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Strengthening Community Schools Through University Partnerships

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Given the mounting call for academic achievement gains in America's public schools—particularly urban schools labeled “failing”—the need for community engagement to tackle a host of underlying social challenges warrants the resources of the nation's colleges and universities (Harkavy & Hartley, 2009). Because colleges and universities are often underutilized anchors of resources in communities, coordinated alignment of K-12 and higher education goals can create a seamless pipeline of educational attainment for communities challenged to produce high academic achievement. Higher education's engagement with community schools further helps to address the whole child and their families in K-12 education by expanding the opportunities for the students and community to access necessary support services. Drawing upon experiences of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and collaboration with its adjacent neighborhoods, this article illustrates the transformative and relevant impact of university and community engagement, as well as new pedagogical approaches to teaching, learning, and training. This article reflects upon the experiences of IUPUI and nearby George Washington Community High School as it can uniquely serve as a roadmap for other school community/university partnerships that are interested in embarking upon a similar education reform path.

Given the increasing mantra calling for academic achievement gains in America's public schools—particularly urban schools labeled as “failing”—the need for community engagement and collaboration to tackle a host of underlying challenges warrants the application of resources by the nation's colleges and universities (Harkavy & Hartley, 2009). Institutions of higher education have long histories of investing their intellectual resources throughout communities, but not since widespread school consolidation and the attempt to achieve “racial equality” through busing has the importance of assistance to America's schools been so important. Serious school reform must be built upon authentic family/school/community engagement, according to a 7-year study by researchers at the University of Chicago. Researchers examined 200 turnaround schools and found

that only 10% *without* solid family and community engagement (or one of four other identified essentials) realized academic gains (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

Because colleges and universities are often underutilized anchors of resources in communities, coordinated alignment of K-12 and higher education goals can create a pipeline of educational attainment for communities challenged by a host of barriers—most often poverty—to produce increased academic achievement for everyone in the community. Higher education’s engagement with schools that have a clear community orientation can address the whole child and families in K-12 education by expanding opportunities for students, parents, and community to access a range of necessary support services. The result is a strategy for organizing community supports around student success and family support of student learning and engagement (Quinn, 2011). Axelroth-Hodges and Dubb (2012) stated that higher education’s approach to urban issues aims to increase community investment as it improves the welfare of surrounding communities. Although Axelroth-Hodges and Dubb’s research focuses on innovative, effective approaches to leverage resources from universities as anchor institutions, the academic challenges require a comprehensive long-term school/community/university partnership that benefits K-12 urban education reform. To improve schools, Bryk et al. (2010) pointed to the need for improving the technical core of teaching and learning that includes hiring and developing staff while sustaining program coherence. The focus must be on reform, and principals as school brokers must have the skills to build “trusting relationships across the school community” (p. 209).

Historically, urban public schools present recurring challenges that invite innovative approaches for reformation. The context of the challenges, changing demographics, new academic standards, leadership turnover, policy changes that displace leadership (e.g., takeovers), and variations in resources, have complicated what is typically thought to be a simple reform movement (Baum, 2003). According to Baum (2003), because long-term stakes are high when low achievement and failure (e.g., dropouts, low standardized test scores) are salient, the motivation persists for repeating the same approaches to change while enduring poverty and lack of resources are ignored. Although there are examples of charismatic leaders and individual schools and school systems that achieve isolated impressive outcomes, there are more widespread examples of lack of progress because the issues that are endemic to urban schools and communities are historical, complex, enduring, and multifaceted. Alone, neither schools nor communities can realize the context of the overlapping—and sometimes overwhelming—needs presented by students to help them become academically successful.

