high school. However, state and national accountability standards have not yet followed suit. The focus currently remains on college readiness with pervasive ACT testing that accounts for much of what is deemed a student's (and school's) success or failure. Instead, a focus on student engagement may lead educators toward a more permanent solution.

Connections to Student Engagement

Student engagement is essential to school improvement (Blomenkamp, 2009; Senge, 2012). In their research on engagement, Skinner et al. (2008) stated, "Students who are engaged in school are both more successful academically and more likely to avoid the pitfalls of adolescence" (p. 765). However, engaging students is easier said than done. In low performing school districts, despite federal and local resources, years of low test scores for some priority schools indicate a need for a change beyond the curriculum and leadership. This change requires a shift in policy focus, where new initiatives are used to provide direct funding to career and technical education, in order to increase student success both during school and after (Kuo, 2010).

The career academy approach uses a school-within-a school approach, a curriculum with a combination of academic and vocational foci integrated through a career theme, and intentional partnerships between community and business leaders that lead to increased internships and job-shadowing opportunities for students (Kemple & Snipes, 2000). Although

traditional models started with a purely vocational focus, the need to increase rigor and relevance for students has led to the development of current academic components that focus on continued accountability standards but also account for a broader range of students and their needs.

Implementation Guidelines and Researched Outcomes

Organizations are evolving entities that must constantly adjust to the climate in which they find themselves, including changing key components to ensure they stay relevant and competitive for consumers. Consumers, in this case students, desire relevant learning material that engage them in a curriculum beyond the textbook. This type of dynamic environment requires thoughtful and effective planning (Bryson, 2011). The business world may seem like the obvious place for this type of strategic planning, but educational practitioners are realizing more and more that goal setting, planning, stakeholder involvement, and evaluation of systems creates a more successful school (Rutherford, 2009).

The career and technology focus of education has shed light on the relationship between career academies and increases in student engagement and success. Despite this, many schools still find the change to career academies to be difficult, given multiple obstacles that include district mandates and state requirements. Schools wishing to implement career academies can do so, but it requires strong leadership and foresight to realize true change to the traditional, even historical, structure of a school. Cannon and Reed (1999) offered a way to accomplish this change through a succinct look at the implementation of career academies within South Grand Prairie High School in Texas.

Cannon and Reed outlined the problems leading to the need for reforming and repurposing schools, including “perceived ills” such as “large school populations, low student achievement, minimal interest in academics, irrelevant instruction, and student graduates

without clear, realistic plans for the future” (1999, p. 48). In essence, a lack of student engagement and purposeful learning presented a real need for change. Cannon and Reed (1999) used South Grand Prairie as a case study of the work needed to implement needed changes. The authors clearly delineated the planning process involved in creating the new career academy model, including starting with stakeholders, effective planning, and continual evaluation.

First, a vision team consisting of teachers, parents, and administrators was formed to specifically target the “low-average to average-ability students with little or no involvement in school activities” who are often neglected in the current environment that caters to high achievers and special education students (Cannon & Reed, 1999, p. 49). This vision team then laid the foundation for the rest of the program, including the scheduling process, new courses, building re-allotment, staff training, curriculum enhancement, and program evaluation. The scheduling process proved to be the most difficult because of issues involving the inability to secure “pure academy schedules” (Cannon & Reed, 1999, p. 49). This is a common issue in high schools trying to restructure a school environment. Instead of aligning every student to an academy, the team realized that some teachers would have to share students to ensure they received state required courses. The authors were careful to note that scheduling issues became fewer as the years went on.

The next step of the planning process involved adding new courses and repurposing areas of the building for staff. Cannon and Reed (1999) detailed the process of choosing “keystone” (p. 49) classes where 9th graders would begin career exploration, and “capstone” (p. 50) classes for juniors and seniors who are using what they have learned to create a final project. This unique terminology not only set the school apart, but distinguished the learning process for students. The vision team believed that for success to occur a literal change of the

building structure needed to happen, including physically moving rooms and adding or removing walls in some cases. This was described as an “arduous and emotionally charged” decision, as many teachers find their comfort zones within certain classroom locations (Cannon & Reed, 1999, p. 50). However, in order to create the feeling of an authentic academy, teachers were relocated to be next to his/her teammates and students were able to be part of a team with a defined location.

The authors concluded with results and final thoughts on the process as a whole. The school itself saw many positive changes in accountability data as noted through student and teacher interviews, as well as quantitative increases in attendance and overall decreases in behavior referrals. Cannon and Reed (1999) stated that these findings cannot be conclusively attributed to career academies, but it “was the only substantial change that took place in the school” (p. 51), leading them to feel strongly that the results are related. In terms of strategic planning, the vision team started the process, from forming ideas to implementing those ideas and, finally, conducting continual evaluations. Cannon and Reed (1999) reported that the evaluation team included future goals for increasing community involvement through an “Advisory Board” (p. 51), in order to bring additional representation and possible partnerships to the program.

Another take on the planning process and implementation of career academies can be found in the work of Dixon, Cotner, Wilson, and Borman (2011). Dixon et al. analyzed the planning process for career academies after the Career and Professional Education Act of 2007 (CAPE) in Florida required each district to create at least one school using a career academy structure. In their report, the team highlighted the importance of vision and mission, stakeholder involvement, and continual evaluation of progress by identifying the external and internal elements necessary to ensure success.

Dixon et al. (2011) provided a clear definition of the goals and purpose of career academies within the introduction: “Career academies are designed to integrate career centered and academic coursework and to offer opportunities for work-based experiences through local business partnerships” (p. 207). They also described the general structure of career academies to be collaborative and interdisciplinary, with teachers being trained on the new initiatives.

In their qualitative study of career academy implementation, the researchers provided clear guidelines for success (Dixon et al., 2011). They highlighted the importance of careful planning that starts with small learning communities to create a familial feel in each academy. “The small learning community structure may have been the foundational element that enabled other elements of the career academies to work successfully” (Dixon et al., 2011, p. 210). The authors concluded that connection to a community is key to information retention and student success. They indicated that the teachers and students in each academy felt like they were part of a joint effort, which increased their sense of belonging.

Dixon et al. (2011) broke down the successes and obstacles of career academy implementation for three academies, in particular, through a series of interviews with students, administrators, and teachers. The three academies, Academy of Multimedia Design (AMD), Fashion Academy (FA), and Engineering Academy (EA), were just a few of the dozen options available for this Florida school district. The researchers identified similarities in both the successes and obstacles all of the implementation models for each academy. “The two main areas of success participants identified were the real-world application of the academy’s curriculum (i.e., relevance) and students’ sense of belonging to the academy. The main obstacles participants identified were recruiting students and scheduling of cohort students” (Dixon et al., 2011, p. 214). Although there were some differences based on the

desirability of the academy, specific teachers, and population of students, the findings generally showed that career academies provide purposeful and authentic learning for students.

The Role of Educational Leaders and School Initiatives

The impacts of small learning communities, including the aforementioned academy model, are considered “foundational element(s)” in studies conducted on turnaround efforts and improving student engagement (Dixon et al., 2011, p. 210). To successfully implement the career academy model, multiple resources and training opportunities are needed. There are several challenges in the process for administrators, including giving students and teachers a feeling of autonomy within each academy (Skinner et al., 2008). This can be done through cohort scheduling, daily time management, effective leadership, community partnerships, and instructional improvements that ensure that authentic learning takes place on a daily basis (Kuo, 2010).

Restructuring an entire school requires intense strategic planning from the early stages of implementation. The students and teachers will need to see a need for the change and believe in the work they do within their academies. This work will be heavily dependent on administrators to create a vision for the school, support teachers and students with consistency, and provide necessary training, but, even more importantly, on school districts to ensure that it is a priority at the top level by guaranteeing fiscal support, appropriate training, qualified candidates for hire, and continued guidance (Kuo, 2010; Maxwell & Rubin, 2001; Quint, 2008).

The process of implementation can be time consuming for leaders, especially for those who lack the skills and resources necessary to make it happen. Supovitz and Christman (2005) detailed lessons for school leaders throughout the process of developing small learning

communities within schools. Their study of two urban districts, Philadelphia and Cincinnati, from the 1990s highlighted the need for additional structures and supports from district leadership and school administration for successful implementation. They found the following to be significant for effective implementation: a focus on instruction, diversification of options, support fiscally and through professional development, and authentic community partnerships (Supovitz & Christman, 2005).

Managing External Factors

District support. Local school leaders need support in many ways from the district to be successful in any transformation, but especially with one that involves rethinking the way school is done. Honig and Hatch (2004) detailed the importance of central office/district support by stating, “When organizations develop goals and strategies . . . they do not go it alone; studies of organizational–environmental relationships emphasize that environmental or external actors and organizations play enabling or constraining roles in these processes” (p. 25). Although the principal must be knowledgeable about the process and willing to inspire others with their vision, district support can make or break initiatives; appropriate staffing, financial resources, and purposeful intent are all necessary. Kuo (2010), in his summary of literature, emphasized the need for a focus on the structuring of SLCs and career academies, including a need for leadership and additional support:

Smallness or other structural arrangements, such as scheduling and time, leadership or management arrangements, or cooperative and integrated activities with institutions of higher education or businesses, must all be met with instructional improvements in the classroom in order to realize significant academic gains (p. 392).

Districts are an important aspect in the implementation process for career academies and must first provide the support necessary to empower principals to be effective. This starts

with training principals on current successful career academy models and allowing principals some freedom in implementation, including development of the school vision and mission.

There is also a top-down focus on the principal being the instructional leader in the building, though this can often be unrealistic with new initiatives and the pressures of policy adoption such as the career academy model. Louis and Robinson (2012) described the dissonance principals often feel when they wrote,

Part of the difficulty is that increased instructional leadership requires leaders to spend relatively more time on the educational and less on the management aspects of their role, or at least to integrate instructional concerns into all aspects of their managerial decision making (p. 635).

However, educators know that aligning instructional outcomes with whole systems within the school is essential. Therefore, districts would be well served to ensure they are appropriately defining their “interactions with schools as a partnership rather than an authority relationship (Louis & Robinson, 2012, p. 634). This is where the “bridging and buffering” that Honig and Hatch (2004) described as an essential part of the relationship principals have with the school district. Honig and Hatch indicate that when district leadership makes an effort to support instead of mandate, it can be much more productive (p. 27). In fact, when districts are facilitators, they can simplify and clarify the “external messages helping schools manage external demands with internal goals and strategies” (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010, p. 217). Amid the multiple demands on principals, districts can aide in the success of initiatives by acting in this manner. Principals must simultaneously implement the change within their school, sell it to stakeholders, make logistical changes, focus on instructional outcomes, and support teachers in their professional development. This starts with the leader having a strong,

clear focus through a viable and well-defined mission and vision that help to guide their decisions.

Managing Internal Factors

Viable mission and vision. Principals are the central drivers of change within a school and strong ones can account for large increases in accountability measures when they have clear and consistent visions (Reform Support Network, 2015, p. 1). A viable vision/mission, as well as subsequent teacher training and professional development, are all necessary parts of implementations. Principals, especially in low-performing schools, who have clear visions for improvement and who work to implement those plans on an individual basis with teachers are more likely to see bigger gains in student achievement (Blase, 2001). Principals must also have a system for identifying teacher needs and then providing the necessary supports to ensure teachers are successful (Gumus, 2013). In order to do this, the instructional leadership team, academy principals, and even academy advisory boards can be used to give feedback and input on decisions. The vision for the career academy model includes a specific number of career academies, with academy principals for each one, and teachers and students actively engaged in relevant learning related to their interests. This vision, which is almost a separate entity, needs to be carefully developed and then presented to teachers in a way where they see the value and have input. Principals can ensure that each of their teachers have a voice and are provided with the resources needed to start the year.

Program equity. Another aspect of implementation includes economical and geographical considerations (location within the county), which lead to questions of program equity. Dixon et al. (2011) said, “moreover, the school’s location in a geographical area, its overall student body makeup, and its standing in relationship to other schools can influence the general level of acceptance an academy within the school receives from the general

public” (p. 224). There are multiple factors, sometimes beyond the school’s control, that inhibit the development of a successful academy. Among these are the programs available at schools and the school assignment process. Students have some school choice based on career options, but most schools have little say in what programs the district assigns to them. Some career options in schools do not provide career certifications in the end, or do not contain programs of interest to their particular students, making their value less to parents and students. This lack of equity in program offerings creates disparity in program populations and also increases competition among students.

Guiding framework and stakeholder involvement. The literature also emphasizes the need for a model or framework to guide the process and increase stakeholder involvement. Both Cannon and Reed (1999) and Dixon et al. (2011) provided a model in their research by which schools structured their own career academies, using standards from Ford Next Generation Learners (NGL), the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC), or the Career Academy National Standards of Practice conceptual framework (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Career academy national standards of practice conceptual framework
Reprinted from “Implementing Career Academies in Florida: A Case Study Approach to Understanding Successes and Obstacles” (Dixon et al., 2011, 208).

According to NCAC (2018),

Career academies are designed to prepare students for both college and careers. They are schools within schools that link students with peers, teachers, and community partners in a structured environment that fosters academic success. The career academy concept has three key elements: a small learning community (SLC); a college-prep sequential curriculum with a career theme; and an advisory board that forges partnerships with employers, higher education institutions, and the community (p.1).

These standards and recommendations provide a starting place where schools can begin strategic planning with stakeholders. This “Vision Team” (Cannon & Reed, 1999, p. 49) can lay the groundwork for a successful academy through regular meetings and consistent program evaluation. Dixon et al. (2011) said “the perspectives of multiple stakeholders should be included in future qualitative studies of career academies in order to understand the ways internal and external factors interact and overlap” (p. 224). If one of the purposes of career academies is to engage students in learning, everyone influenced, including teachers, students, and parents, must feel as if they are part of a team. Stakeholder involvement with both students, teachers, administrators and even the community is essential to promote a collegial environment that fosters real-world learning.

Part of stakeholder involvement, teachers will provide feedback as they work to rethink the way they teach. To implement this change effectively, teachers will need support. Therefore, teacher training and professional development are a crucial part of the career academy implementation process (Mujis & Lindsay, 2006). Given their significance, the

principal must ensure that professional development is of high quality and directly related to the needs of each teacher. Although accountability scores are not the impetus for the career academies, increased scores are a desired outcome for the program.

Another large resource utilized for career academies is the actual building and physical layout, which is used to create a sense of community within a large campus. In career academies “. . . both students and teachers reported a ‘family-like’ atmosphere where collaboration and personalized attention were present” (Kuo, 2010, p. 393). For many schools, this will mean teachers, administrative staff, and resources will be relocated in the building, into assigned academy locations; this can be tough for many veterans. In the end, however, school leaders play a profound role in transforming and redesigning schools into career academies that better serve student needs. Those who lead with a “shared and distributed practice” tend to find more success in gaining teacher, parent, and student support because of the willingness to allow stakeholders to give input (Wallach, Lambert, Copland & Lowry, 2005, p. 2). The foundations of success are found in a strong vision/mission, knowledge of the process (gleaned from successful models), and district support in the form of financing, qualified candidates for staffing, and necessary initial and follow-up training (Kuo, 2010; Maxwell & Rubin, 2001; Quint, 2008).

Summary of Literature Review

With high stakes accountability requirements and the current nature of schooling, the literature shows a need to refocus efforts on redesigning schools in order to cater to student interests and provide clear goals for post-secondary success. Labaree (2008) contended that the factory model of education is antiquated and killing the creativity and motivation of students. Principals must constantly balance external and internal factors as they work to change the educational landscape for students. Part of the difficulty is that increased

instructional leadership requires leaders to spend relatively more time on the educational and less on the management aspects of their role, when both are necessary for the success of new initiatives such as the career academy. Although research in career academies in general has provided much insight into student achievement, there is little research around the principal's perceptions during implementation (Gentry, Peters, & Mann, 2007). Given the popularity of this model in many urban school districts, learning from principals is paramount to understanding implementation recommendations and the overall impact of the academies. School leaders can be overshadowed in the process, when in reality they are the initial implementers who may need additional support to ensure success:

Strong school leaders are important, but principals need the support of superintendents and district or central-office personnel to effectively implement reforms and sustain them over time. Designing, putting in place, and monitoring change may require a whole cadre of staff who share a vision and who have the skill and time to realize that vision (Quint, 2008, p. 67).

Therefore, through this qualitative research, I sought to advance knowledge of effective career education programs by adding to what has been described as limited research on the perceptions of principals after implementing and sustaining career academy programs, as well as the capacity and support needed for those academies to be considered sustainable and successful (Kuo, 2010; Maxwell & Rubin, 2001; Quint, 2008).

Although additional reforms are needed to change the way students are assessed, the movement toward a more authentic curriculum that embraces student interests is becoming a priority across the country. Career academies are one way to restructure schools and provide a productive outlet for students as they advance through high school, but leaders must first have the appropriate supports to be successful. The traditional education model, which relies

heavily on core content subjects and standardized assessments, is still present in the majority of schools, but as data on student engagement needs increase and additional stakeholder input is sought, traditional schooling may soon become obsolete.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Research Questions

This chapter provides a description of the methodology used in collecting and analyzing data on principals' perceptions of career academy implementation and support. The data were collected to provide answers to the following research questions:

- What beliefs do current career academy principals have concerning the purpose for career academy implementation?
- What are the principals' perceptions of program successes, barriers, and supports needed for career academies?
- What are the principals' perceptions of whether the model achieves its intended purpose and what do they recommend for the future?

The chapter starts with an explanation of why the qualitative methodology is appropriate for the aforementioned research questions. Next, I discuss instrumentation used, as well as data collection procedures and method of analysis. In subsequent sections, I discuss my personal role and perceived biases, then present the data. The chapter concludes with a summary and foreshadowing of future findings.