What does work? The answer to this fundamental question is best guided by large-scale research with the capacity to control for a variety of variables and the capacity to evaluate multiple factors that influence student and school achievement. One of the best examples for inferring an empirical basis for evaluating improvement strategies is provided by Bryk et al. (2010). Their research identifies five factors that constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for producing academic gains in schools:

- collaborative leadership
- instructional guidance
- professional capacity
- learning climate
- authentic parent/community engagement

Bryk et al. (2010) concluded that “schools strong in most supports were at least ten times more likely than schools weak in most supports to show substantial gains in both reading and mathematics” (p. 93). The conceptual framework and analysis of the data led to a conclusion that leadership is the driver of the other four factors. For example, the researchers conclude that “an average school community with a strong leadership base would have a set of organizational indicators three years later that approached the top quartile of schools in this study” (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 131). The researchers do not take the position that it is strong leadership in an authoritarian sense that results in strengthening the other four factors, but rather a collaborative leadership style. They noted that “technical activities of school improvement rest on a social base” (p. 204), which should include the development of trust among the stakeholders inside and outside of the school and distributed leadership for reform.

We agree that collaborative leadership is a key component to developing and strengthening the other four strategies. Through the following case study, we present our experience as evidence that the collaborative leadership structure, based on *authentic parent and community involvement* that includes the involvement of an institution of higher education, serves as the basis for enhancing the remaining four components identified by Bryk et al. This approach is based on the development of a 15-year partnership between Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and nearby George Washington Community High School (GWCHS). The reopening of George Washington in 2000 was led by a grassroots community initiative to reestablish public education in an area where all five public schools had been previously closed. The inclusive task force of community leaders, university staff and faculty, and community residents was instrumental in shaping the vision and implementation of the school as a community school and ensuring that the other four components later identified in the Bryk et al. model were developed and implemented in the school.

Thus, the aim of this study focuses on lessons learned by the GWCHS/IUPUI collaboration and illustrates strategies that strengthen the five key ingredients for success. This article details ways that IUPUI engaged with students, families, and community leaders to encourage learning, academic success, and support for the community school model. This case study also presents the basis for development of the Midwest Center for University-Assisted Community Schools (Midwest Center), a national replication project by the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania that works to build capacity for colleges and universities, K-12 schools, and their respective communities to develop and expand partnerships using strategies based upon models of engagement between GWCHS/IUPUI and the sound research principles of Bryk et al.

GWCHS AND IUPUI PARTNERSHIP

Since 1997, IUPUI has worked closely with nearby neighborhoods located on the Near Westside of downtown Indianapolis to enhance the educational opportunities for students, families, and communities. Beginning with early collaborative leadership of a Westside Education Taskforce and Education Study Circles, IUPUI, through facilitation from the Office of Neighborhood Partnerships, has been dedicated to help the neighboring communities enhance their quality of life. The ultimate mission for the initiative is to build upon existing partnerships on the Indianapolis Near Westside to improve education as well as career outcomes.

One of the most successful endeavors that community organizations and leaders of the Near Westside have undertaken has been the university-assisted community school initiative at GWCHS. As directed by then chancellor Gerald Bepko, university faculty and staff were encouraged to work in a participative style of leadership with grassroots organizers to reopen the doors of their beloved high school in fall of 2000. Community leaders envisioned a neighborhood school that would graduate students prepared for postsecondary education and provide a source of pride for the entire community. In the spring of 2006, the first group of students achieved that goal, marking the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) district's highest percentage to graduate that year, and in 2009 and subsequently 2011 and 2012, a remarkable 100% of the graduates were accepted to postsecondary education. As a full-service university-assisted community school, GWCHS was able to reach those levels of achievement by partnering with organizations that provided services and resources for students, strengthening social capital to enhance high school graduation and college acceptance, strengthening families and, consequently, their neighborhoods. Currently, more than 70 community organizations partner with GWCHS, including three institutions of higher education.