Case Study Research

The qualitative case study design lends itself to this study because of its ability to provide insight into the process behind educational changes. According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative researcher “builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). In other words, they fill in the blanks that quantitative data and analysis cannot address. When one looks at numbers, patterns, and growth in educational turnaround data, what is missing is the structured and tedious path many schools have taken to find success or failure. Qualitative research allows for the researcher to be the “primary instrument of data collection and analysis,” with the intent of having a cross analysis of the interviews become a “richly descriptive” narrative (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). Yin (2009) took the qualitative approach one step further by clarifying the purpose of the case study: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Case studies are critical to understanding organizations, events, and initiatives, because they provide the missing link between what’s happening and why.

However, it is also important to know the boundaries of a case in order for it to be considered one. Merriam (2009) wrote of the boundaries of cases, highlighting the differences between relationship testing and analyzing a phenomenon. Case studies are bounded by the phenomenon and the people within it. She qualified the case-study researcher as one that is “interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 29). This is an important deviation from quantitative research, which seeks to test hypotheses. Much like Yin’s (2009) understanding of case studies, it is not possible to analyze the participants in a case study separate from the context of the situation. Therefore, this

particular case-study driven research was particularistic—i.e., focused on a “particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 29)—and career academies served as the program being studied.

Research Design

The study utilized a multiple case study approach in order to understand the steps, skills, and resources necessary to implement a career academy within a large, urban school district. I used a holistic approach to the data in order to analyze emerging themes within each principal’s experience (Yin, 2009). This type of approach was intended to identify themes in an overall collection of data with the intent of providing meaning and recommendations for others who may utilize the program. My overall aim in this study was to explore critical influences on the success or failures of the academy model within high schools, from a leadership perspective, after implementation. The results of this study will be used to create a guidebook for other principals, such as those in JCPS, who are starting career academies within their high schools.

The purpose of this multiple-case study research was to explore principal perceptions of career academy implementation, success, and district support in Academies of Louisville, a Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) effort to redesign select schools to achieve greater student engagement and success, both in school and following graduation. The multiple-case study was intended to focus on “one issue or concern applied to multiple case studies to illustrate the issue,” in this particular case, principals’ perceptions of career academies (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

Career academies have gained traction in recent years, in part because of the Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL) model. This academy model promotes the implementation of academies within a school building, where students have the choice to pursue their interests

while in school, including potential certifications and job internships. The use of a case study approach for a study of career academy implementation allowed a clear description of the process to emerge, as well as potential implications for career academies in JCPS and elsewhere.

Ford NGL has an existing partnership with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS); in fact, they helped to establish the Academies of Louisville. After I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this research, case studies were conducted, including interviews, document analysis, and site visits at willing career academy high schools. The goal was to highlight at least five or six of the 11 original high schools in Louisville that participated in the career academy redesign during the 2017–2018 school year.

Data sources and purposeful sampling. Data sources included principal interviews, as well as an interview with the district director for career and technical education, and document analysis. Principal selection was purposeful and they were chosen from the original 11 high schools participating in the Academies of Louisville from its inception in the 2017–2018 school year. All 11 principals were invited to participate in the study, with the intent of having at least five of the 11 confirmed. In order to circumvent a lack of participants, I held preliminary discussions with many of the principals in order to get their feedback on participation and the ability to conduct the study. After meeting with multiple principals and district leader, at least five confirmed they would be willing to be interviewed and provide documents as needed after the study was approved.

Data collection and instrumentation. The case studies themselves examined the model of career academies already at work in JCPS, which emphasize student choice in learning, multiple success pathways, and real-world connections (Ford NGL, 2016). For the

purposes of this study, I visited JCPS Academies of Louisville schools in the spring of 2018 to interview willing principals (See Appendix C: Proposed Timeline and Budget).

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. Appendix D provides the open interview questions, which were aligned to each research question. These questions were used as a focused guide; therefore, they were adapted at times depending on the unique responses of each participant. Interview questions were used to analyze the implementation of career academies and document principals' perceptions of the program, in order to build the case. Questions focused on the following: the implementation process, culture and climate pre- and post-academies, academic achievement pre- and post-academies, student engagement pre- and post-academies, specific roles of participants within the academies, the role of administration within the academies, resources needed/provided, and perceptions of success or areas for growth.

Although other methods of data gathering were considered, including the focus group, they were eventually rejected because of the goals of the research. Despite the fact that a focus group of principals would have provided easier access, it was important for me to understand "each participant's experiences sufficiently to enable comparison with the experiences of other persons in the study" (Trainer & Graue, 2013, p. 189).

Prior to the interviews, and following IRB approval, participants were provided with information concerning the objectives of the research (Appendix E includes the Research Protocol. Appendix F includes the Adult Consent Form). Their participation was voluntary (Appendix G) and no incentives were provided. All interviewees were asked to consent to being tape recorded or video recorded (if a face-to-face meeting was unavailable, an online meeting format would be used) for the purpose of research documentation, although this was never utilized. The same semi-structured interview questions were used at each site in order to

maintain consistency among site visits. Finally, each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and to track their feedback and answers.

Document analysis. A request for readily available as well as publicly available documents was made prior to the interviews and as noted in the invitation letter to potential participants. Those documents were analyzed and coded using the same categories that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The following documents were reviewed: career academy guiding documents, career academy pathways and programs, and mission statements for each school.

Although interviews took place in the spring of 2017, it was important to gain an understanding of the scope of the research through proactive document analysis prior to the interviews, which was one means of triangulation. Prior to the study, there were also other preparations undertaken, including a careful analysis of the non-negotiables document for comparisons to the actual academy implementation (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis and interpretation can often be flexible, iterative, and take multiple forms due the researcher's positionality and ability to make meaning throughout the process (Creswell, 2014). After the interviews were completed they were transcribed, then coded using first deductive coding from the work of Honig and Hatch (2004), followed by inductive coding for any additional emerging themes.

Inductive and deductive coding. Inductive coding as a method of data analysis allows a researcher to analyze phrases and sentences for patterns, in order to make meaning. Saldana wrote, "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). Deductive coding is often

recommended when there are “a provisional list of codes...” that coincide with the study’s conceptual framework (Saldana, 2009, p. 75). In this case, the work of Honig and Hatch (2004) and their concept of “crafting coherence” (p. 26) helped to shape the deductive codes used in initial analysis. The deductive codes included: Bridging/Buffering (district and school relationship and supports), Decision-making Structures (actual implementation), External/Internal Demands (barriers), and Maintenance Activities (next steps).

In order to discover and make meaning from the semi-structured interviews, an inductive coding process was used after the deductive codes were exhausted for the first round of open coding, where information was sectioned into categories. The second round of coding, or axial coding, analyzed broad categories to allow for reconfiguration of the codes already generated (Saldana, 2009). Bryant (2013) saw the aim of axial coding as bringing together the different strands of ideas developed in earlier coding stages around the “axis” of a category. In part, this can be accomplished by analysis of existing codes based around answering questions such as when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences (p. 117).

This second round of coding allows researchers to start piecing the puzzle together in order to come to some conclusions (in this study, concerning the career academy model and the leader’s role). Finally, a story evolves from the interconnectivity of these accounts, which can be referred to as selective coding (Creswell, 2014). This crucial part of the research analysis allows the researcher to make decisions about the most important themes and to also draw conclusions based on these themes.

Cross-case analysis. After the coding of individual cases has been completed, it is important to do a cross-case analysis in a multiple case-study design because of the multiple perspectives and the need to find commonalities and differences. The cross-case analysis is a

crucial part of data interpretation, because it is the culmination of the research and the point at which the researcher can begin to form a cohesive narrative concerning the data collected.

Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008) saw the cross-case analysis as something that enables case study researchers to delineate the combination of factors that may have contributed to the outcomes of the case, seek or construct an explanation as to why one case is different or the same as others, make sense of puzzling or unique findings, or further articulate the concepts, hypotheses, or theories discovered or constructed from the original case (p. 2).

For this study, I examined each case in order to form deeper meaning about the work as a whole. The intent was to gather commonalities among principal interpretations, to “build abstractions across cases” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194) and to glean lessons from the career academy experiences of the principals that could be shared with other leaders and school districts.

Qualitative Validity and Ethical Considerations

I first utilized data triangulation through multiple principal interviews, with participant consent, an interview with the district director, and member checks for each one in order to ensure credibility and validity of the data.

One of the goals of the research was to yield clear examples of career academy implementation, along with suggestions for sustainability, that could then be shared with my home district as recommendations. However, having a close working relationship with the Academies of Louisville already and knowing many of the principals confidentiality and ensuring each of their perspectives was represented well was of high importance

Ethical issues related to this study included confidentiality concerns—interviewed principals would be voicing their perceptions of district support or lack thereof, as well as

general opinions about career academy success/failure. Therefore, participants were given pseudonyms, and identifying demographic data was omitted. Further, specific schools might be identified as having low teacher buy-in or even ineffective leadership. Therefore, the names of the schools were changed in the study to once again ensure confidentiality and aid in objectivity.

The role of the researcher. *Researcher positionality.* In this study, I strove to be an open-minded interpreter of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data were collected upon approval by the University of Louisville's IRB and with permission from Jefferson County Public Schools. However, it is important to acknowledge biases of the study and the role the researcher played. Creswell (2014) wrote, "The role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study" (p. 206).

As an academy principal in JCPS, it is important to note the preconceived notions I may have as a researcher and active participant in an academy model school. Although there may be bias associated with this role, it can also serve as a connecting factor with those familiar with the academy model. I have seen firsthand the struggles of implementation from an academy principal perspective, but have not been responsible for the entire school like the primary principal (or executive principal as they are often referred to). I have also seen the benefits of the model from within my own academy, but I also realize that my personality, talents, and belief in small learning communities may play a role in its success. Given my unique perspective and desire to continue to lead a school in the future, I hoped to understand the Academies of Louisville as a voluntary, but top-down initiative that principals were fresh-off implementing.

The Academies of Louisville within JCPS was introduced for the 2017–2018 school year, and this study was conducted in the same school year, so the findings of this study can impact the program, since it is in its early stages. This study is intended to serve as a guide for principals and districts wishing to implement the academy model, providing valuable information concerning pitfalls or barriers related to the success of the program.

Data Presentation

The findings are reported in multiple steps, beginning with a description of each principal, their school, and then a thematic narrative using the conceptual framework themes and cross-case analysis of the interview data. I also compared research findings with the Features of an Academy document (Appendix A) and the non-negotiables (Appendix B) to see how closely principals followed the requirements, or made changes, respectively. The document helped me to formulate appropriate questions for the interviews and also to have an understanding of the goals of the program.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about the implementation process of career academies from the perspective of the principals involved and to examine successes, barriers, and supports needed. The following chapter details the findings of this case study research. I present each case through the lens of the conceptual framework for “crafting coherence” from Honig and Hatch (2004) and the research questions, which were:

- What beliefs do current career academy principals have concerning the purpose for career academy implementation?
- What are the principals’ perceptions of program successes, barriers, and the supports needed for career academies?
- What are the principals’ perceptions of whether the model achieves its intended purpose and what do they recommend for the future?

This chapter is divided into eight sections, six of which highlight coded themes and subcategories revealed through both inductive and deductive coding. This chapter also reveals how the themes answer the research questions.

The work of Honig and Hatch (2004) was used as a conceptual framework to help identify the following deductive codes: Purpose (school and district goals),

Bridging/Buffering (district and school relationship and supports), Decision-making Structures (actual implementation), External/Internal Demands (barriers), and Maintenance Activities (next steps).

Also, an additional theme of general success of the program emerged from the data. This included coded language such as *engagement*, *student choice*, *whole school buy-in*, and *positive culture*.

Profiles of Interviewees/Schools

The Academies of Louisville was an initiative started in 2016. Although Jefferson County Public Schools was already part of a similar model using Ford NGL and a Five-Star School model, the district wanted to adopt something to specifically support national CTE requirements and improve student preparation for post-secondary success. The initiative was completed through a voluntary request for proposal (RFP), to be implemented during the 2017–2018 school year. Eleven high schools joined the initial cohort and, because of their commitment, were promised funding to support additional pathways and staff positions if they followed the non-negotiable requirements (Appendix B). The principals and their unique perspectives on the process are highlighted in the following sections. Together, the findings present a more holistic story of the first year of implementation and include a detailed look at each principal’s perspective on their purpose for applying, barriers or threats to success, maintenance activities or areas for growth, and their perspective on general program success. In order to provide a well-rounded approach and triangulation, the director of CTE shed light on the district’s role for each of the themes, as well further highlighted the “bridging and buffering” relationship that Honig and Hatch (2004) saw as a critical part of implementation.

Principal Morgan/North High School. Principal Morgan is in his second year as principal of North High School. His role is doubly important because he is also principal of

the middle school housed within the building, which happens to be designated as priority. The mission of North High School is “to prepare students for their future self, ready to contribute value to their world” (Appendix H). The schools academies include Health Science, Community, STEM (Electrical Construction & Civil Engineering) and the Freshman Academy. Key components cited by the district include the use of “a dedicated principal, counselor, and team of core teachers” for each academy, with a special focus on a yearlong freshman seminar course (Appendix I).

Principal Morgan described working his entire career to prepare for this job. He can best be described as passionate, decisive, and highly knowledgeable about turnaround work. He said, “I had tried to do my best to build a résumé and a body of work that, if it came open, I was really the only logically viable candidate, and then also I had spent my career trying to . . . put myself in the position to do turnaround work.” He described the district in positive terms and appreciated the honest working relationship he has had with the current career and technical education director as he built the career academy in his school.

Principal Smith/Tiverton High School. In his first year as a new principal of a priority school, he previously worked in priority schools and felt comfortable with the nature of turnaround work. Tiverton High School’s mission statement highlights the use of a “collaborative process focused on learning, ensuring all students develop twenty-first-century skills so that they will be college- and career-ready” (Appendix H). The school’s academies include Automotive Engineering, METal (manufacturing, engineering, technology, and leadership), IGen Business, and finally Freshman Academy. The school has nine pathways ranging from collision repair to cyber engineering, and financial services.

Although he took over after the prior administration signed on to the academy model, Principal Smith’s previous CTE experiences allowed him to slowly refocus the school. He

said, “Ultimately, we’ve been working on refining what the purpose is and how we’re going to approach the academy model with the idea of state accountability changing from college- and career- to just transition-ready.” He said he sees the academy model as a positive work in progress, and is highly motivated to sell it to veteran teachers and continually find alternatives for students who need more options in schools.

Principal Stewart/Thomasville High School. As an educator with 17 years of experience teaching and leading within public schools, Principal Stewart can be described as a positive and highly supportive principal who prides herself on the work she’s done in the academy model. Her school features a mixture of academies including Law and IT, Agri-Science, Health and Education, and Freshman Academy. Each academy contains a similar mixture of pathways, from cyber engineering and pre-law studies to animal science and, finally, an academy with early childhood education and patient care technician pathways.

The mission of Thomasville High School is “to prepare students for college and career goals, as measured by state academic standards [and] providing an environment and system of support to ensure all scholars are successful” (Appendix H). Principal Stewart’s staff and students hear this message on a regular basis and see evidence of it in the work they have done with the academy model. She believes in the model and previously attempted to start it on her own, but was appreciative of the Academies of Louisville when it came along. Her educational philosophy is student centered and focuses on engagement, much aligned to the district’s direction. She said, “I learned quickly that in order to get kids engaged in what I was doing, there had to be a path to something that they really valued or wanted.” Stewart said she sees the model as a way to do school differently and provide an exceptional educational experience for each of her students.

Principal Davis/Eastwood High School. Principal Davis worked as an assistant principal for 10 years before getting hired as the principal of a priority school. He was part of the implementation of career academies under the prior principal, and participated in the Academies of Louisville in his first year as principal. Principal Davis said his school has been on a positive journey toward success. He discussed the lengths the administrative team went to to change the culture since he arrived three years prior.

Eastwood's mission is something the principal and staff are proud of and have made a core focus. The mission reads, "To inspire, create, and foster authentic learning opportunities that maximize student engagement." The school currently has four academies that include Tech and Design, Business and Finance, STEM, and Freshman Academy. The pathways in each are representative of the academies and a sampling includes manufacturing, financial services, and information support services.

Principal Davis said he sees the academy model as a means to engage students. He said, "We saw kind of a lack of interest or passion in school and we wanted to identify student interests and give kids some choice in their school. We thought that was important" (Appendix H). Even in his first year of implementation, Davis sought to maintain the high expectations created at the school and to continue the purity of the academy model. He said his priorities are to sustain and build pathways, securing funding and lab space, as well as increasing use of current technology within the school.

Principal Burton/Collins High School. Principal Burton is principal of a highly populated, top-performing school in the district. The implementation of the academy model took a slightly different direction for Principal Burton. With nearly two decades of educational experience, Burton took on the role of stepping into a school after the former principal already agreed to be a part of the Academies of Louisville, but had not yet

communicated its purpose to staff. Therefore, Burton spent the first year of implementation starting at ground zero, selling the program to staff and slowly making changes.

The mission of Collins is to “meet the needs of students, parents, and community through the implementation of a rigorous and disciplined academic environment as we continue to build upon a longstanding tradition of excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics” (Appendix H). This mission is evident in the development of the current academies and is featured as the only academy in the district with a Visual and Performing Arts Academy. The rest of the academies include Business Services, STEM, and Freshman Academy. The school is not set up in the academy model at this time, but plans are in place to begin shifting the school toward a pathway model, where students can be in classes with other students who share their interests. The district promotes the school as offering an “ever-expanding list of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Advance Program (Gifted and Talented), Honors Program, and Exceptional Child Education (ECE) Program” deliberately showing there is a place for everyone at Collins, including high performers.