The success of the GWCHS/IUPUI partnership has been mutual as it has significantly contributed to the capacity of IUPUI as an engaged campus. During 2001–2010, 157 Freshman Service Scholars, 83 Fugate Scholars, and 126 Community Work Study students from IUPUI received financial support for their college education. They provided tutoring, assisted with homework, and provided postsecondary mentoring to students at GWCHS. College students routinely volunteer to coach cheerleading, assist the school nurse, conduct fitness and arts classes, and serve as athletic trainers. University faculty and staff engagement has grown from advisory council participation and three service-learning courses in the 2001–02 school year to 16 courses offered in partnership with GWCHS during 2009–10. Through spring 2010, 28 individual IUPUI faculty members had offered 21 different service-learning courses from Business, Communication Studies, Education, Nursing, Philanthropic Studies, Psychology, Political Science, Physical Education, Sociology, Geography, Science, and Spanish.

A major partner with GWCHS is the IU School of Education at IUPUI that focuses on preparing teachers for urban settings. Since 2001, education faculty members have conducted classes at GWCHS. Annually up to 120 preservice teachers study principles of urban education and contribute to the school. The pragmatic focus integrates fundamental principles of instructional theory and pedagogical practice in urban schools. With an emphasis on the full-service school as a social justice reform movement, courses present a potentially transformative approach to classroom instruction by effectively utilizing the pedagogy of community schools. An invaluable component in the preparation of preservice teachers is the field experience as preservice teachers establish knowledge in the act of teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and expertise through experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Teacher educators must socialize future teachers to understand how the philosophy and practices of full-service community schools affect academic achievement.

The School of Education's Center for Urban and Multicultural Education is the external evaluator of the full-service community school initiative that includes formative and summative evaluations. The research translates community action research into practice, working closely with community groups and P-20 initiatives at IUPUI. The evaluation follows the Extended-Term Mixed-Method Evaluation Design (Chatterji, 2004) that simultaneously holds grant awardees accountable for stated outcomes and provides continuous formative assessment of short-term

program goals. The process is necessary to identify unforeseen challenges and improve data on successful programs for replication while aiding sustainability. Indicators include tracking gains in student attendance; honor roll status; standardized test scores; graduation; parent engagement; health promotion participation; and individual student, family, and community members who are provided supports and basic services. The Center's scholarship on community schools will increase in the next few years as it participates in the work of two distinct communities through two major university-assisted full-service community schools initiatives funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

Another example of the mutually beneficial partnership between IUPUI and GWCHS is the Physically Active Residential Communities and Schools (PARCS) fitness program. PARCS provides service at GWCHS to students, staff, parents, and community residents to improve their quality of life by promoting the development of healthy lifestyles through consultation on exercise and nutrition with individual personal trainers. The program is staffed by exercise science, physical education, and physiology students from IUPUI and employs a graduate student assistant, six to eight undergraduate service-learning assistants, and a faculty program director. Each semester about 220 undergraduate students participate for academic credit that requires them to provide 10 to 30 hr of service each week at the fitness facility in GWCHS. PARCS is designed to promote lifetime physical fitness and wellness to families to help reduce diabetes, obesity, and coronary artery disease risk factors. PARCS has operated successfully at GWCHS since spring 2005, and in 2010 served 422 adults and 300 individual students. The program fills a health education gap that local fitness centers and schools cannot provide due to availability, funding, and time limitations.

IUPUI faculty is also involved at GWCHS. The Faculty Community Fellows Program involves IUPUI faculty in a year-long Faculty Learning Community focused on developing new community partnerships in the Near Westside. The program supports faculty with experience in teaching service-learning classes and/or community-based research to apply expertise to facilitate meaningful community change in the Near Westside. Faculty Community Fellows work collaboratively with each other, their community partners, and Office of Neighborhood Partnerships staff to design projects that demonstrate significant student learning and community impact and create models for faculty peers and community stakeholders.

IUPUI's civic engagement activities, which have included the GWCHS/IUPUI partnership as a salient example, have been the basis for multiple recognitions including four Presidential Awards for Community Service, the Carnegie Foundation Classification for Community Engagement, two Savors of our City citations, recognition in *Colleges with a Conscience*, and *US News and World Report* recognition for excellence in service learning.

The impact of the GWCHS/IUPUI collaboration has been significant for GWCHS students. In addition to the high percentage of graduating seniors being accepted into postsecondary education, minority students were identified as the highest achieving population—particularly Hispanic males during 2008–09 (Houser, 2010). School personnel contend that the mere presence of college students has directly contributed to the rates of graduates accepted into postsecondary education. Student attendance also increased from 88% in 2006 to 94% by 2009, the amount it remains today (see Table 1 for examples of other outcomes). In addition, GWCHS was awarded the inaugural National Community School Award by the Coalition for Community Schools in 2006. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education awarded GWCHS's lead-partner Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center, on behalf of the collaborating partners, a \$2.4 million grant, the first

TABLE 1
Top Five Achievements/GWCHS Community Schools Initiative from 2000 to 2010

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- 1. A greater value for education permeates the school neighborhoods**
 - 100% of graduates routinely are accepted into postsecondary education now (in a community where only 7.4% of residents age 25 and older have earned any type of postsecondary degree)
 - The high school graduation rate increased from 47% in 2009 to 77% in 2011 (the latest data available)
 - Quality of Life Plans for both neighborhood areas (Near West and West Indy) where most of our families live identify education as a top priority and call for high school graduation and postsecondary education as strategic goals for each child in the Indianapolis Near Westside
 - Since its inception in 2006, our grassroots Dollars for Scholars chapter has awarded 179 graduates a total \$214,102 in financial aid for postsecondary education
 - In 2009, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Coalition for Community Schools cited Washington as a community high school “raising graduation and college-going rates.”
 - 2. Transformative relationship established between IUPUI, school, and community**
 - The leader of a Washington, DC education think tank in 2011 cited GWCHS as the most comprehensive university-assisted community school in the country
 - The University of Pennsylvania Netter Center for Community Partnerships funds a new Midwest Center for University-Assisted Community Schools at IUPUI to promote adaptation of the GWCHS experience
 - Ongoing hundreds of IUPUI students and staff members from departments across campus participate annually at GWCHS in a variety of education supports, including tutoring and mentoring, afterschool activities, and management of the school wellness center that is open to the public weekday afternoons/evening and provide personal trainers as well as individual health assessments
 - After Washington’s reopening, IUPUI-facilitated Westside Education Task Force helped convince Indianapolis Public Schools district to build a new elementary school in historic Haughville across the river from the campus in 2006
 - About 200 preservice education students at IUPUI take their courses in GWCHS each semester
 - Routine engagement in neighborhood improvement efforts take place between residents, IUPUI, and school representatives
 - 3. Sustained one of the nation’s most comprehensive community schools more than a decade**
 - More than 70 community partners collaborate in providing 98% of the students at least one support service the past 2 years
 - Community partner Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center has continued full engagement as lead partner and fiscal agent, employing onsite community schools professionals full time, guiding collaborative funding plans and acquisition, and handling extensive accounting services; provides full-time Parent/Community Coordinators to two nearby feeder elementary schools
 - Secured \$2.4 million over 5 years in Federal Full-Service Community School funding in 2008
 - Partnering USA Funds has invested more than \$1 million in college-preparatory supports and student scholarship awards at GWCHS since 2005
 - Recognized with the inaugural National Community School Award in 2006 by the Coalition for Community Schools
 - Anchor-partner neighborhood centers Christamore House, Hawthorne Community Center, and Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center collectively provide employment, social service, preschool/child care, afterschool, adult learning, and related supports for more than 9,000 GWCHS families and their neighbors annually
 - 4. Helped to create a school climate that is welcoming to parents and families, community, and conducive to learning**
 - Monthly Community Advisory Council provides school community stakeholders a voice and opportunity to collaboratively align resources with academic and social development needs
 - A 2010 Indiana University study showed that Washington’s minority students—notably Hispanic males—were the highest achieving students in the school
 - The student population mirrors an essentially balanced neighborhood ethnicity that is 32% African American, 31% Hispanic, 31% White, and 6% other
 - More than 600 of 940 students are enrolled in the “Hub” afterschool program that meets schooldays until 6 p.m. when participants finish dinner and board late buses for home