Burton said he sees the model’s purpose as “a way to get more of the kids career-ready in schools that traditionally don’t have a lot of kids going down that route.” In his current role, he said, he works hard to sell a model he strongly believes in to a veteran staff that has been hesitant to buy into the program. He can be described as a passionate, charismatic leader who is dedicated to bridging the current structures within his school by slowly implementing the academy model and, therefore, gaining buy-in from all stakeholders.

Principal Williams/Xavier High School. After working for 12 years in the same priority school, Principal Williams indicated that he has strong beliefs about what works for students and teachers in his school. The mission of Xavier is for all students to leave high school “college ready, career experienced, goal-driven, and reality certain” (Appendix H). He

believes in Xavier not only because he has been there the majority of his career, but also because he's proud of the Early College program he started in an effort to help students receive college credit while in high school.

With the smallest student population of the schools whose principals were interviewed, Xavier's academies are a culmination of student interests including 1) Culinary, Carpentry, and Graphic and Digital Communication, 2) Health Science and Business, and finally 3) Freshman Academy. The career pathways are combined within the academies, as well, and include food service workers to residential carpenter assistants and patient care technicians. The district publicly promotes the school's small learning communities, core classes, and freshman exploratory coursework.

Principal Williams can be described as extremely positive about the academy model and appreciative of the district supports provided. He is a data-driven principal who uses data in the decisions he makes for pathways, funding, and staffing. He believes the Academies of Louisville was initiated at the perfect time for his school; he said his school was "in the right position at the right time to take part in it," after spending years focused on the Early College program that aimed to increase college readiness for his students. Principal Williams is dedicated to the model, which he sees "engaging students and exposing them to career pathways."

Principal Vazquez/Wright High School. With over 15 years of experience as a principal, Principal Vazquez brought a lot of knowledge to the role in his fifth year at Wright High School, a priority school. Wright's mission statement says Wright is "committed to meeting the needs of all students and providing them with the 21st century skills necessary to reach proficiency and postsecondary success" (Appendix H). Wright boasts three academies: Health Science, Industrial Maintenance, and Freshman Academy. Although it only has three

academies, the school features a large number of pathways including nine in health sciences, and four in industrial maintenance; students prepare for careers ranging from phlebotomy technicians to maintenance mechanics.

Principal Vazquez's positivity is evident in his interactions with staff and students. He said he wholeheartedly agrees with the academy model and sees it as a way to get many of his students in career paths suited to their interests. In his own words, "The academy model, I believe, is a huge step in the right direction for the district. I just believe that in my heart. I've seen more kids engaged in the classroom than I ever have before. It's phenomenal—really, really phenomenal." He started implementation slowly during the 2017–2018 school year and only used the model in the freshman academy, in an effort to "get it right." His hopes were to grow the capacity of teachers in the freshman academy and then train the rest of the school in the coming year.

District Director Robertson. The district director of career and technical education was ready to roll out an improved system for career readiness, based on her previous experiences. As a former principal and CTE director in another county, Robertson had a vast amount of knowledge on school turnaround efforts. In her previous role, she won an award and notoriety for raising accountability scores from the 18th to the 78th percentile; in her prior district, she (and staff) focused on helping students find the right pathway for their interests and monitored data efficiently. In her new role, she seemed eager, passionate, and motivated for the Academies of Louisville initiative to succeed. She indicated that her focus is on career certifications, but also on providing a new way for students to be successful. In her discussion of why some schools struggle to meet accountability standards, she said, "[the students] are bright, they're talented, they need a different way to measure it, and career readiness finally gave us a vehicle." After spending even a small amount of time with her, it was evident that

she lives and breathes the academy model and is ready to sell it to anyone who will listen. This kind of passion and drive is what makes principals, community partners, and businesses buy into the model.

Theme Outline

The interviews provided insight into each principal's unique perspective on the implementation process, but also revealed some differences in their approach, depending on the needs of the school and barriers to the program. The rest of this chapter reveals their perspectives through coded themes. Initial themes came from Honig and Hatch (2004) and their model for "crafting coherence," while sub-categories emerged from the data. In order to facilitate understanding of the organization of this chapter, I have provided the following outline of themes and sub categories that emerged from the data, as well as a cross-case analysis chart (Table 1) to provide a clear picture of principals' responses.

1. Purpose: post-secondary success, engagement, student choice and exposure, and timing
2. Decision-making Structures and Considerations: negotiation, expertise, choice, finance, critical staff, logistics and movement
3. External/Internal Barriers and Program Concerns: scheduling, student populations (student mobility and transportation challenges), teacher turnover, veteran teacher buy-in, teacher movement, state accountability
4. Program Impact: student choice, positive culture
5. Maintenance Activities (Next Steps): communication and promotion, sustainability, better data tracking, new staffing and training models
6. Conclusions

Table 1

<i>Principal Perceptions of Career Academy Implementation Coded Responses</i>								
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-Category</i>	<i>Participants</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Purpose</i>	Post-Secondary Success	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Engagement	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Student Choice & Exposure	X		X	X	X	X	X
	Timing	X		X	X		X	
Decision Making Structures & Considerations	Negotiation	X	X	X			X	X
	Expertise	X					X	X
	Choice			X	X			
	Finance	X		X	X		X	X
	Critical Staff			X	X	X	X	
	Logistics	X	X	X	X			
Barriers & Program Concerns	Scheduling	X	X			X	X	
	Student Populations	X			X		X	
	Teacher Turnover			X	X		X	
	Facilities		X		X	X	X	X
	Teacher Buy-In	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Teacher Movement	X	X	X	X			
	State Accountability		X	X			X	
Maintenance Activities	Communication/Promotion	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Sustainability	X	X	X	X		X	
	Better Data Tracking	X					X	
	Staffing & Training Model	X			X	X	X	X
Program Impact	Student Choice	X		X	X	X	X	
	Positive Culture	X		X		X	X	

Notes. X specifies the theme/sub-category was indicated or directly discussed by the principal.

Purpose

In the fall of 2016, schools were invited to complete an RFP (Request for Proposal) whereby they submitted applications to become part of the Academies of Louisville. Each principal had their own reasons for joining; however, some principals in the school district did not apply at the beginning of the year due to extenuating circumstances, whereas the others applied early and had time to prepare for implementation.

Principals in the 11 schools that applied started implementation at different rates due to differences in logistical needs, principal turnover, and faculty buy-in. Full implementation means that they redesigned the school around the academies and had a designated academy principal, counselor, and student-chosen pathways. It also means that they attempted or are in the process of arranging the schedule for students to take academy core classes, and have designated career and technical education teachers for each pathway. Schools that are considered as delayed or partially implementing the program may have implemented only the Freshman Academy, or are in the process of creating buy-in among staff in order to fully implement in the next year. The schools can be categorized by level of implementation attempted, with full implementation schools (Thomasville, North, Eastwood, and Xavier) and delayed or partial implementation schools (Wright and Collins).

Prior to this initiative, schools in JCPS with a focus on career certifications were called 5-Star Schools and each had different industry foci. This model had been in place for multiple years and many principals lacked clarity about its purpose, beyond advertising each school's program offerings. Therefore, the career academy model, as a new approach, provided much-needed cohesiveness, purpose, and all-over supports within the schools adopting it. In the Academies of Louisville's non-negotiables document, the mission statement reads, "All high school students will belong to a personalized smaller learning community engaged around interests where relationships are valued. Instruction will be project-based, applied and integrated where meaningful business engagement is evident, post-secondary institutions are involved and the community is supportive" (Appendix B). This was the guiding document presented to principals at the start of the process. It proved to be a helpful tool in selling the program and in providing clarity concerning expectations.

For the initiative to be successful, buy-in was key within the district. Principals needed to want to participate and not feel forced. The application process was essential because, in prior administrations, top-down policies were not being followed with fidelity because of a lack of both buy-in and support. The new director of career and technical education for the 2016–2017 school year described a feeling of urgency and concern about the best way to implement this policy without fully “developing it out” or having a fully functioning plan. She said,

I felt like what I learned in just my six months observing and watching and trying to get as much information, is that when 5-Star was here, it was pushed from the top down. You were told what you got. Things were pulled out, and things were put in. I didn’t want to be a part of that.

However, as the principal interviews show, the application to be in the Academies of Louisville could not have come at a better time for the principals, as they were already searching for alternative solutions and in need of district support for funding and staffing. Each principal had a reason for joining and a belief in the purpose of the model. The following themes concerning the principals’ beliefs about the purpose of career academy implementation were noted most prominently as a result of a coding analysis: post-secondary success, engagement, student choice and exposure, and timing.

Post-secondary success. Educators are in the business of preparing students for the next stage of life, so it is not surprising for post-secondary success to be an important factor behind the creation of the academy model at each high school. Post-secondary success for this particular district is seen as a student being transition ready for the next steps of either directly entering into an occupation, attending college, or pursuing a military career. Career academy practice is heavy in providing options for students who may be disenfranchised by the current

system. High school principals, therefore, are highly focused on graduation rates and providing ways to meet new accountability models that emphasize transition readiness (or preparation for life after high school). In fact, in the mission statement analysis (Appendix H), five out of seven of the high school mission statements included a section on post-secondary success.

Principal Stewart's view of the academy model at Thomasville revealed her goals for each student's future. She discussed the importance of "getting kids in a pathway . . . where they see that there is some very real reward for them. And not just reward but preparation for what they want out of life."

Principal Davis had a strong statement echoing Stewart's focus on post-secondary success:

At the end of the day, for me, it's about opportunities for kids and what can we implement that's going to put kids in the best position to graduate with as many opportunities as possible? You know, whether it be an internship, whether it be a co-op, whether it be a job, whether it be going to college or the military or whatever they want to do.

Again, Principal Williams said he sees even the small successes as being worth it to support the necessity of the academy model: "They may love this and decide to pursue it in college and that's the catalyst that gets them there. At the same time, regardless, it may simply wind up being that they're able to then transition into the workforce with a much more accomplished résumé."

Even if students do not get every advantage the model promises, each principal saw it as worthy in promoting student success.

Engagement. The engagement factor was a large component for every principal. Whether they used the word *engagement* or the phrase *finding student interests*, or *passions*, engagement was well covered. For the purpose of this research, engagement is defined as a behavior that shows a person’s motivation and interest in a particular event, activity, or subject.

Principal Smith described the significance of the academy model in his efforts to engage students by helping them find their purpose:

I’ve always said that if a kid comes up to me and says “Why do I have to come here, besides the fact that the state now says I can’t drop out ’til I’m 18 . . . What is the purpose for me coming to school?” And if you don’t have a viable answer for that, it’s not a good enough answer. . . . So, with JCPS’s magnet programs and choice model, I think that if students are willing to access the system, they can find a niche that even if academics aren’t their thing, there’s a purpose for them to go to school.

Principal Vazquez described a similar issue in his own school, which led the leadership team to embrace the career academy model.

We continue to get better and better and better. The academy model, I believe, is a huge step in the right direction from the district. I just believe that in my heart. I’ve seen more kids engaged in work in the classroom than I ever have before. It’s phenomenal—really, really phenomenal. When you walk down the hallway and the phlebotomy kids are calling you ’cause you’re going to get blood for them, they’re just thrilled.

This discussion of finding students’ passion fits the national model, including programs like Ford NGL and NCAC, who help fund current career academies nationwide. Ford NGL (2017) said it strives to help “students ignite their passions as lifelong learners.”

NCAC claimed they are in the business of connecting “experts and practitioners that share your passion for changing the lives of young people” (National Career Academy Coalition, 2018, p.1).

Principal Williams saw the benefits of the model and its effects on student engagement early in the implementation process.

Saying, “Hey, look, during this time, I’ve done these field experiences, I’ve done this internship. Here’s an example of a project that I did,” whether it’s building a shed for carpentry to catering meals for culinary to being able to simulate a call center in business to the graphic and design media arts stuff that we do here. The posters and marketing behind all that. Or the design and marketing of all that. It’s just a much more . . . it provides much more opportunity to engage kids. Go back to that word, *engagement*, it’s all about that word.

Important to note, the district’s “Deeper Learning” initiative may have played a role in principals’ desire to implement the career academy model as a way to engage students’ interest. The focus on engagement of students’ interest was already the direction in which district leadership was moving. In the mission statement of Jefferson County Schools, “To challenge and engage each learner to grow through effective teaching and meaningful experiences within caring, supportive environments,” (JCPS Vision 2020, 2017, p.2) engagement is key. It is not surprising, then, to hear of ways that principals are searching to help students find their passions in school.

Although each principal and the director were eager to discuss engagement as a featured component of their instructional programs and purpose in the school, it is important to note that only one school, Eastwood, included engagement as part of their mission statement (Appendix H). This may be indicative of older mission statements that have not

been revised to include the schools' new focus on the academy model. On the other hand, although it was not included in schools' mission statements, a review of the district's public documents emphasized the use of inclusive and small learning communities within six of the seven schools (Appendix I). Collins was the only school not included here.

Student choice and exposure. Affording students choice in their learning is an essential part of the purpose of the career academy model, but students must have more exposure to post-secondary options and aptitude development to be able to know what to choose. Therefore, student choice and exposure were often mentioned together in each of the interviews.

Principal Burton revealed his belief in giving students choices in their learning when he said, "I think it's to give more kids options to find an area of interest, or something that they are passionate about to a certain extent, whether or not it's something that they want to do for a career, or it's a hobby."

One principal even described the excitement of students picking their academy as something from the movies, stating,

They got to choose the top three pathways, which then placed them into an academy. So, at this reveal ceremony, they opened up an envelope on the count of three and there was confetti and all this stuff. And they got to see which academy they had been placed in, sort of Harry Potterish.

No matter the level of the school, each principal believed student choice was vital. However, the priority school principals mentioned exposure at a greater rate. Examples include the following:

Principal Williams: "Oh, 100 percent, I really believe it is about engaging students and exposing them to career pathways."

Principal Stewart: “I get really passionate about opening kids’ eyes to things they don’t know exist.”

Principal Davis: “Career academies help build a bridge between the school and the community, as well, and building those relationships with the business partners and people from outside of school, beyond just their classroom teachers, I feel, is a very important piece that kids normally wouldn’t have gotten.”

Principal Vazquez: “We’ve got kids that have built a wall already and run the wires from a panel box to a socket to a receptacle to a light switch. They’re learning how to put up ceiling fans. Even if they don’t pursue this as a career, they’ll know how to do those basic things when they own a house, so they’re going to get some basic knowledge that’s going to help them in life some place.”

Student choice and exposure were mentioned as tools with which schools can achieve engagement. Many of the priority school principals saw it as their purpose to provide students with opportunities that would make them like school more and, therefore, be more successful when they left school. They saw student choice and exposure as instruments for this goal and the academy model as the right medium.

There was an inherent need for each principal to make this initiative successful because so much was riding on it, including a lot of money and public perception. Principals not only sold the program to students by giving them choice, they also allowed teachers to pick their academies and find the right fit for *their* interests. There was a strong focus on getting the whole school on board, and choice was a powerful tool in helping this happen.

Timing. Many principals wanted to make big changes in their schools and do something to make school more relevant, engaging, and, therefore, success-inducing. They saw this model as an opportunity. Every principal talked about giving students a reason to

want to be in school or to utilize their time wisely. In many instances they were trying to find ways to do it on their own and the career academy initiative came at the right time.

One of the respondents said, “The timing was perfect. So, we had already done so much of that work that it was an easy transition for us to be an academy school.” Another described it as the “perfect storm.”

Principal Williams saw it as a fortunate opportunity that fit well with a model he was trying to initiate himself. He said,

That’s how I heard about it, that’s how we decided to apply for it. . . . It matched things we were already doing in the building and it was a great fit for the kids and a perfect opportunity to maybe salvage the accountability model as we moved forward.

Although money was an essential need in the initial stages, the principals showed an eagerness that was already there when the district approached them with the opportunity. Even the district director believed the timing was a factor, despite not having all of the moving parts in place right away at the start of implementation. She said, “So, when great people want to do something, even if you don’t have every answer, you don’t have everything worked out logistically, you should still move forward.” And with this mentality, the district did, with both successes and areas for growth.

Given the fact that the director had a limited amount of resources and the principals had made requests for large programs, negotiation played a large role in the final outcomes. Therefore, decision-making structures and considerations played a role in how resources were allotted and to what degree. Together, the district and principals had to weigh needs. The district had a strict vision of implementation (Appendix B), while principals had clear understandings of what their students and schools needed.

Decision-making Structures and Considerations

Decision-making structures in effective relationships are constantly evolving. District central offices must continue to search for and use “information about schools’ goals, strategies, and experiences to inform their own operations” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 26). Principals must do the same thing to constantly assess the needs of their schools. The hope is that the principal’s expectations and those of the district align.

The decision-making structures that will be discussed in this section rely on the concept of bridging and buffering. Bridging is a strategy articulated by Honig and Hatch (2004) that emphasizes the process of bringing people together for a common goal both within an organization and outside of it. When a principal’s purposes align with a district’s purposes, there is bridging and overall agreement. When purposes or resources are not aligned, decision making is more difficult and the misalignment may be seen as a barrier, necessitating buffering to protect the school as a whole. Although decision making is often dictated by financial needs due to set budgets at the district level, additional themes noted included expertise, choice, staffing, and logistics.