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 1
Top Five Achievements/GWCHS Community Schools Initiative from 2000 to 2010 (*Continued*)

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- In 2011, parent engagement increased to 1,012 individual participants, nearly a 100% increase over the number in 2009
 - Visitors often comment on the positive school climate; in 2010 a longtime guest award presenter said that in her years of visiting schools, she had never before been in one “filled with such love”
 - Students in Spring 2012 Youth As Resources presentation expressed that bullying is “not a problem in this school”
- 5. Contributed to the Indianapolis Near Westside being considered a great place to work and live**
- Piloted at Washington, the onsite Juvenile Probation Officer reported his caseload decreased 50% within the first five years and now every high school in the county has a probation officer on site
 - About the time the school reopened, new business development along adjoining Washington Street corridor began in both directions; today, developers are building affordable housing in nearby Central Greens, former home of a state mental hospital complex
 - A 2004 West Indianapolis Development Corporation neighborhood survey of 100 households identified our public schools the area’s top asset
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Note. IUPUI = Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; GWCHS = George Washington Community High School.

federal Full-Service Community School funding from Congress. The GWCHS grant expanded support services for students, families, and residents, including afterschool and weekend hours, and recognizes GWCHS as a model for school/community engagement. Resident involvement in GWCHS has spawned involvement in other educational initiatives (e.g., charter schools) and strategic planning in other areas (e.g., health, safety). The GWCHS Alumni Association remains active in bringing community support to the school and neighborhood residents have access to school-based facilities (i.e., swimming pool, wellness center, community meeting room) for free or nominal cost. The presence of a thriving school has contributed to economic revitalization of the neighborhood. Buildings that were boarded are now thriving businesses. The growth, paired with community planning, has resulted in establishing a Westside business association.

The success of the GWCHS/IUPUI collaboration aligns with the findings of Bryk et al. (2010) for school turnaround success. However, the GWCHS success demonstrates an alternative model that started with community and university engagement that influenced the other four factors. The Westside Education Taskforce had met for 3 years before the reopening of GWCHS, worked with the IPS district to advocate for a community school, worked with the principal prior to the school’s opening to develop a shared leadership model, developed collaborative arrangements between the school and IUPUI and between the school and community agencies, and established resources that strengthened residential support. In addition, IUPUI received grants that provided professional development activities for GWCHS teachers during summers on service learning pedagogy that enhanced community connections, engaged learning, and the instructional climate and the School of Education has provided in-service staff development in understanding multiple cultures and curriculum adaptation. IUPUI staff and faculty were also active members of the GWCHS Community Advisory Council, PARC-led Fitness Center, and swimming pool that brought community residents to the school during the day and evening. Thus, the GWCHS case study broadens the possible ways that necessary and sufficient conditions for turnaround success in challenged public schools can occur and demonstrates how strong community and

parent engagement, aided by higher education involvement, can stimulate, support, and enhance collaborative leadership, instruction, professional development, and the learning climate of a school. Therefore, the social base that Bryk et al. describes can generate from the community and support the development of a community school with a positive learning environment and achievement gains.

Because of the success of this partnership, multiple Indianapolis representatives at the 2008 Coalition for Community Schools National Forum in Portland, Oregon, identified a need for more coordination and consistent communication among local stakeholders interested in advancing the community schools model. As a result, the IUPUI Office of Neighborhood Partnerships began coordinating the Central Indiana Community Schools Network at the request of USA Funds. Regular coordination meetings led to weekly, summer, and monthly school-year partnership development discussions with 20 local community school coordinators. In addition, other forms of technical assistance and training work have focused on Washington's feeder elementary schools, Howe Community High School, and the university-assisted community school initiative focused on three Indianapolis Eastside elementary schools.