Negotiation. The most frequently mentioned example of bridging and buffering behavior were the negotiations between the principals and the district prior to implementation. While some needed more resources than others due to their school’s budget and layout, all literally sat at the negotiating table, ready to either take what they could get or aggressively fight for what they believed they needed. The district was guided by their non-negotiables document (Appendix B) and budget restrictions; however, depending on the needs of the school, negotiations all ended with the principal getting something they wanted but not everything.

Principal Morgan described the negotiation process as a necessary process:

So, we negotiated a bunch . . . with the district, and settled on what we wanted and what they wanted, and there were some tense discussions about that. Eventually we got what we wanted, and they got what they wanted, and now they keep sending people to us, because we're doing really well. So, it worked out great. . . . The first thing we said is "That's not enough. Give us more." . . . And they said, no, and then we argued, and then for the most part they eventually saw the light.

The district director played a large role in the negotiation process because the principals knew and appreciated the fact that they had multiple district representatives and new leadership with CTE backgrounds. This was evident in the trust they showed in the negotiation process with the district. Principal Morgan stated,

[Director Robertson] was all for it, and she really saw that through and made that happen, and [the superintendent] was instrumental in that, too, because the previous administration wasn't necessarily supportive of that, but [the superintendent] got it.

The principals all spoke highly and positively of the current district administration, even if they did not get exactly what they wanted in negotiations. Principal Stewart at Thomasville discussed the experience and the supports the district provided throughout the negotiation process, saying, "I really can't say enough positive, honestly. I feel like I've been really supported, very well informed." She stated, "We've had to negotiate some resources," but the process in general was described as positive and productive.

Although all described the process as an overall positive experience, they said they saw it as an ongoing one. Principal Smith stated,

It's an ongoing negotiation just because I don't have enough funds to do it exactly the way I would want to do it, so I have to go begging for those, and it's a reciprocal quid

pro quo type relationship of “I’m happy to do A, B, and C, but I need this to make that happen.”

Findings on sustainability will be discussed further in the “Maintenance Activities” section. However, the district’s perspective centered on the bottom line and the need to provide equitable and adequate supports during the negotiation process. The district director described the initial implementation stages as working “blind” because of previous central office structure that left her hands tied in many ways. Despite the challenges, the director sat down with each principal to negotiate resources. She said,

So, I would take the staffing formula, and then literally we did budget analysis, and we would really break it down. I mean, just analyze it every way we could possibly analyze it. . . . And what would be staffing, equipment, operating, total cost? And then we looked at all 11 schools. What could we give you? And we just started trying to go school by school, by name and by need: What do you need? What could we push out to the next year? What was it going to take? And a lot of times, the building dictated it.

The use of negotiations was more of a symbolic moment for the district and principals, as it was the first time since joining the program that they were able to discuss their needs for their schools. Although the district had established ideas and timelines for implementation, many of the principals were able to ask for additional requests or take the time to explain their program needs. Director Robertson admitted that she has gotten better at this initial sit-down process and, in subsequent meetings with new academy participants, she has taken more of a hard stance on what they can and cannot do, stating, “I give [them their] options now.” In the initial stages, the goal was to get the program going; there was less of a

focus on fidelity, allowing for more leeway for principals than they would potentially get had they joined later.

Expertise. One of the reasons negotiations were a positive experience was because of the collective expertise of the district and the knowledge the district director provided to principals during the negotiation process. For example, if a school wanted to start a carpentry program, there was a specialist in the career and technical education office that could look at the space, assess the need, and determine how best to proceed. The principals appreciated the knowledge and support they received, as they, too, were looking for better ways to get students on the correct pathways, to ensure that career readiness standards were met. Principal Williams said, “Behind that money came expertise.” Principal Burton said, “They have helped us with tightening up the pathways, looking at our current pathways and our current course offerings, and making sure that those things are a little bit more streamlined.” Due to the many hats principals wore during implementation stages, many principals acknowledged the need for experts in the field, acknowledging that they are not experts in other fields.

In terms of increasing certifications and meeting state accountability, the director provided her own level of expertise in creating better systems. She said, “I feel I have to do my part, and my part, where we bring expertise, is the systems for career readiness.” Director Robertson’s previous experiences building career and technical education programs in another county led her to her current role. Her level of expertise in navigating the accountability system and understanding student pathways was crucial to the development of the academy model from the perspective of the principals.

Choice. Just as student choice was named as one reason principals joined the career academy model, his or her own choice in the programs and additions within the school were deemed important. Director Robertson indicated that she knew that choice was crucial to principals and staff, as she herself had worked in career and technical programs in her previous position. She explained her thinking behind the application process:

What will I do differently that will force the academies to implement with fidelity this time around? Why will it be different, because it's just me now, and we have to do something different, and that's where the application bubbled up. Why would they not apply? Why would we give them another penny or resources to do something, and then beg them to do it? Let's present it. Show our non-negotiables, and then ask those schools that fit for them.

Instead of making this a requirement and one-size-fits-all program, the district tried a new approach by offering the funding to those who were accepted as long as they entered the program on the district's terms (Appendix B). This created a sense of buy-in from schools at the outset. The director was honest about the district's intentions, though, and described that initial meeting when she presented the program:

They were all in the room. They were very quiet. They didn't appear to be collegial. They listened. I didn't know, when they left the room, if there was just very limited questions, but I said, "Be clear. If you apply . . . We don't care if you apply. We're looking for one school who might think this would be good for them, but if you do, here's clearly what we will do for you, but here's clearly what you will have to do to implement.

The serious nature of the presentation was done to set the tone for the program. Robertson wanted to be clear that if principals joined there would be guidelines. However, it

did not stop many. In her discussion of the application and initial adoption process, Principal Stewart said, “I had a lot of choice in that. We wrote the application based on what we wanted, but I had a lot of information from them that helped.” During initial stages, principals were able to fill out the RFP and request for specific pathways with the knowledge that facilities and staffing support would come along if it were approved. This knowledge meant that schools who were struggling to fund pathways their students wanted would now have a means to do it. However, they also had to prove that the pathways and programs they were requesting were necessary.

Financing. Principal Morgan’s statement about financing summed up the response from all principals when they were asked what the most-needed resource was: “Money. You can’t do this without money.” Although financial support was mentioned in many ways in the principals’ interview responses, it was most specifically mentioned through facilities, equipment, training and trips, as well as staffing.

The director described the budget process as tenuous at times because it was being built for the first time and each school had different needs. Although schools did not get approval for every request, funding was secured to support new pathways and equipment at each school.

Principal Davis highlighted the significance of staffing, saying, “I think staffing is the most important thing that they were supportive with. They added a counselor, so we got a fourth counselor, they added a talent academy coach so we were able to get that position, which we would never have had, and then another CTE position.”

Principal Burton discussed one of the more helpful resources as funding for trips to help sell the program at Collins:

I would say allowing me to take one of the staff members who was the biggest barrier, taking him down to Florida, we went down to Tampa, we went to Clearwater. We went to schools that had comparable populations to [Collins] in size and programs, and showed him, basically, what we saw when we were in Tampa at Braden River, and he was like, “We could do this.”

The money that was provided to principals looked different depending on the school’s needs and the initial requests. The director explained the process as a system of staffing analysis, facilities, and budget comparisons. She said, “I would take the staffing formula, and then literally we did budget analysis, and we would really break it down.” She sat down with each principal and presented a spreadsheet of their data and needs. This is also how the district director determined which programs were feasible and which may need to wait until the following year. While there were some letdowns, each of the principals said they appreciated the support and understood that money was limited. All expressed appreciation for the financial supports they were given, which sometimes were over six figures, due to equipment costs and renovation needs.

Critical staff. Of all possible resources, it appeared that financial support for additional staff was the key support during implementation. However, even though CTE positions were valued, the role of the academy coach was mentioned in principals’ responses more than any other. This position is used as a liaison between the district and the schools, as well as between the schools and business partners.

In essence, the role of the academy coach serves to ensure fidelity to the academy model and also to maintain open lines of communication between the principal and district representatives. The academy coaches were described as a “lifeline” by Director Robertson because they provided a much-needed connection and support for principals. The academy

coach became the organizer, promoter, and ambassador of the career academy program for each school in this study. This freed up principals to focus on school culture and other pressing issues, while the academy coach was able to develop the model school-wide as a full-time job.

Principal Davis described the position as “huge, huge, huge.” He explained the value behind this addition, saying,

But the biggest part for us, you know, we hired a very good talent academy coach who’s done a great job, and that was provided by the district so that was their support . . . that’s the person who really has to build those relationships and keep the school connected with all the various groups, with all of our academies, because you know we have four academies, three primary ones that we want connected with the community.

The necessity of this position was mentioned in every interview. Whereas, in prior positions, the role of each academy coach may have been left up to the principal, the Academies of Louisville director was very clear that she needed consistency with this position. Therefore, the role became part of the non-negotiables document when principals signed on (Appendix B). There appears to be very little if any deviation from the job description after speaking with each principal and understanding how they utilize the role.

Logistics and movement. One of the biggest decisions each principal had to make in initiating their career academy involved changes to the space inside their school building, including moving teachers to be housed in academy spaces as opposed to the traditionally assigned content hallways. In order to ensure an efficient process, many principals focused on gaining teacher buy-in and support prior to the transition, while others could not waste time and went for a more authoritative approach.

Principal Davis at Eastwood discussed the initial logistical changes and the intent of getting things as “smoothly done as possible” due to the “enormous change throughout our school in terms of just where everyone’s classrooms were going to be, in terms of changing what people, changing academy principals, moving offices, moving classrooms, different other things.” These were monumental changes for some of the buildings, especially with veteran teachers who may have had their classrooms for their entire teaching careers. As noted in the next section, selling the idea to experienced staff was a barrier for some principals.

The key to effective logistical changes was to focus on clear communication. Director Robertson noted that “it wasn’t clean implementation,” but she also noted the importance of the communication channel and “strictly personalized relationships” to ensure everyone had as close to what they needed as possible. Principal Williams took the need for communication to the next level by forming a “task force” of teachers to focus on the logistical implementation of the new model and had “multiple conversations” with stakeholders, while others like Principal Vazquez only implemented the freshman academy in the first year to “make sure we got that right.” The key was that each principal had to work on logistics in their own way, with their own staff, and using the building they had been given. Although negotiations proved to give principals additional resources and even additional space, each principal had to still sell the idea and no one was without movement. For example, each school had to relocate teachers to actual academies within the building. For some that was the only move necessary, but for others, whole additions had to be built, walls torn down, and new facilities designed.

External/Internal Barriers and Program Concerns

Honig and Hatch (2004) wrote that “schools and school district central offices working together to craft or continually negotiate the fit between external demands and schools’ own goals and strategies” (p. 16) is an essential part of successful initiative implementation. Therefore, the next aspect of crafting coherence requires an understanding of the barriers to success, including how to balance external and internal pressures. For this particular section, the difficulties of pure cohort scheduling, student mobility, teacher turnover, facilities, teacher buy-in, and state accountability will be discussed as areas of need and potential issues within the model.

Scheduling. When the academy model was first offered to principals in JCPS, through the Request for Proposals, principals were notified that they potentially could get an additional counselor and an academy principal, depending on their needs. If there is one thing to understand about high schools, it is the value that can be found in having a solid administrative team. Many principals in this study could not afford the additional counselor positions on their own, so they jumped at the idea, indicating that the counselor position was highly valued. Principal Davis said, “They added a counselor, so we got a fourth counselor . . . so we were able to get that position which we would never have had.” Principal Williams also highlighted the importance of the position in the research interview. He said it was part of the negotiation process, that the understanding was that by agreeing to the terms, he would get the staff he needed. He said, “We’re going to get an additional counselor . . . by deciding/going wall-to-wall, which was a commitment from the district to say, ‘If you go wall-to-wall, we’ll support you.’”

While securing an additional counselor was the first step, scheduling became a crucial and difficult part of the implementation process. Even the Academies of Louisville guidelines highlighted the difficulties of having a pure academy cohort of students, given the nature of

high school Advance Program classes and electives. It would be nearly impossible to have an elective teacher for each academy; this, then, created some difficulties in each school's master schedule.

According to the Academies of Louisville non-negotiables document, there is an emphasis on purity. It states:

Both student purity and teacher purity allows for true “teaching and learning through the lens of the academy.” The following guideline will be the minimum expectation:

9th grade: 90% Student Purity, 10th grade: 80% Student Purity, 11th grade: 70%

Student Purity, 12th grade: 50% Student Purity, Teacher Purity: 50% of the core team teacher schedule should be in the academy” (Appendix B).

The notion of going wall-to-wall meant that the school fully implemented the academies across the building, in each grade level. It meant that there was an academy principal running each academy and working with an academy counselor to ensure students are placed correctly. Finally, wall-to-wall means that the students are in classes with the maximum purity allowed in the schedule. For example, students in the Nursing Academy would travel to all of their core classes with other nursing students. This is why the master schedule under the academy model requires an adept counselor who is familiar with the model.

Principals echoed the difficulties of ensuring that students graduated with requirements fulfilled, yet also aligned to pathways in order to meet academy requirements and be eligible for certifications. This is where principals had to make some tough decisions regarding program offerings, and whether they could meet the expectations of purity. Principal Morgan explained: “Where our struggle is, is we are too small and spread out to be pure. We would be pure if we did what the district said, and did two academies and a

freshman, but we won't do that. I won't do a binary choice. We need more options." Principal Burton struggled to find ways to put students into academies due to the sheer number of elective and advanced courses. He stated, "If you looked at our master schedule and saw how spaced out everything is, it's not realistic to group everybody. . . . I can almost guarantee you that next year, we'll have at least 50% of our kids in an academy." In both realms, priority and nonpriority schools, scheduling requires intense training, thoughtful planning, and intentionality among the leadership team. It is obvious that 100% purity is unattainable, and while that may be freeing to some, it is still a barrier to others.

Student populations. *Level of need.* The populations of each school influenced the principals' outlook on the success of and barriers to their career academies, depending on resources requested for their students and how much of them were received. Population descriptors often came in the form of gendered options, student mobility issues, transportation challenges, and the description of the school as priority, or high needs.

Each priority school principal was highly aware of the needs of their student population and mentioned it in regard to how they spent their budget. Principal Williams described the difficult decisions that must be made to weigh the holistic needs of the school with the emphasis on instruction:

Being a priority school, I have to spend a lot more money to ensure that this school is safe, resourced, and secure. I cash-in teachers [positions] to be able to provide security, to be able to provide resource teachers, because my years of experience of teachers is only about 3.1 for all my faculty. You average it all up. I've got a lot of young faculty who barely know how to teach and now they're coming into a priority setting with a lot of barriers that our kids bring with us. I am, unfortunately, cutting instructional funds.

This sentiment shows the struggle that priority school principal's experience in balancing resources in ways that most benefit students and teachers. They do this by following a hierarchy of needs. That is, increased instructional supports may be ineffective when students do not have a safe and secure learning environment.

Student mobility. Another issue faced in regard to student populations is that of student mobility. Due to multiple factors that are often beyond the student's control, priority schools often have high mobility rates. Although a sense of belonging is his top priority, Principal Williams is honest about the transient population, stating that it is difficult to sustain that "when 55% of the freshman class turns over in four years. I lose 55% of an incoming class." Principal Morgan, also in a high needs school, discussed his frustrations with inconsistent data tracking at the district level: "I think it probably has to do with the transients in our district, and the lack of understanding, generally, of sequencing of CTE." Students coming and going to different schools with different programs makes it difficult to ensure that they are on the correct pathway and will meet certification requirements by the time they are seniors.

Vt c pur q t w k q p ' e j c n g p i g u. While differentiation of programs across the Academies of Louisville is a cornerstone of its purpose in catering to various student interests, lack of transportation poses a problem. Students in high poverty areas are transported by bus, in most instances, and lack the ability to participate in internships during the day. Principal Davis cited the transportation barrier: "Kids getting from school to these opportunities . . . that's something that we have to deal with all the time." He and the district both hope to find alternatives to this issue and the issue of transient populations by perfecting data systems to track students across the district, working with local companies to find ways to offset the cost

of transportation, and even working with city officials to provide free or reduced transportation for JCPS students.

Teacher turnover. Student transiency and mobility issues, as well as transportation issues, may be barriers to increasing student completers in programs, but teacher turnover, especially in priority schools, is, arguably, an even bigger barrier. No matter the school, whenever a teacher leaves, the new one coming in must become accustomed to the general culture. However, when veteran teachers leave and new ones continually come in, the challenge for the school is even more substantial. From a training standpoint, it can feel like a never-ending cycle. Principal Williams described the struggles of retaining staff at priority schools, identified as such because of low student achievement. He said this was his greatest barrier at Xavier.

My years of experience of teachers is only about 3.1 for all my faculty. You average it all up. I've got a lot of young faculty who barely know how to teach and now they're coming into a priority setting with a lot of barriers that our kids bring with them.

Principal Davis also described the yearly process of teacher turnover at Eastwood, another priority school: "You get a brand-new person, you have to teach them. You have to train them up, professional career academies and project-based learning and everything, because they're starting from scratch, so it's tough."

From a student point of view, turnover poses a challenge, as well. Consistency is vital in moving students forward. The sense of belonging that is created by the academy model can be broken when students are "seeing a new person every year coming in" (Principal Davis, 2018). This need for consistency and follow-through in new policy implementation is not surprising. The very nature of crafting coherence requires continued checks and monitoring in an effort to ensure fidelity, consistency, and support as goals are developed "through

sustained and managed school-based participatory activities” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p.26).

This process is not different for building capacity among a staff.

Principals in this study saw turnover as an issue at the district level, as well. With a sudden change of leadership at the start of the 2017–2018 school year, principals expressed excitement about new possibilities, but also hope for current structures to stay in place long enough to see results. When asked what the biggest challenge has been with districtwide implementation, Principal Stewart saw it as consistency.