The GWCHS/IUPUI partnership provided foundational work for organizing visits and tours, publishing scholarly articles, and making presentations at professional conferences on best practices for individuals interested in issues related to community health, service learning, science education, campus/community relationships, community/school partnerships, and academic turnaround. The school has partnered in advocacy and building public relations to support the community school model and adaptation for other communities. The GWCHS/IUPUI partnership now provides technical assistance and training for new coordinators at other schools.

The GWCHS/IUPUI partnership also contributed to the formation of the IUPUI-led Talent Alliance that works to coordinate K-12 and higher education institutions, government, business, and youth service providers for a continuum of P-20 service in Central Indiana. The GWCHS Director of School/Community Engagement was a founding member of the Alliance team. The relationship between IUPUI and GWCHS has also positioned IUPUI in national and international conversations on engaging universities in a regionally coordinated fashion with partner organizations in underresourced neighborhoods and schools.

COMMITMENT TO REGIONAL WORK

The vision of the primary stakeholders at IUPUI (e.g., Center for Service and Learning, School of Education, Center for Urban and Multicultural Education, Community Learning Network) has been to share the work about civic engagement of the campus in general and the specific success of the GWCHS/IUPUI partnership broadly. Information about the community school model has been shared with visitors from across the country as well as groups from Brazil, Canada, China, Great Britain, Japan, South Africa, and the Education Ministry of Israel. Whether discussing this work on a panel, from a podium, across a table with small groups, or in large conference rooms, the GWCHS/IUPUI experience is a unique model because it was instigated by the community and in a middle/high school setting. Nationally, many of the major community school movements have more fully developed in elementary school settings. Replications of community schools also often find it challenging to secure the buy-in of both school administrators and the school community. From the beginning, GWCHS had the benefit of major stakeholders and key decision

makers sharing a vision. This experience uniquely positions the GWCHS/IUPUI partnership to assist in the facilitation and development of university/school and school/community relationships in ways that can facilitate the strengthening of the other areas of Bryk et al.'s (2010) model.

Community schools are one of the only school reform strategies specifically designed to address both academic and nonacademic issues by integrating and leveraging funds, working across silos, and partnering with local organizations to maximize resources (Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, & Pearson, 2010). IUPUI has already secured commitments from funders who have followed the work and see value in its replication throughout the city, state, and region, illustrating a university's capacity to leverage resources. In addition, there is a strong partnership with the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, the Coalition for Community Schools, and the New York City Children's Aid Society National Center for Community Schools in sustaining IUPUI's school/community work and serving as a resource nationally.

IUPUI and GWCHS continue to promote and guide the development of university-assisted community schools by formalizing technical assistance and expanding to work with other university/community collaborations, using IUPUI, GWCHS, and its feeder elementary schools as training ground.

Key components of the regional center's work are to

- Advocate at the local, state, and national levels to leverage funding for community school coordinators, and replicate the university-assisted community school model in a comprehensive and systematic way;
- Offer training and professional development for community school coordinators, principals, partnerships, and other interested stakeholders through the development and implementation of consulting services, workshops, site visits, and regional conferences;
- Evaluate the implementation of university-assisted community schools;
- Establish a repository of community school resources, including a website and presentations platform; and
- Convene annual meetings with local and regional advisory groups, reflecting authentic community engagement and collaborative leadership identified by Bryk et al.

With an international reputation for implementing a depth of campus/community engagement, IUPUI has the experience to draw upon for learning opportunities with other postsecondary institutions. A key component of such collaboration includes advocacy for community schools as a comprehensive, community-based education reform model. Families and communities are an essential force in turning around low-performing schools if family/school/community engagement moves from "a checklist to a full engagement plan" (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010, p. 15). Other school communities demonstrate the value of campus engagement. University-assisted professional development for the faculty of a community school in Port Chester, New York, has caught the attention of the Coalition for Community Schools. Dr. JoAnne Ferrara, Chairperson of Curriculum and Instruction at Manhattanville College, and Thomas Edison School teachers Barbara Terracciano and Amy Simmons provide firsthand accounts of teacher development in their school on the Coalition blog, April 12, 2012:

In our university-assisted partnership experience, addressing the needs of teachers is equally as important as helping students to achieve academic success. Those of us that work in professional development settings (PDS) believe that student achievement is deeply dependent upon many factors

including the quality of teacher education, opportunities for professional development, and access to educational research. Teachers learn best in collaborative, collegial school cultures where their professional growth and well-being are the norm rather than the exception. For more than a decade, Manhattanville College in Purchase, N.Y., and the Thomas A. Edison School have sustained a PDS partnership focused on providing opportunities for practicing teachers, pre-service teachers, and college faculty to participate in a rich learning community. Teachers benefit from the professional growth opportunities made available in the strong integrated learning setting of a community school with a PDS component. Community schools/PDSs have the potential to create environments where teachers engage in rich learning experiences beyond their daily life within the classroom. (Ferrara, Simmons, & Terracciano, 2012, para. 2)

The Midwest Center draws upon similar experience with IUPUI faculty at GWCHS and elsewhere to promote university-assisted professional development. Dr. Medina, a member of the Midwest Center leadership team, has both taught most of her university courses and facilitated professional development by faculty at GWCHS over the past decade. The focus of teacher preparation and professional development courses centers on social justice as preservice teachers and licensed teachers recognize the value of community partnerships, connectedness, civic engagement, and collective impact. The underpinning theme, social justice in education, requires a critical orientation to the status quo and possibilities for social change. Incorporated in the course are student-centered opportunities that entail critically questioning biases and assumptions, debunking deficit learning theories while recognizing the social assets within communities that legitimize cultural knowledge. Drawing on the work of Paulo Freire (1970), students identify school concerns that impact student learning, talk with teachers and students to define issues, and engage in problem posing and consciousness-raising around social, political, and economic issues that impact academic achievement.

In addition, Seattle University's work with its nearby Bailey Gatzert neighborhood, a Promise Neighborhoods place-based initiative, earned the most recent President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll and Presidential Award, as did the University of Pennsylvania and IUPUI. Bailey Gatzert Elementary Community School Coordinator Eddie Lincoln was quoted in a *Seattle Times* report as identifying their biggest resource as "the college students" (Long, 2012). Meanwhile, Rita Axelroth-Hodges of the Netter Center noted in a recent Coalition for Community Schools article that by giving students of all ages opportunities to contribute to solving real-world problems in their local communities, the university-assisted community school model can make a significant difference on campus and in the community, and develop active, caring, and creative citizens of a democratic society (Axelroth-Hodges, 2012).

By implementing the principles, partnerships help advance the quality of life in their communities as well as institutional core missions of research, teaching, and civic development. This argument has considerable historical grounding. The founding purpose of both colonial colleges and historically black universities was to educate young people for service to others. Fulfilling America's democratic promise was the founding purpose of land-grant universities. The urban-serving mission for higher education dates from the late 19th century, notably the founding of John Hopkins University, the first "modern university," in 1876. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been re-emergence of engaged scholarship, with leading academics and university presidents making the case that universities – particularly urban ones – would better fulfill their core academic functions of advancing knowledge and learning if they focused on improving conditions in their cities and local communities. (Axelroth-Hodges, 2012)

Demonstrating such a philosophy, principles that guide the collaborative work of the Midwest Center include

1. Engaging with universities and school communities that desire but are not mandated to engage in implementation of a community schools model;
2. Tailoring the GWCHS/IUPUI model to fit with other communities and schools, recognizing that the structure, goals, and outcomes will not necessarily be the same but rather customized for individual school community circumstances;
3. Facilitating practical trainings and workshops that assist both (a) university faculty, students, and staff and (b) K-12 faculty, staff, and community stakeholders to develop strategic plans; and
4. Sharing research findings related to community and educational outcomes achievement in developing university-assisted community schools, including Bryk's identified essentials.