Consistency in leadership at the district level. Consistency in leadership at the school level. Sustained funding and the sustained energy of the marketing and the promoting, which I think is directly connected to the leadership. I think that's probably the biggest challenge.

While principals expressed the need for consistency, Director Robertson also spoke of consistency when she spoke of her experience with principal turnover. At the beginning of the proposal stage, three principals were in place who were not in place when the academy model was about to launch. Some of them wanted to “go a different direction” and change the initial pathway. Another decided to back out of the initiative, stating that she wanted to slow down and take care of other things before implementing something new. Therefore, the district had to work with new principals to ensure that the systems were implemented and aligned to mutual goals.

Turnover continues to be a focus for any organization hoping to move forward with initiatives and especially when human capital is involved. The principals who were interviewed for this study and the district representative held similar goals in their desire to sustain and continue to develop the momentum they felt after successfully launching the academies.

Facilities. The academy model in general, requires the actual reallocation of building space to create common spaces for student cohorts. For example, students in the nursing academy would be located in one part of the building where all of their classes would be housed, along with their academy principal and corresponding counselor. The idea is to not only increase a sense of engagement among students because they have choice in the academy, but to also create in the students a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of a self-contained community within the larger school.

Because, in many cases, the academy model is implemented in older facilities, it presents a challenge for administrators who are trying to create smaller learning communities within often-linear or ill-fitted spaces. Principal Smith described the difficulty of implementing the model within the confines of his current space, saying his struggle involved the “geographical space of the building. So, physical layout impacts that greatly, and a lot of our schools are laid out in a linear fashion instead of a block orientation, so you have to create that division or you don’t do it.”

Many of the schools in the study whose spaces did not lend themselves to the academy model worked hard to create areas that looked like separate academies. Some schools used signage, while others actually tore down walls and redesigned the areas they had. Director Robertson discussed her understanding of the groundwork required for successful implementation stating,

The hard part was, now, the x’s and o’s, the real detail of implementation. Financing, budgeting, budgeting renovations of equipment and buildings. Oh gosh, all right, now we want to put in a welding lab . . . where will we put it and walking around and the manpower and the knowledge . . . and we had 21 renovations that we had to handle internally . . . and the very first one, we had asbestos. It put us 3,000 over. So, just the

logistical and budgeting, pathway selection, course sequencing, just the magnitude of 11 [schools] at once trying to figure out what everybody really wanted, and get a plan. So that was the most challenging.”

Veteran teacher buy-in. Getting buy-in is a challenge for any new initiative.

Principals must work doubly hard to sell ideas to staff, students, parents, and the community. Veteran staff often hold strong opinions about the way the school should be run and feel more strongly the longer they are there. Therefore, principals must be careful in their decision making, ensuring inclusion and that support is felt among the staff, especially among those teachers who have been there at the school the longest (Alvy, 2005).

Principal Burton, at Collins, struggled with staff buy-in at first and had to strategically repackage the program after the previous principal had been unsuccessful at creating it. He provided a detailed explanation of his steps,

The most difficult part was getting the teachers to understand why we even need to do it. They look at [Collins] as . . . We are in the top tier, we have this many kids taking AP, we have this many kids doing this, that, and the other thing. So, the way I sold it to them was yes, we have that, but here are our rankings over the last three years; they’ve dropped. Here’s the gap that exists between our high-end and our low-end kids. I showed them trends in market share that we’ve lost, I’ve showed them trends in teacher retention rates, teachers leaving for other schools that are lesser than [Collins]. So, I showed them there is a sense of urgency here, and this is why we’re going to do it, this is how it’s going to benefit us.

Principal Smith’s biggest barrier at Tiverton was very similar. He stated, “[There are] teachers who have been here a long time and haven’t bought into this model. [They are] resistors in that regard, resistors to instructional change, to doing things different than they

have done.” He went on to discuss some of the sometimes “selfish motivations” of adults who may value the status quo and comfort rather than doing what is best for students. In conclusion, change can be hard for teachers, but anyone who has been working in a profession and feels a sense of familiarity with what they have been doing. Therefore, it is up to some principals more than others to sell programs, or create buy-in for their staff.

Teacher movement. Along with the need for improved or altered facilities, principals brought up having to ask teachers to change location within the building to be a challenge, especially with veteran teachers.

Within the first year of implementation many schools were faced with having to move teachers all over the building to accommodate the academy model and put core content classes, as well as career and technical education classes, together within true academies. Teachers were no longer arranged by content; instead, they were located according to the academy into which they had been placed or chosen. Principals mentioned this multiple times as a hurdle, with one saying “I spent half of my faculty meetings selling it.”

Once the principals had sold the idea of the academy, movement was an essential part of its implementation. That aspect could easily become a problem if the principal did not sell it correctly. Principal Davis, at Eastwood, knew how important the implementation was and discussed the original plan stating,

Well, I guess the first steps were making sure logistically it was as smoothly done as possible because obviously it was an enormous change throughout our school in terms of just where everyone’s classrooms were going to be, in terms of changing people, changing academy principals, moving offices, moving classrooms, different other things.

This emphasis on a smooth transition was important to note with the majority of high schools having an easier time than others. Although Principal Davis came in during the second year of implementation, he understood the enormity of the movement for teachers. Principal Williams, on the other hand, was there at the start of implementation and was able to work with the faculty to create a sense of unity throughout the process, despite challenges. He said,

When all was said and done, I would say it's almost unanimous. Let's go. They believed that we could get it done. They understood. I did tell them, I said, "We may not be perfect in the upper academics. The emphasis is going to be perfection at the freshman level and let this roll up, but we're going to move full academics."

It's important to note that priority school principals, or schools close to priority status due to student scores and needs, had an easier time with staff movement than those schools not in priority status. This could be due to the high turnover found within priority schools and the greater flexibility of younger teachers filling positions. Principal Morgan, at North High School, noted that his staff was "awesome" and "ready for change." Another priority principal, Ms. Stewart, at Thomasville, said logistics were the "easiest part."

On the other hand, as previously discussed, Principal Burton had difficulty selling the model to his staff: "It was perceived as a negative because it was only looked at as being put in schools that were low-performing, and that was for those kids and not all kids." The fact that the teaching staff at Principal Burton's school was more veteran and, therefore, held stronger opinions about what works, may have meant that the sell was harder. In priority schools, with high turnover rates, new teachers may be more willing to acquiesce or trust the leader to make decisions.

State accountability. The pressures of state accountability are evident in many of the responses and also in the three out of seven mission statements that specifically include college and career readiness as a goal (Appendix I). State accountability is the most pressing policy for districts to implement and set goals to achieve. A key determinant of the response of implementing agents to accountability policies is the degree of consistency they perceive between the policy content and their own values, goals, and strategies for achieving them (Louis & Robinson, p. 632). Principal Williams said,

That's how we decided to apply for [the academies] . . . it matched things we were already doing in the building and it was a great fit for the kids and a perfect opportunity to maybe salvage the accountability model as we move forward. . . .

Williams, like other priority school principals in this study, then, sees the career academy model, with its focus on career readiness, as a way to “salvage the accountability model” for the school, given poor college readiness scores of the past. In other words, the program would increase student certifications and help the school to overcome low achievement scores by making it up with career readiness points. Even though the state accountability model may be purely focused on increased certification numbers, Williams wanted to do it for the right reasons and not just for numbers. “I want it for the best interest of [his high school], which means the best interest of the child, which hopefully means translations in both accountability, performance, and children's success.” That said, Williams expressed the frustrations of trying to do what is best for students while also considering the need to meet state accountability. He provided the example of wanting to start a cosmetology program for his students, which was of high interest. However, the state did not recognize it as a pathway and, therefore, did not have a certification for students. He stated, “That's sad on our state level because that's a

career and you have to have a license to be one.” Principal Smith also discussed the impact of the current accountability model at Tiverton stating,

So, ultimately, we’ve been working on refining what the purpose is and how we’re going to approach the academy model, with the idea of state accountability changing from college and career to just transition ready, and so many of our kids here at [his school] ultimately don’t go on to college.

This raises questions about the original purpose of high school and if schools are truly being successful in giving students every opportunity to pursue college. The state accountability’s emphasis on career readiness can be seen as a positive force for students, but also needs to be assessed to assure it is equitable in the opportunities it provides for all students.

Program Impact

Student choice. A benefit of the academy model that many principals discussed is the ability to give students additional options and choices in their learning. The model, as presented, was an opportunity for principals to expand pathways and even survey students to see what they wanted to do. Each of the principals saw student choice as one of the biggest benefits and successes of the career academy program. Principal Morgan best explained it as he discussed how he came to add a culinary program for students. He said,

We started like the first week of school last year. What are you interested in? What do you want to do? Going out there and polling kids and polling parents, and doing a lot of research into what are some high demand jobs, and then also looking at extracurriculars that kids would fall into. One of the reasons we adopted the culinary pathway is because the largest club on campus last year was Cooking Club. It had over 120 kids. That’s more than my band and my football team combined . . . So, we knew

that that was high demand/interest for our kids. We also knew there are a lot of jobs in the culinary pathway, and then from the cultural standpoint, if you can bring food into a building, everyone wins.

Other principals took similar steps to ensure that the money being spent would be spent on something that students were truly interested in and that would boost their success. Principal Davis and Principal Williams had a similar experience in building their own programs, as well. In fact, Principal Williams said, “Our school surveyed our kids three times to determine what was needed inside this building.”

Principal Davis said he believed his school chose the manufacturing program because it “was a pathway that wasn’t there that we kind of looked at student need and what students were interested in and based it off of that.” In both instances, the principals viewed the success of the program as a direct result of students truly wanting to experience it.

Finally, Principal Stewart identified student choice as a success at her school because of the school’s ability to add “high interest” pathways for students. She described the process:

So when we surveyed our freshman last year . . . they really wanted a math/sciency/techy pathway and I didn’t have one. And they also wanted something in the medical field and I didn’t have that, either. And then those are exact things that the community partners were saying they needed. So, that was an easy match. We were able to add cyber engineering and patient care tech with the academy’s partnership. So that provided the teachers and the resources for those classes.

Given the experiences of the principals who were interviewed for this study, district and school leaders wishing to implement the academy model may take note of the expressed need to survey students and take into account their interests prior to discussions of funding or

teacher movement. If the desire is there, students seem to take interest and, therefore, the program is more likely to thrive.

Positive culture. Increases in student and teacher sense of belonging were evident schoolwide and influenced the culture of each workplace. Although many principals intended to use the academy model as a means of increasing student certifications and real-world opportunities, many of the principals also noticed a significant positive impact on the culture of their schools, a result of reorganization and restructuring. Director Robertson said, “Teens are starting to find their identity,” which may be interpreted as a testament to the solidarity and partnership that was developed during the first year of implementation. The positive impact appeared to be districtwide from an adult perspective, although no students were interviewed to see if they were truly changing.

Principal Williams wrote about the dramatic success he had with both teachers and students due to the academy model: “The teachers are happy. Matter of fact, I just looked at my comprehensive school survey reviews a few weeks ago. So many things were up.” When he asked his staff why, the answers led him directly back to the career academy.

The number one thing was freshman academy really helped to set expectations in the building. Then the academy structure in general with embedded staff inside the academies . . . accessibility to a counselor. All that is part of the academy model and all three of those were the high fives that the faculty agreed upon. A lot of validation there.

Healthy competition was another aspect of the academy model that contributed to a positive culture in the schools that participated. Principal Morgan brought legitimacy to the program by trying to be the best and a model for the Academies of Louisville. Honig and Hatch (2004) reported, “When schools compete for and secure funding from particular policy

initiatives, their success in attracting those funds may appear as a reward and their participation a source of legitimacy” (p. 16). Principal Morgan understood the need to promote the school, saying, “The way we’ve buffered that relationship is success and positive press. One of the things I think [the school] has done exceptionally well for the district’s behalf is we have given them excellent press.” This has helped to build the positivity surrounding the program and, at the same time, highlighted the great things going on within the building. This combination bolstered teacher, student, and community support and helped change the perspective and possibly the stereotypes that are often associated with priority schools. The message was that even the most disadvantaged students and schools are finding success.

The positivity did not stop in the schools, though; Robertson gave a glowing assessment of the first year of implementation by citing increases in student certifications, well-trained staff, and noticeable momentum from business partners.

Maintenance Activities and Next Steps

The positive outcomes, including improvements in overall school culture, as well as student choice through the academy model, must be maintained in order for implementation to be worthwhile and truly successful. Maintenance activities, then, are the activities that are required for the program to continue to develop. Honig and Hatch (2004) saw the stakeholder’s individual contributions “to the development and use of goals and strategies” (p. 21) as an important part of any policy cycle or implementation of an initiative. Therefore, there are still areas that need to be addressed in order for the Academies of Louisville to grow and develop further. These areas include facility and transportation needs, communication and promotion, sustainability, better data tracking, a new staffing model, and improved training for teachers and administrators.

Communication and promotion. Communicating and promoting the purpose and needs of the academy model is important to ensuring consistent implementation, but also in promoting growth. The principals in the study had concerns about the way the model was communicated at the start, but admitted that this was a growth process for them, as well. Principal Stewart, in reflection, stated, “I think I would have spent more time on the front end, repeatedly talking about that message.” Much of the first year was described as a sprint to implement the program as quickly and efficiently as possible, while still ensuring that their schools ran smoothly. Although implementation and communication were thoughtful, each principal had to make decisions that influenced the final product. For example, Principal Burton acknowledged that the academy model looked differently at first because he stepped in after the previous principal had started the implementation. He had to mesh his ideas of what it should look like with a process that had already been started, and at the time, poorly received by the staff. His number one goal in the coming year is to get most students on a pathway and “to build on what we have and to really communicate with students, parents, and faculty.”

Communication is not just within the building, with teachers and students, but outside the building, with parents and business partners, as well. Principal Davis admitted that pulling in stakeholders was an area that needed work. He said, “Unfortunately, one of our growth areas . . . is involving parents, and we’ve tried and we’ve done a lot of different things to try to get them more involved in the building.” Still, he said, he felt that the business partners were well communicated with thanks to the role of the academy coach. The coach, he said, worked hard “to connect the school with the business community and with the community in general, and [to] be that kind of bridge between the school and the outside community.”

Another aspect of promoting the academy model is starting earlier than high school. Principals had concerns about how the model was being communicated in middle schools and whether students were truly making educated choices when they picked certain high schools. Principal Smith said, “I don't know if we're promoting it to up-and-coming kids who well understand that they have a high degree of choice of which school they go to, and not just which academy at a school, but which school and which academy.” In response, Director Robertson emphasized that the district is “working with elementary and middle schools at the same time” in an effort to get projection summaries for enrollment, or an idea of how many students to expect. However, in order to gain the most out of the academy model, it may be important to start promoting the programs in middle schools in order to give students a taste of what each high school offers. This might cut down on student mobility challenges, because students know what they want to do sooner than the end of freshman year, when they get to pick their academy.

The consensus among the principals concerning communication was that it is of vital importance and most appreciated when the district is open and consistent. Due to principals being pulled in multiple directions, they indicated that they want someone else out there hustling to promote programs, gain business partnerships, and generally harnessing community support in order to sustain and grow the current programs.

Sustainability

Program sustainability was a clear concern of the principals after a year of implementation. All believed the momentum created in the original pitch, funding, reorganization, and community partnerships needed to remain in place in order to sustain the culture changes, student sense of belonging, and general successes of the program. Principals

saw sustainability in the form of facility planning, additional funding, and meeting student transportation needs as the greatest priorities.

Principal Stewart said, “Sustained funding and the sustained energy of the marketing and the promoting, which I think is directly connected to the leadership, I think that’s probably the biggest challenge.” Principal Smith supported this point by emphasizing the need for cohesion between the district and principals, stating, “I think it’s going the right direction, but I think it could easily wither on the vine. Schools can’t support this on their own, nor do I think they will really ever be able to. I think it’s always going to have to be a joint effort between the school level and the district level.” These principals named a necessary step in Honig and Hatch’s (2004) “crafting cohesion” cycle. After implementation, including an analysis of decision-making structures, external and internal barriers, and successes, it is important to assess maintenance activity needs that are necessary to prevent the initiative from failing.

Principals strongly emphasized the importance of consistent support from district leadership to ensure sustainability. Although all were pleased with the current leadership at the district level, Principal Morgan saw the district’s oversight as crucial to this process. He said he hopes that they “keep their promises as far as continuation of funding, because these things will not be sustainable without district funding.” Sustained funding is vital to the program and the diverse pathways that promise to engage students in learning and having real-world opportunities. Without the district’s support, principals said, they fear having to close pathways and lose students.

Given the funding for new pathways, some of which included machinery and equipment to allow students to have hands-on working experiences, principals emphasized the importance of continually funding these programs to ensure success. They noted that career

and technical educators wish to work in settings that emulate the actual career, which can mean real and very expensive equipment. Principal Stewart said, “I think my concerns are, are we going to be able to sustain this? In terms of consumable materials or maybe the EKG machine breaks, what’s going to happen then? I worry a little bit about that.” Much of the equipment costs were included in the original budget and it was unclear whether the district had built maintenance into the budget, although each school received additional funding based on pathway and staffing needs. That said, Principal Williams saw the current allotment, including equipment, as more than adequate, stating, “Sustainability is great. The money for supplies, resources that are added in every year is perfect. I don’t know anything different.” Regardless, each acknowledged the importance of sustainable funding, equipment, and general staffing.

Better data tracking and increased certifications. As nearly all interviewees emphasized the importance of post-secondary success, there must be a way to measure this. Students who are transition ready (or college and career ready) in the state of Kentucky are those who either meet academic benchmarks or receive industry certifications within their pathways. Therefore, data tracking to ensure students will complete pathways and are on track to become certified is highly valuable to principals and the district alike. For principals, increased certifications can potentially lead to higher state accountability scores, and for the district the result is the same. Given the sheer number of pathways and the number of students, data tracking surfaced in this study as an area in need of attention. Principal Morgan detailed his beliefs on the difficulties of data tracking and the importance of knowing what the numbers really are when he said,

I think it probably has to do with the transients in our district, and the lack of understanding, generally, of sequencing of [career and technical courses]. What the

district is doing now, and will do in the oversight portion of that, I think will be the best thing to sustain it, because what we will eventually need after once all of this glitz and glamour wears off and the good press, is to go back to our business partners and show them success.

Community and business partners on the outside may not be able to see the changes in culture taking place, but what they can see are the numbers of students who are becoming certified in their chosen pathways. Selling the academy model and fostering these partnerships means ensuring that the numbers of students getting certified is accurate and growing.

Principal Williams emphasized that the focus needs to be on data tracking, especially for student certifications, which are a main way to get students labeled as career ready. He said, “How many certifications are coming out of each school? Hands down, that’s what I’d be looking at. Are we getting the certifications that are out there?” Similarly to Principal Morgan, he voiced concerns at the level of support needed and what indicators were being used given the heavy accountability on transition-ready students. “I’d also be looking at other indicators. How many . . . is there a way to declare internships? How many internships is each school getting? I would look to see who’s struggling . . . I know the data, too. I’m struggling with certifications.” In other words, even principals with proficient knowledge of data and systems work are still struggling to align pathways to certifications against state accountability requirements and current options.

Director Robertson understood the need to improve data tracking systems, but felt very confident in the direction of the Academies of Louisville and the amount of data the district already had. She said, “We’re working on data collection systems, but we’ve got 836 industry credentials passed and in the queue.” She produced numerous documents to support this, which she called “massive data charts,” including confidential contracts between the

district and each principal to show the amount of funding allotted to schools based on number of students, teachers, and pathways. If the goal is increased certifications for accountability purposes and principals are still struggling to get the right students in the right pathways, perhaps it is more an issue of training the administrators and teachers to understand the current data tracking systems. The current statewide tracking system, TEDS (Technical Education Database System), may be the best place to start.

New staffing and training model. Along with the need for data tracking comes the imperative of properly trained staff and the ability to hire the right person for the job. This is easier said than done when private sector jobs that are as specialized as the ones needed in the academy model often pay much more than a public educator makes. Therefore, many of the professionals hired are in their second careers, close to retirement, or hopefully, love education.

Principal Smith described the difficulties with hiring under the current academy model. He said,

It's the nuances right now. So, we're staffed as a whole school, but we're expected to run academies inside of that . . . Anytime you divide things into numerous pieces, you lose stuff off the ends, like cutting a loaf of bread. You feel like you lose stuff. So, when we're trying to staff essentially three or four separate schools inside of one, the JCPS staffing model leaves some things to be desired in how we support that, if we're pursuing this in regards to purity and making sure we have those teams fully intact, and that they are tight with their kids and their colleagues.

In the academy model, the number of teachers needed can increase for numerous reasons, including smaller CTE classroom cap sizes, additional pathways, and growing programs. The staffing model that is used for traditional models still has an impact on the

academy model schools, which makes it difficult to properly staff. Although most principals understood the reason certain requests were rejected—“I understood, it was a staffing thing” (Principal Davis, 2018)—it forced some to be very creative in hiring and to hold off on some current goals. That said, the district has worked hard to provide additional funding for staffing in addition to allocations under the traditional model.

Director Robertson was clear that the district has a system for trying to identify school staffing needs, but admitted that it is difficult given the number of pathways. She said that they “look at every school, and try to look at how many are enrolled in their data.” She also stated that they try to be “fair and equitable,” to ensure that one school does not get more resources than another. The director believes this is where knowledge of the master schedule is crucial, to see when “there’s openings and gaps and fluff with staffing.” Even with the district’s close eye on enrollments, some principals received more money than others. Although no one complained outright, they voiced concerns about sustainability if their programs continued to grow or needed to be altered.

In addition to physically hiring staff, the success of the model may rely even more heavily on adequate and appropriate training for staff members, especially the academy principals who are often charged with growing and fostering their own “school within a school.” Robertson admitted that training lacked cohesion at first, saying, “All of our training was a hot mess the first time around. That was a fail. That was a big fail. Big barrier. We did not get the right people in the right room.” This is reference to the initial trainings for the academies where principals were asked to send teams, but they lacked clarity about which teachers and administrators should make up these teams. Therefore, multiple people were trained, but they did not end up working together in the same academy, or perhaps could not have productive conversations together because of their content areas.

The data system was also another needed area for additional training, especially for the counselors who were trying to ensure students would graduate having successfully received a certification. Principal Williams highlighted the pressures of growing programs and balancing the need for increased certifications. He said he sees support for training as an area for growth:

As a district, I would look at each of the schools that are implementing this and say, “Who needs help where?” Let’s get boots on the ground and train the staff. Not saying that they’re not doing this, but I know it will probably come. Not fuss at us and say, “You need to get more.” We obviously aren’t doing it right, so come train. In some cases, I think it’s just simply training. It’s making more people aware of how to do it a little bit better.

He highlighted an important point that came up often regarding implementation stages. Principals in the study seemed to feel that the number one priority is to increase numbers, but there are so many other issues that are of importance that it can be easy to get overwhelmed or frustrated by constant accountability pressures, principals said. Perhaps the feelings of not doing something right comes from failure to disseminate the same message across work groups. Principal Smith expressed this best in describing the struggle to get everyone on the same page within the building. He said, “I guess, from my side, managing that message across the assistant principals has been the biggest challenge. So, be it instructional or managerial or whatever the message is, it has to be consistent through four people instead of just from the principal.” When the message is the same, teachers have a better chance of successfully implementing the model and experiencing success because students are engaged and feel a sense of belonging within each academy. In conclusion,

without better training to increase efficacy, efficiency, and consistency among staff, the school will not see the full benefits of the model.

Chapter Summary

The Academies of Louisville initiative was received as wholly positive despite some of the personal requests and ever-present need for consistent and equitable access to resources. The passion of the principals was evident when they described the initial results of being a part of the movement for just one year. Principal Vazquez summed it up by saying, “It just gives me cold chills thinking about it,” in reference to the impact he has seen on students and the school as whole.

By completing a cross-case analysis of the findings, conclusions may be drawn regarding barriers, successes and next steps for the program. While the responses regarding purposes for starting the program were similar, there was clear variation in responses regarding desired outcomes for the high performing school versus the priority schools; the majority of priority schools saw it as a mechanism for schools to increase certifications and a tool to impact the culture and feeling of belonging within the school. At the same time, Principal Burton of Collins High School was still in the process of figuring out how to work the academy model into a college-prep culture and therefore focused on the cultural components more so than career readiness side. However, these two factors are not dichotomous and can work concurrently to impact student success as evidence by the wholly positive take on the model from the priority school principals.

In the next chapter, conclusions will be drawn from the findings. Also, I will discuss implications for my own practice, personal reflections as a researcher, and final recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The Academies of Louisville was started in 2017 as a districtwide effort to improve students' transition readiness and post-secondary success. The initiative was implemented by 11 principals at 11 unique high schools within the district. Although the process was similar in structure between the schools, the ways each principal implemented the program were sometimes very different, depending on teacher experience, student population, and the principal's general personality. However, overall, barriers and successes were mostly aligned.

Discussion and Significance

Barriers and challenges within the program included scheduling, student mobility, teacher turnover, facilities, teacher buy-in, and state accountability models. Overall successes included an increased sense of belonging for both students and teachers, increased student choice and engagement, and a positive impact on the school culture.

In order for principals and the district to implement the model with consistency, it required "bridging and buffering" on the part of each (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Decision-making structures such as negotiations, understanding expertise, providing choice, financing each pathway, open communication, the addition of an academy coach, and discussions on logistics were all crucial to each high school moving forward.

Although each principal had their own perspective on the Academies of Louisville, the majority were appreciative of the experience because of the funding and additional staff provided. Those who were hesitant found themselves dealing with large cultural changes that could take more time than the district was hoping to provide. The following sections provide context and a discussion of the larger concepts that arose as a result of this study, including differences in understandings of the initiative's purpose and the role of accountability, maintaining momentum, questions of equity, negotiable non-negotiables, appropriate training, and rethinking the program's structure and offerings.

Different views of purpose. Accountability standards have a way of adding pressure on principals, depending on their student population. Priority schools are already labeled as low achieving and given multiple areas for improvement, on top of the state audits that take place on a regular basis. Teachers and principals in these schools, then, may have different goals when it comes to school-wide programs. If they already feel stretched thin, they may be more willing to embrace programs that provide alternative ways for students to be successful when they are struggling in the traditional academic accountability model.

Therefore, a theme that emerged was the idea that priority schools benefited more from the program than others. This is mainly due to the inherent belief that the college-going students will be hurt by focusing on career academies and vocational training. If the focus truly is on certification then principals may be correct, but if the model is presented as a way to engage students and help them feel a sense of belonging while they are still in school, the model can work for any school despite the academic level or post-secondary goals.

This raises questions about the very nature of high school and whether the high school truly prepares students to be successful when the measure of success is the ability to provide for themselves and their future. It is difficult to pinpoint what true success looks like, but

currently schools are given college and career readiness standards as the only measures. One of the intents of the academies is to provide additional opportunities for students beyond high school, but it may be reinforcing existing class structures as evidenced by priority schools with higher numbers of free and reduced lunch students benefiting from the model more than others. With the implementation of the Academies of Louisville, it was evident that the priority school principals saw it as a way to help students get certified, given accountability requirements to ensure students are “transition ready,” or meeting academic or career and technical benchmarks. That said, all of the principals saw it as a positive program and one that came at a fortuitous time for each of them. However, the lack of initial discussion on culture and climate and the impact on student success may indicate a lack of understanding concerning the true power of the model.

Although student engagement was a key factor, the principals who had fewer behavior and academic issues looked at the model as a bonus of sorts for their students, a chance for them to be successful with meaningful internships and certifications. The principals who had more students struggling with academics (mainly priority schools) saw this a critical opportunity to change the trajectory for their students, who may need certifications to find jobs after high school, or who find academic benchmarks tough to hit.

True alignment of the purpose of the program with district initiatives is evident in many of the principals’ interviews, when they discussed their purpose for starting the program, but it appears that accountability may be at the underlying core of the academy model. According to Honig and Hatch (2004), “When central offices have helped schools choose and use goals and strategies, they typically have provided that assistance selectively—in support of goals and strategies aligned with central office priorities” (p. 25). This is not necessarily a bad thing as students being certified and deemed career ready can not only

benefit school accountability scores, but also give students an advantage in the workplace. In the end, it is important to do an additional assessment for the reasons for joining in the first place and how outside influences may have influenced participation.

Reasons for joining. Even though Director Robertson indicated that she did not want to be part of a top-down push, the district used the RFP and non-negotiables document to provide clear guidelines for implementation if principals wanted their programs funded (Appendix B). In other words, it may not have been a requirement, but the funding and additional staff promised were seen as vital to each school's success and enough of an incentive to apply.

Interestingly, none of the principals directly stated that the purpose of placing the academy model at their school was due to incentives for funding and staff, but it was clear that these were highly needed areas in the discussion of both. Like Principal Morgan stated, "if you pulled my district funding at this point, I would pull five pathways tomorrow, because I wouldn't be able to pay for them." This sense of urgency for funding was referenced in the principal's discussion of the timing being perfect. This poses the question as to whether the academies were truly voluntary or joined out of the necessity to create better programs and secure funding. That said, each principal was pleased with the final outcome although some were attending to the model structures more than others, which leads to a discussion of the non-negotiables document.

Negotiable non-negotiables. The academy model initiative can be seen as voluntary due to the application process, or as Honig and Hatch (2004) phrase it, the school's "selective engagement" was used to "inform and enhance implementation of their goals and strategies" (p. 23). The process was necessary for principals to secure funding which fulfilled their vision and goals for the school. In comparing each school's implementation to the non-negotiables

document provided by the district, it is evident that the non-negotiables are actually more negotiable at this time. Although it is the goal of the district to achieve the goals, there is not a single school that has implemented all of the non-negotiable points with fidelity. Appendix B highlights the components where there was evidence of implementation across all schools, evidence in some schools (or evidence of progress), no evidence shown, or unknown.

Areas that were fully implemented and aligned include designated academy coach, business partners, and a freshman academy. However, there were multiple points that were only partially implemented or still in progress. These included designated academy principals and counselors for each academy, and specific areas for each academy. Principal Vazquez at Wright and Principal Burton at Collins did not have the full model implemented for different reasons, but both were moving slower mainly for teacher buy-in and to ensure program success. That said, the other principals had made strategic moves within each of their schools to meet this requirement, yet all voiced the difficulty of working within their current spaces. Principal Smith at Tiverton was still in the process of finding appropriate office space for assistant principals, and others like Principal Davis at Eastwood discussed making room for growing academies and specific pathway needs.

Other areas that are still in the process of implementation include team common planning, scheduling purity, modification procedures and accreditation. Each principal discussed the difficulties with scheduling, including both purity and teacher planning. Although, it is still a goal of each. Director Robertson discussed the push for accreditation from NCAC which showed evidence of work toward it, stating, “I want to get head [academy] directors to the NCAC for accreditation. I’m starting, those are the two next levels,” but the principals did not have this on their radar at the time.

Finally, for in-progress goals, each school had a mission statement, though the majority existed before the academy model came along, making it difficult to say whether the missions were intentionally aligned to academy model. Principals did note similar goals to the district's mission for the program which states,

All high school students will belong to a personalized smaller learning community engaged around interests where relationships are valued. Instruction will be project-based, applied and integrated where meaningful business engagement is evident, post-secondary institutions are involved and the community is supportive (Appendix H).

Principals also noted many of the same goals including engagement, post-secondary success, and business/community partnerships. There is evidence that alignment is there, but not as "tight" as the district may desire at this point.

The non-negotiables document is very clear on expectations for principals and has a clear purpose, to *ensure alignment and set a clear vision for performance*. In the opening paragraph it even warns that these guidelines are, in fact, "non-negotiable" and the school's standing within the academies and funding may be affected. Given the stern warning, it is unclear whether principals have been influenced by the guidelines. Director Robertson's acknowledgement of continued next steps and building the program as they go seems to say that the non-negotiables are more of a desired goal at this time.

The adoption of the non-negotiables document can be seen as adherence to a policy. Honig and Hatch (2004) would emphasize that at this point in the process the district should still be searching for information to support schools and adapt to their needs, while principals should be analyzing their goals and missions to ensure that alignment is authentic. This "conceptualization of policy coherence" is then seen as a "process or craft" (p. 25), which is where the model of crafting coherence comes into play. Perhaps the current state of having a

negotiable non-negotiables document is appropriate for the first year of implementation, but that expectations for adherence will continue to tighten with additional time.

Keeping the momentum. Another theme that many of the principals spoke of was the sustainability of the model. In order for the Academies of Louisville to grow and maintain momentum, the funding, support, and vision must remain constant. Therefore, “trust and collegiality” must be present in the continued relationship among the district and schools (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 21). The district must work to transition into a role where, “schools become central decision makers and school district central offices become supporters of others’ decisions and both face demands to work together in new ways” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 28). The need for this is demonstrated in the principals’ underlying fear that their schools may be left to fund the new teachers or the equipment on their own if they need to change pathways, or if, for some reason, the student population shifts and student interests change. A confirmation of support and multi-year plan may give principals the security they need to help their programs flourish.

Also, to continue academy momentum, students and the community must know about it much sooner than entering ninth grade. Although the district has a communications team and a marketing team for the Academies of Louisville, principals expressed hope that they could begin promoting the program in middle schools to ensure that students are ready to pick the academy school that best fits their needs. The idea is that if students are aware of the pathway they want prior to entering high school, it may help them to find a sense of belonging earlier on and also prevent student movement to other schools in mid-year.

Finally, it may be important for the marketing team to further highlight the holistic benefits of the program. There are a lot of numbers associated with the Academies of Louisville’s success, which is something community and business partners can see and

quickly appreciate. However, the impact of the model on school culture is more difficult to convey. For this to be experienced, it may be helpful to shift the focus to the voices of the students who feel an increased sense of belonging and to the staff who are benefiting from community and district support generated by the academy model.

Proactive planning. If the academy model is going to grow beyond what it is now, there must be proactive planning for staffing, training, facilities, and even student assignment. Effective districts must continually search and “look for information to provide their ongoing operations” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 26). This continual reflection is crucial in maintaining program initiatives and supporting principals. In this case, the very layout of many of the high schools needs reevaluating to see if it adheres to the academy model structure. Currently, the school layouts are not all conducive to the model given the lack of office space in needed locations and the way rooms are spread out within buildings. Part of the benefits of the academy model comes from the community feeling created by having the academy principal, counselor, and all teachers in the same physical location. Without this important component it may be difficult to create this.

Although building space may not be changeable, training and staffing models are. The staffing model may need to be adjusted to understand that some teachers, especially those in CTE, may have a smaller number of students as they build programs, or simply because of smaller cap sizes. Instead of allocating staffing based on total number of students, each school’s funding and staffing may look very different depending on the pathways chosen. Therefore, the staffing model should be based on a combination of overall number of students plus an additional allocation based on the pathway needs. While it will not look fair by the numbers, it is an important factor in building and sustaining programs. That said, if student

interests shift, tough conversations may need to be had about cutting certain pathways and, potentially, staff.

While there is often training for teachers first starting out in education, it may not be specific to the unique design of the academy model. For teachers to be successful, they will need training at the beginning and follow-up throughout the year to ensure that they understand the purpose, the pathways, and the focus of their academy, and how to incorporate student interests into their curriculum and planning (Mujis & Lindsey, 2006). Administrators and counselors need training on many of the same topics, but also on how to lead a school-within-a-school, how to communicate purpose and provide direction, and how to complete a master schedule that provides the purity necessary to continue the programs.

In addition to scheduling, the student assignment model needs to be reevaluated to ensure students truly have choice in their schools and so student populations continue to grow. Although, the career academy model has been implemented within JCPS, the student assignment plan is still carried out under the old model. The Ford NGL model was originally used to organize schools by career themes, but with the specificity and development of the Academies of Louisville, it has become more imperative to reconsider student assignment needs not only for program success and communication, but also for equity concerns. Programs at each school should be included on new assignment plans and district leadership needs to ensure students have equitable access to the schools that best fits their interest. This may include looking at and planning for the placement of incoming students to district that may be entering later in their high school career, as well as English Language Learners who may need a more structured approach to meet the career and technical education requirements while still mastering a language.

Finally, if the academies are to be sold to students and staff, they have to understand the connection between the academies and their pathways. In many of the schools there was a conglomeration of misfit pathways that made up an academy (see Appendix I). Six out of seven of the schools had at least one pathway that does not fit the academy theme. For example, at North High School, Air Force Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) is located in the STEM academy, while the same program is located within Tiverton's METal academy, and Thomasville has it classified as a global, or whole school academy. Another example is Thomasville's combination of Law, IT, and Health and Education into one academy. Xavier has combined Culinary, Carpentry, and Graphic and Digital Communications into one academy. The number of pathways also differs for each school. Wright has nine individual pathways in its Health Science academy, but only three in its Industrial Maintenance pathway. Although it is early in the full implementation within the district, consistency among the academies, as well as refining pathways, may lead to greater clarity for students hoping to be certified and, in general, a better understanding of program offerings for parents and students.

Implications

There are many implications to this research for principals new to the academy model, or who are working to implement a large initiative in their schools. These include knowledge of requirements, a clear vision and mission, creating teacher buy-in, and understanding individual student needs.

There are multiple demands placed on principals, some required, others optional. It is important to weigh and know the options as principals. A strong working relationship with district administrators who share a common vision and goal is helpful, but not always realistic. The process of "crafting coherence" relies on a mutual understanding and common

focus for both the principal and district. When this happens, the principal takes on the role of implementer and the district takes on the role of supporter.

A clear vision and mission is also crucial to success and creating teacher buy-in. Principals who have clear visions for implementation and work to highlight those plans on an individual basis with teachers are more likely to see program success due to increased teacher efficacy and buy-in (Mujis & Lindsey, 2006). Much of this involves the appropriate training of staff, but also having a vision and mission that is supported by the district. Especially in low performing schools with high teacher turnover, vision is “crucial in building staff commitment” to any school improvement process (Chenoweth & Kushman, 1993, p.47). In the academy model, buy-in is essential due to the amount of movement, logistical changes, and rethinking of core instruction. Teachers are the very instruments used to bring a program idea to fruition and may need time and additional support to put the mission and vision into practice.

Another critical implication for the success of the academy model is a true understanding of the needs of the students within the building. If student engagement is key to the model, then student pathways must be aligned to their interests. This was evident in the way some principals attempted to give students choice in the academies, but at the same time, the principals were limited in their offerings. Surveying student interests is important like Principal Stewart did, but also surveying staff to see which academy they connect to the most can help to build a sense of community. Principals must work with the district to find pathways that will work for their school. Although this is easier said than done, if the money is available, principals should find pathways that will benefit the most students and that fit the design and mission of the school.

In addition to student choice, it is important to note the benefits of creating small learning communities and not just viewing the model as a means to certifications and careers. If rethinking school in a way that works best for our students is our goal as educators, then providing students with a sense of belonging and community feel is crucial. Small learning communities do not always need to be career themed, but can instead be formed within larger settings to bring together students with common interests and simply to help them feel closer to the teaching staff. As the research shows, students who often struggle in traditional model schools benefit from the nature of smaller academy schools due to the intentional focus on individualizing learnings (Allen, 2008; Dixon et al., 2011).

Researcher Reflection

This research has broad implications for principals and districts implementing large scale initiatives, but there are also many implications for myself, as I reflect on the research. Having been a part of the Academies of Louisville and working in education in general, there has to be a desire to help students be better and succeed. That said, the political landscape for education right now does not favor the public sector. Without making too many assumptions, I believe principals working in urban school districts face multiple obstacles in finding resources for supporting diverse learning needs, being able to recruit and retain teachers, and ensuring that the physical building is conducive for learning. There are many social and political nuances at play here that shape the participants' outlook on education in general and the district's support of their initiatives.

Currently, the question of racial equity is not part of this study, but I believe equity is at the heart of what I am doing. The academy model, in itself, is a means of bringing students together and helping them feel like they belong. Traditional models of school have, for far too long, catered to one type of student. In this study, the participants came from a wide range of

backgrounds, though some schools in the study were more diverse than others. All of these factors played a role in how the principals viewed the needs of their students and also how they viewed their potential success in the academy model. Does this model work better for higher performing students, or does it work best for underserved populations? These are all important questions to consider as the research continues.

As an academy principal I was able to relate to the participants and understand the pressures they faced in starting the academy program. Milner (2007) suggested “that researchers think about themselves in relation to others, work through the commonalities and tensions that emerge from this reflection, and negotiate their ways of knowing with that of the community or people under study” (p. 396). Although I can relate on one level and has an established knowledge of the process, questions of equity and diversity may need to be more closely examined for me to fully understand the background and reasons for starting the academies. I see the academy model as a way of supporting students who often feel unsupported and faceless in large high schools. This model supports students from poverty by finding ways to engage them beyond the traditional high school model. However, there is a need to understand how this physical change in the structure of schools can lead to systemic changes that improve the lives of students of color.

Future Research

Future research in this area is needed due to the current movement toward career and technical education and transition readiness. However, it is important to look at the model not only for increasing student certifications, but also for how it can impact school culture. Therefore, future researchers would benefit from looking at the model as a way to restructure struggling schools and positively impact school culture.

More research is needed on the impact of student scheduling, as well. Scheduling and staffing were seen as significant barriers to the model's success, in the current study. It may be important to examine the role of the counselor within the model to understand how they work to find the appropriate "purity" levels within each class and how they determine what teachers need to be hired. They are a crucial piece of the puzzle that has thus far been unstudied.

Also, there have been studies that look at student graduation rates and college success after leaving academy model schools, but additional research on the student's success finding a job and their general career aptitude would shed light on the true success or limitations of the program. In the end, the goal is to ensure that students have the skills needed to thrive both personally and professionally when they leave high school; therefore, research to assess this result is imperative.

Most pressingly, the research on the student's voice and perspective throughout the implementation process is vital to understanding whether the initiative does truly increase a student's sense of belonging and their enjoyment of school. Specifically, the voice of students of color and special populations, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, must be heard to see whether they, too, feel there is a benefit to the small learning communities and career-themed focus. There has been research that shows increased graduation rates for students with high free and reduced lunch rates, but very little to disaggregate perception by race, gender, and need (Kemple & Snipes, 2000).

Conclusions

This research sought to provide insight into the beliefs of current principals within the first year of career academy implementation. The research questions included:

- What beliefs do current career academy principals have concerning the purpose for career academy implementation?
- What are the principals' perceptions of program successes, barriers, and supports needed for career academies?
- What are the principals' perceptions of whether the model achieves its intended purpose and what do they recommend for the future?

The work of Honig and Hatch (2004) was used as a conceptual framework to guide the research. Their work on “crafting coherence” during new initiatives provided context and purpose for the findings. During implementation stages, the district and schools find a working relationship where principals must bridge and buffer external and internal demands in an effort to effectively implement new programs, but also to maintain a positive culture and climate in which the unique needs of staff and students are valued.

The findings of this study are significant for many reasons, but most importantly because of their implications for a shift in transition readiness and a focus on career academies as a way to transform education. Principals of schools where students are struggling to meet academic benchmarks saw the model as a way to meet accountability standards, but also as a way to engage student populations that have become apathetic in the traditional model of schooling. Principals of schools using the model spoke to the increases in accountability numbers, including certifications, but more importantly, they spoke to the impact on culture and climate, of an increased sense of belonging among students and staff. That said, principals also acknowledged serious challenges for sustaining the program, including transient student populations, teacher buy-in, pure cohort scheduling, staffing deficiencies, and their need for continued funding and support.

Although there are areas for growth, principals and districts who have the same goals for the program must together to develop systems that support the unique needs of each school. In the end, students want to feel supported and that there is purpose behind what they are asked to do; teachers want to feel supported and that there is purpose behind what they are asked to do; and principals want the same. The academy model can be a transformational tool when the purpose is clear, funding and staffing needs are met, and proactive planning is used to ensure sustainable programs and pathways are maintained.

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APPENDICES

Features of Academy Structure

1. Common core of teachers working with a themed teacher to support students
2. Common planning time to follow the common planning template
3. Assistant principal and guidance counselor assigned to an academy should attend common planning times—AP should be principal of a small school and held responsible for that school's success
4. Academy coach is the liaison to all aspects of the high school redesign—the go-to person for business engagement and building SLCs—must be part of the Leadership Team and the Master Scheduling team
5. National Standards of Practice for Career Academies is the roadmap for accountability in the academies
6. Freshman Academy and Freshman Seminar success is pivotal to the success of the academies in the upper grades—some of the best teachers assigned here
7. Structure must be in place in order to transform teaching and learning within that structure—it isn't about the structure, but it is about what can happen if the structure is in place—without the structure transformation would be hard to implement.
8. Principal should be seen as the biggest promoter of academies—in the walk as well as the talk—faculty meetings and any gatherings should use the verbiage and philosophy of academies
9. All PD should be embedded in the academy model, and academy philosophy should be embedded in PD
10. All instruction should be 21st century teaching and learning and bring relevance through the lens of the academy theme. Some ways to accomplish this are: instruction that is project/problem based, inquiry based, includes technology as an integral part of teaching and learning, and engaging teaching strategies.
11. Teams of teachers have common planning across disciplines to allow supporting students in their academy.
12. Experiential learning is a key element for teachers and students. Strategic, intentional scaffolding of experiences with time for reflection deepens and connects the experience to academic achievement through relevance. (Business and community are engaged and partnered with academies to deliver instruction, provide relevance and authenticity, provide resources, and hold all accountable for outcomes.)
13. Gen ed teachers use the lens of the academy theme to teach their course standards.
14. Assessments are formative and summative. They are standards based and performance based. They give students a variety of ways to demonstrate mastery.
15. Pathways are based on workforce demands and lead to high skill, high wage careers. Students follow a sequenced course of study and become completers within a chosen pathway.

16. Pathways focus on careers that provide opportunities for students to have multiple exit points for success or reach the highest level in a career pathway.
17. Industry certifications are offered and promoted by the academy with business support.
18. All career academy students meet the same graduation requirements as any other students.
19. A continuous improvement model is used for ensuring success and breaking down barriers to outcomes.
20. Business partners are engaged in team meetings and/or advisory boards.
21. Academies do not track students based on ability or gender. To encourage diversity of, choices of pathways allow for all levels of rigor and learning styles.
22. Alignment with post-secondary (dual credit/dual enrollment, early college credits), and pathways aligned with industry and post-secondary.

Academies of Louisville Non-negotiables

The Academies of Louisville will follow “tight” structures and systems that have been tested and proven the backbone of success. All Academy of Louisville High Schools will follow the nonnegotiables to maintain their AOL Status and continue funding. The purpose of this guide is to clearly identify and define the Academies of Louisville Foundations, ensure alignment and set a clear vision for performance.

1. **Mission** – All academy schools will support the high school mission. “All high school students will belong to a personalized smaller learning community engaged around interests where relationships are valued. Instruction will be project-based, applied and integrated where meaningful business engagement is evident, post-secondary institutions are involved and the community is supportive.”
2. **Academy Structure**—All academy schools will maintain the Academy Structure with each academy having a leadership team made up of an Academy Principal, Counselor, and Team Lead. The academy team of teachers and staff will be positioned together within a building as closely as facilities will allow. Each school will have an Academy Coach that serves as the business liaison and academy project manager, making sure all academies are working to maintain all academy guiding principles and work closely with the school leadership team.
3. **Teaming/Common Planning**—All academies will have common academy planning and content planning. Highly Effective Teaming training is required and a teacher leader should lead the team. The Academy Principal is ultimately responsible for the academy and helping develop the team leader. The Common Planning template will be followed to guide the meetings to include all necessary parts of an effective academy, including business engagement, student interventions, interdisciplinary planning, etc.
4. **Business Engagement**—All academies will maintain positive relationships with their business partners and engage them in meaningful academy experiences to include but not limited to advisory meetings, experiential learning, curriculum development, externships, showcases/open house, and all academy planning sessions.
5. **Freshman Academy**—The Freshman Academy should be present in every school with teams of teachers working to support students to stay in school and prepare them for their academy. To allow for full student support, **Freshman Seminar** is a full year or semester course. CTE electives can be offered in the 9th grade, but 9th graders

should be associated with the Freshman Academy and not a career or thematic academy until their 10th grade year.

6. **PBL/Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning**—All teachers should engage in an interdisciplinary PBL project each semester. Teacher teams can be as few as two teachers up to including the entire academy in a project. If teachers have not been trained in PBL 101, each school should develop an on-site training alternative until a full PBL 101 training can occur to allow for all teachers to participate in an interdisciplinary project—not being trained in PBL does not exempt a teacher from participating in two interdisciplinary academy projects per year—one each semester. Academy Principals will monitor PBL projects and make sure all teachers participate. Each school should have a school level PBL showcase to determine which projects advance to JCPS PBL Expo.
7. **Five Characteristics of a Graduate**—The Profile of a Graduate drives our work as an academy and each academy strives to help students achieve all five characteristics. Ultimately, our goal would be to have 100% of students meet all five characteristics.
  - Have a plan for post-secondary education and career.
  - Achieve a minimum 21 composite score on the ACT.
  - Participate in a work-based or service learning experience or a capstone research project.
  - Complete at least one course delivered in an online or blended environment.
  - Attain college credit, a nationally recognized professional certification or both.
8. **Schedule**—The A/B schedule has allowed for a focus on interdisciplinary learning and provided the flexibility to offer academic support in double-dipping. The A/B schedule will continue with 30 minutes for advisory or RTI as needed (can be credit or non-credit bearing, but cannot offer a singleton that could result in inequality).
9. **Purity**—Both student purity and teacher purity allows for true “teaching and learning through the lens of the academy.” The following guideline will be the minimum expectation:
  - 9th grade: 90% Student Purity
  - 10th grade: 80% Student Purity
  - 11th grade: 70% Student Purity
  - 12th grade: 50% Student Purity
  - Teacher Purity: 50% of core team teacher schedule should be “in the academy”
10. **Program Modification**—Opening, closing or phasing in/out pathways (including any building/infrastructure changes) must be discussed with the local advisory board and program modification documentation submitted to the office of College and Career Readiness in the fall prior to the next school year. These changes must align with workforce data and evidence of high skill, high wage and high demand career preparation. Flexibility is allowed for unexpected changes such as a loss of a CTE/pathway teacher.

11. NCAC Accreditation—All academies will collect documentation and work to maintain NCAC (National Career Academy Coalition) accreditation. The Academy Coach will serve as the project manager for all accreditation visits/evaluations.

In addition to the foundations listed above, each school will work toward hosting a minimum of two Louisville Ford Hub Tour dates each year (fall and spring). Additionally, any tours with more than 10 guests highlighting your academies should be coordinated through the Office of College and Career Readiness and will be placed on a master AOL Tours Calendar. This will allow us to keep accurate data and work to coordinate events for better organization and community exposure.-

KEY

Evidence of implementation at each school
Evidence of implementation at some schools, or in the progress
No evidence
Unknown

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Timeline	Proposed Budget
September 2017- CITI Training Complete	\$0
October 2017- Submit Chapter 1	\$0
December 2017- Submit Chapter 3	\$0
February 2018- Defend Dissertation Proposal	\$0
February 2018- Apply for IRB Approval	\$0
March 2018- Apply to conduct research in JCPS	\$0
April 2018- Conduct Interviews	\$0 GoToMeeting Interviews As Needed \$50 Audio Recording Device
May 2018- Data Analysis and Conclusion	\$500 Rev.Com Transcription Service
Sept 2018- Submit Chapters 4 & 5	\$0
October 2018- Defend Dissertation	\$0
December 2018- Graduate	\$0
	Approximate Total: \$550

Career Academy Semi-Structured Interviews

Thank you for the opportunity to meet and learn more about your experiences with the Academies of Louisville and career academy implementation in general. This interview will be audio recorded today in order to ensure your words are recorded accurately and to facilitate my analysis. Please indicate and sign the consent form to acknowledge your understanding and permission of this. This form states that your information will be confidential, your participation is voluntary, pseudonyms will be assigned for confidentiality, and no harm will come to you as a participant.

During the interview, I would like to ask you several questions concerning your experiences implementing and sustaining the academy model, but with the intent of you expounding on these questions. Please feel free to share your insights, whatever they may be. The interview should last between 45-60 minutes. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, we can move on to the next.

Guiding Interview Questions	Alignment to Research Questions	Interview Notes & Observations
1. Tell me a little bit about how you came to be principal here. a. How long have you been a principal here? b. What made you want to be a principal here? c. Did you implement career academies, or take the job after they had been established?	RQ: 1	
2. What was the impetus for starting a career academy in this high school? a. What do you believe is broader purpose of the career academy? (sense of belonging, engagement, achievement, etc.)	RQ: 1	

help with maintenance and sustainability after implementation? (Financial, support staff, training, etc). 5. Would you consider the career academy model a success at this high school? a. What specific evidence supports this? b. What would you consider to be barriers to success? 6. How could the career academy model be improved upon at this high school? 7. Do you feel that the career academies accomplished their intended purpose (sense of belonging, engagement, community partnerships, achievement, etc.) for this school? For the district?	RQ: 2,3 RQ: 2,3 RQ: 2,3	

Protocol Description – Program Coordination Survey

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT:

This study seeks to understand the reasons principals implement career academies within their schools, as well as their perceptions of success and failure, the support needed to make it work, and recommendations for the future.

2. JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH:

With high stakes accountability and the traditional nature of schooling, the literature shows a need to refocus education efforts on school redesign by teaching to student interests and providing clear goals for post-secondary success. Labaree (2008) contends that the factory model of education is antiquated and killing the creativity and motivation of our students. That is not to say that traditional academics do not still hold value or a place in school, but the purpose of school has become lost amid high stakes accountability testing. Students must be passionate about their work just like anyone else before they put time and effort into it. This passion can be found through programs that emphasize career readiness, authentic learning, internships, and community partnerships. Their drive can be focused through the use of career academies.

Although research in career academies in general has provided much insight into student perceptions, there is little research around the principal's perceptions of success during and after implementation (Gentry, Peters, & Mann, 2007). However, the role of the principal is paramount in redesigning schools into career academies for the purpose of increasing student engagement and subsequently success:

Strong school leaders are important, but principals need the support of superintendents and district or central-office personnel to effectively implement reforms and sustain them over time. Designing, putting in place, and monitoring change may require a whole cadre of staff who share a vision and who have the skill and time to realize that vision (Quint, 2008, p. 67).

Therefore, through my qualitative research, I seek to advance knowledge of effective career education programs by adding to what has been described as limited research on the capacity of school leaders to implement successful career academy programs and restructure schools for student success (Kuo, 2010; Maxwell & Rubin, 2001; Quint, 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY:

The purpose of this multiple case-study design will be to explore principal perceptions of career academy implementation, success, and district support in Jefferson County Public Schools, Academies of Louisville. The multiple-case study is intended to focus on "one issue or concern applied to multiple case studies to illustrate the issue" and in this particular case, the issue is principal perceptions of career academies (Creswell, 2007, p.74). At this stage in the research, career academies will be bound to the eleven original high schools participating in the Academies of Louisville since the program originated in the 2017-2018 school year.

Data sources will include principal interviews and document analysis. Principal selection will be purposeful and based on the principal's participation in the Academies of Louisville. All eleven original principals and the director will be invited to participate in the study, with the intent of having at least five of the eleven confirmed and at least one district administrator. The case studies themselves will look at the model of career academies already at work in JCPS, which emphasize student choice in learning, multiple success pathways, and real-world connections (Ford NGL, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews lasting 45-60 minutes will be used as the primary method of data collections. Interview questions will analyze the implementation of career academies and document perceptions of the program in order to build the case. For the interviews, participants will be provided with the information concerning the objectives of the research prior to their participation through an invitation letter and following IRB approval. Their participation is voluntary and no incentives will be provided. All interviewees will be asked to sign a consent to being tape recorded or video recorded (if a face-to-face meeting is unavailable an online meeting format will be used) for the purpose of research documentation. The same semi-structured interview questions will be used by the researcher as a guide in order to maintain consistency among site visits. Finally, each participant will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality, but also to track their feedback and answers.

A request for readily available as well as publicly available documents will be made prior to the interviews and as noted on the invitation to participate. These documents will then be analyzed and coded using the same categories that emerge from the semi-structured interviews. The following documents will be reviewed at each site: career academy meeting forms, career academy implementation guidelines, promotional materials, and achievement data including graduation rates. The documents will be analyzed for similar emerging themes that can then be compared at each site

4. PLAN OF ANALYSIS:

After the interviews are completed and documents collected the interviews will be transcribed and then coded using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS) called NVivo. In this way, the data will be more easily analyzed for coding purposes and categorization.

In order to discover and make meaning from the semi-structured interviews, both an inductive coding process will be used for the first round of open coding, where information will be coded into broad categories, but also a deductive process using the "crafting coherence" conceptual framework from Honig and Hatch (2004).

After the coding of individual cases has been complete, it is important to do a cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis is a crucial part of data interpretation, because it is the culmination of the research and the portion where the researcher can begin to form a cohesive narrative concerning the data collected. For this research study, the researcher will look at each case to form deeper meaning about the work as a whole.

5. TIMETABLE:

Once approved through U of L's IRB process, I will apply with Jefferson County Public Schools for the ability to conduct research within the district. I will then contact the principals of the twelve zoned schools to ask for volunteers to participate in the study. I will set up face-to-face interviews in May of 2017. I will utilize an online meeting format for any that are unable to meet with me in person during my visit, although this will be only as needed. The guiding questions will be used to answer the research questions, but considering it is a semi-structured interview style, I will be open to allow the principals to provide insight in their own way. I will then analyze the data by first using open coding, followed by axial coding, after transcribing the interviews. I plan to defend the dissertation in August of 2018.

Subject Informed Consent Document

Deindustrializing School: The Implementation of Career Academies and Implications for School Leaders

Investigator(s) name & address

Mary Brydon-Miller (PI)
1905 S. 1st St. Louisville, KY 40208
Terra Greenwell (Co-PI),
4248 Darbrook Road, Louisville, KY 40207

Site(s) where study is to be conducted

Jefferson County Public Schools

Phone number for subjects to call for questions

502-424-0948

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Terra Greenwell, Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development doctoral student at the University of Louisville, with Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller (Ph.D.) serving as the principal investigator. The study is sponsored by the University of Louisville, Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development. The study will take place within Jefferson County Public Schools. Approximately twelve subjects will be invited to participate.

Purpose

There have been studies concerning student achievement after career academies, but few have examined the role of the leader after implementation and during sustainability efforts (Gentry, Peters, & Mann, 2007; Kuo, 2010; Maxwell & Rubin, 2001; Quint, 2008,). With Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) in Louisville, Kentucky being in the first year of the career academy model, a study providing insight and valuable feedback to principals and the district as they rethink school could be vital to the success of the Academies of Louisville. Therefore, the overall goal of this research study is to understand the impact of career academy models on schools by looking at perceptions of success, failure, and next steps from the perspective of principals who have already led the school through the process in Jefferson County Public Schools. After completion, urban school districts like JCPS will have a better understanding of the model as a whole, as well as insight into the implementation process.

Procedures

In this study, participants will include high school principals and district administrators participating in the Academies of Louisville within Jefferson County Public Schools. A semi-structured interview will be used to ask the key research questions, as well as

sub questions. The interviews will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted at a time and location convenient to you (i.e. your office, or using an online meeting format as necessary). The responses will be audio recorded. Participants involved in this research will also be asked to provide public documents including promotional brochures, program policies, organizational structures, and meeting minutes, etc.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks, although there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include providing much needed narrative in the role of the principal and district within the career academy model. This work will be used to inform Jefferson County Public Schools as they work to implement the Academies of Louisville, going into the second year. The information collected may not benefit you directly. However, the information learned in this study may be helpful to others.

Payment

You will not be compensated for your time while you are in this study.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. A pseudonym will be provided. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your information may be shared with the following:

- Organizations that provide funding at any time for the conduct of the research.
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human subjects safety or research compliance
- The local research team
- Government agencies, such as:
  - Office for Human Research Protections

Security

Your information will be kept private using a password protected computer and a pseudonym will be provided to each participant.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify. You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

Contact Persons

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact Mary Brydon-Miller, PhD at 502-852-6887 or Terra Greenwell at terra.greenwell@jefferson.kyschools.us or 502-424-0948.

Research Subject's Rights

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the study doctor, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has approved the participation of human subjects in this research study.

Concerns and Complaints

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgment and Signatures

This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Subject Name (Please Print)
Date Signed

Signature of Subject

Printed Name of Legally
Signed
Authorized Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Legally
Authorized Representative

Date

Authority of Legally Authorized Representative to act on behalf of Subject

*Authority to act on behalf of another includes, but is not limited to parent, guardian, or durable power of attorney for health care.

Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form
Signed

Signature of Person Explaining
Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)

Date

Printed Name of Investigator
Signed

Signature of Investigator

Date

List of Investigators:
Mary Brydon-Miller, PhD
Terra Greenwell

Phone Numbers:
502-852-6887
502-424-0948

Dear Principal,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study concerning the implementation and sustainability of career academies. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the University of Louisville's Educational Leadership and Organizational Development Program. The assistant chair of the department is Dr. Kyle Ingle, and the principal advisor for this study is Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller.

As an academy principal in Louisville, Kentucky this study plays an important role in helping to improve the Academies of Louisville initiative. The purpose of this multiple-case study is to examine the principal's perceptions of career academy implementation, sustainability, and district support in Jefferson County Public Schools. I identified you as a possible participant for this study based on your role as a principal in the Academies of Louisville.

I would like to sit down with you for an interview lasting no longer than 45-60 minutes, at a time and location that is convenient for you. My contact information is terra.greenwell@jefferson.kyschools.us, or 502-424-0948, but I will also follow up with an email to you. If you have additional questions my research supervisor she can be reached at mary.brydon-miller@louisville.edu, or 502-852-6887. I am flexible with the timing and can also set up an online meeting if in-person is unavailable. In the interview, I will ask some questions about your experience as a leader in the Academies of Louisville, including your perceptions of success, barriers to success, and district support needed. Your responses will be audio recorded and will remain confidential.

A second phase of this study is to analyze the public documents associated with the Academies of Louisville at your particular school. Many of these are already available through the district, but if you agree to participate, I will ask for a copy of school specific ones used to implement and sustain the academies that may help other districts with this initiative including promotional brochures, program policies, district agreements, meeting minutes, etc.

You may indicate your willingness to participate by replying to me by e-mail or telephone, my contact information is:

Primary Investigator - Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller
Email: mary.brydon-miller@louisville.edu
Phone: 502-852-6887

Co-Investigator: Terra Greenwell
Email: Terra.Greenwell@jefferson.kyschools.us
Phone: 502-424-0948

Sincerely,

Terra Greenwell, Doctoral Student

Dear District Administrator,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study concerning the implementation and sustainability of career academies. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the University of Louisville's Educational Leadership and Organizational Development Program. The program director is Dr. Kyle Ingle, and the principal advisor for this study is Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller.

As an academy principal in Louisville, Kentucky this study plays an important role in helping to improve the Academies of Louisville initiative. The purpose of this multiple-case study is to examine the principal's perceptions of career academy implementation, sustainability, and district support in Jefferson County Public Schools. I identified you as a possible participant for this study based on your role as a district administrator who works with the Academies of Louisville.

I would like to sit down with you for an interview lasting no longer than 45-60 minutes, at a time and location that is convenient for you. My contact information is terra.greenwell@jefferson.kyschools.us, or 502-424-0948, but I will also follow up with an email to you. If you have additional questions my research supervisor she can be reached at mary.brydon-miller@louisville.edu, or 502-852-6887. I am flexible with the timing and can also set up an online meeting if in-person is unavailable. In the interview, I will ask some questions about your experience as a leader in the Academies of Louisville, including your perceptions of success, barriers to success, and district support needed. Your responses will be audio recorded and will remain confidential.

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Primary Investigator - Dr. Mary Brydon-Miller
Email: mary.brydon-miller@louisville.edu
Phone: 502-852-6887

Co-Investigator: Terra Greenwell
Email: Terra.Greenwell@jefferson.kyschools.us
Phone: 502-424-0948

Sincerely,

Terra Greenwell, Doctoral Student

Appendix H—Mission Statements

School	Mission	Coded Connections
North	North High School will prepare students for their future self, ready to contribute value to their world.	Productive Citizens Post-Secondary Success
Collins	Collins strives to meet the needs of students, parents and community through the implementation of a rigorous and discipline academic environment as we continue to build upon a longstanding tradition of excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics.	Supportive environment (needs) Academics/learning Extracurricular
Planning Eastwood	To inspire, create, and foster authentic learning opportunities that maximize student engagement.	Academics/learning Student Engagement
Thomasville	To prepare students for college and career goals, as measured by state academic standards. We are committed to providing an environment and system of support to ensure all scholars are successful.	College/Career Ready Accountability Supportive environment (needs)
Tiverton	To use a collaborative process focused on learning ensuring all students develop twenty-first-century skills so that they will be college-and career-ready.	College/Career Ready Academics/learning 21 st Century Skills
Wright	Wright is committed to meeting the needs of all students and providing them with the 21st century skills necessary to reach proficiency and postsecondary success.	Supportive environment (needs) 21 st Century Skills Academics/learning Post-Secondary Success
Xavier	All students will leave Xavier college-ready, career-experienced, goal-driven, and reality certain.	College/Career Ready
District	To challenge and engage each learner to grow through effective teaching and meaningful experiences within caring, supportive environments.	Supportive environment (needs) Academics/learning Student Engagement

Post-Secondary Success

Student Engagement

21st Century Skill

Academics/learning

Accountability

Productive Citizens

Supportive environment (need)

College/Career Ready

Extracurricular

Current K-12 Curriculum Review

School	Academies	Pathways
North	Health Science	Allied Health EKG Technician Pharmacy Technician Project Lead The Way (PLTW)- Biomedical Sciences Pre-Nursing
	Community	Administrative Support Animal Science Systems Culinary and Food Services Teaching and Learning
	STEM (Electrical Construction & Civil Engineering)	Air Force Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) Civil Engineering Skill Trades Constructional Electrical Track
	Freshman	
Collins	Business Services	Administrative Support E-Commerce Management and Entrepreneurship Marketing
	Visual and Performing Arts	Cinematography and Video Production Graphic Design Interactive Media Visual and Performing Arts
	STEM	Aerospace Engineering Cyber Engineering Mechanical Engineering Teaching and Learning
	Freshman	
Eastwood	STEM	Manufacturing/Engineering Technology Pre-Nursing
	Business and Finance	Financial Services Management and Entrepreneurship Marketing (Hospitality)
	Tech and Design	Information Support Services Digital Design and Game Development
	Freshman	
Thomasville	Law and IT	Cyber Engineering Pre-Law Studies
	Agri-Science	Animal Science Systems Environmental Science/Natural Resources Systems

	Health and Education (Global)- Not a separate academy Freshman	Horticulture and Plant Science Systems Early Childhood Education Patient Care Technician Teaching and Learning Marine Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC)
Tiverton	Automotive Engineering Manufacturing, Engineering, Technology, and Leadership (METal) IGen Business Freshman	Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair Entry-Level Collision Repair Painter Entry-Level Non-Structural Damage and Repair Technician Army Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) Cyber Engineering Machinist Operator Financial Services Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, and Recreation
Wright	Health Science Industrial Maintenance Freshman	Administrative Support Allied Health EKG Technician Pharmacy Technician Patient Care Technician Phlebotomy Technician Project Lead The Way (PLTW)- Biomedical Services Pre-Nursing Veterinary Assistant Administrative Support Industrial Maintenance/Electrical Technician Environmental Control System Technician (HVAC) Maintenance Mechanic
Xavier	Culinary, Carpentry, and Graphic and Digital Communications Health Science and Business Freshman	Culinary and Food Services Graphic and Digital Communications Residential Carpenter Assistant Administrative Support Patient Care Technician

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Contact Information: Terra.Greenwell@jefferson.kyschools.us

Education

2015- 2018 *Ed.D: Educational Leadership & Organizational Development, Summa Cum Laude*

University of Louisville-Louisville, KY

2013-2015 *Education Specialist Degree in Educational Administration, Summa Cum Laude*

University of Louisville-Louisville, KY

2011-2012 *Master of Science- Education, Summa Cum Laude*

Indiana University Southeast-New Albany, IN

2005-2009 *Bachelor of Arts in English & Secondary Education, Summa Cum Laude*

Bellarmino University- Louisville, KY

Professional Experience

2018— Principal

Jefferson County Public School- Ramsey Middle School

2015-2018 Academy Principal

Jefferson County Public Schools- Doss High School

2014- 2015 Goal Clarity Coach

Jefferson County Public Schools- Jeffersontown High School

2009- 2014 English Teacher

Jefferson County Public Schools- Jeffersontown High School

National Presentations and Contributions

Presented at the National Career Academy Coalition Conference in November 2016 on Career Academy Implementation

Presented at the Persistence to Graduation Summit in June 2017 on the transformation of Doss High School

Presented at Graduate Student Regional Research Conference (GSRRC) at the University of Louisville, Louisville, KY March 2-3, 2018

Presented at the Kentucky Department of Education Continuous Improvement Summit in September of 2018 on embedded professional development and cultural improvements

Ingle, W.K., Greenwell, T. & Woods, J (2018). An analysis of district mission statements in Kentucky, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Houston, 2018. Houston, TX

Awards and Recognitions

- 2018: Principal Pipeline for Jefferson County Public Schools
- 2015: University of Louisville Ed.S Student of the Year
- 2009: Bellarmine University Thomas J. Kemme Award for Excellence in English
- 2009: Bellarmine University Monsignor Raymond J. Treece Senior Merit Award from the Annsley Frazier Thornton School of Education

- 2009: Bellarmine University Outstanding Educator Award from the Annsley Frazier Thornton School of Education