Engaging universities and school communities is important to the success of the Midwest Center for University-Assisted Community Schools, but the process that takes place before implementing a community school model is more important. Partnerships can be created for a variety of reasons; however, according to Harkavy and Hartley (2009), successful partnerships should be democratic, egalitarian, transparent, and collegial. The relationships are built on the premise that one organization does not make decisions without input from the others. University/community interaction has been commonly referred to as unidirectional and with actions representative of a top-down approach; however, higher education institutions need to move beyond these methods to a more collaborative interaction with the community (Bringle, Officer, Grim, & Hatcher, 2009; Harkavy & Hartley, 2009). Relationships developed between institutions of higher education and community schools will be effective only when both parties feel they are represented in the decision-making process. The Midwest Center's collaborative work is guided by the principle that both parties enter into the relationship mutually with neither one mandated to collaborate. This helps engage both parties and in-turn develop strong relationships focused on improving the community school engagement in the neighborhood.

The Midwest Center recognizes that not all community schools and organizations have the same needs and therefore one model will not apply to all. The customized approach taken by the Midwest Center allows programs to move beyond technical and institutional ideas of reform (Baum, 2003). Traditional reform models are often prescriptive and rigid. According to Rowan and Robert (2007), although implementation fidelity is a seemingly useful goal, many researchers worry that a focus on faithful implementation—especially when accompanied by tight restriction on teacher autonomy and a corresponding focus on a narrow band of teaching practices—will have negative effects inside schools (Rowan & Robert, 2007). Thus, community school models must be adapted to the needs of the community school and surrounding neighborhoods.

The third principle that guides the Midwest Center is the facilitation of trainings for community school personnel as well as individuals involved at the university level. The Midwest Center's training opportunities are intended to address particular needs of schools, communities, university campuses, and other partner organizations. Recognizing that sharing research and findings is a key aspect in developing community school initiatives, future research by the Midwest Center will address the following:

- How the impact of university/school partnerships from both sides is measured – are we establishing a pipeline for students into higher education and back into their communities?
- To what extent are universities authentically engaged in student achievement across the P-20 continuum in our geographic focus area?

CONCLUSION

School, community, and university partnerships are not a new phenomenon. At IUPUI, faculty and staff have responded to the call and worked collaboratively on factors subsequently identified by Bryk et al. (2010) as critical for success. Urban universities have a responsibility to work with urban public schools and enhance professional preparation. Thus, the commitment to urban schools and communities requires more than a vision of collaboration; it requires development of professional competencies by university faculty in partnership with public school administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders. This model and the long-standing relationships with IUPUI, IPS schools, and partner community organizations have resulted in mutually beneficial partnerships, often sharing data that translates knowledge to practice. As partners, they developed initiatives that address needs and transform social conditions of school communities. A prime example is the partnership with GWCHS. Aspects of this partnership make it exceptional when compared to existing university-assisted models. GWCHS as a full-service community school aligns student-centered services in the school and extends into the community. The model links IUPUI with school and community-based organizations that aim to create borderless and boundless initiatives where lines between the two are difficult to discern (Dryfoos, 2000, Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005). This model is successful because it promotes partnerships with family and community groups through reciprocity, collaboration, and effective communication.

Evident in the egalitarian IUPUI/GWCHS partnership is a keen understanding of the capacity and limitations that contribute to a committed collective process that aims at social actions. Perseverance drives efforts that attempt to dismantle structural inequalities and unfair educational policies in public schools. Key to this idea is acknowledging a comprehensive organizational environment that includes long-standing community groups, parents, university administrators, and faculty, as well as graduate and undergraduate students. Creative strategies for bridging structural differences include recognizing multicultural assets, civic engagement, and a long-term commitment to community planning. The Midwest Center for University-Assisted Community Schools provides technical assistance and training for school communities and universities interested in implementing and strengthening the community schools model and university collaboration. Although the work of the center draws upon the extensive IUPUI/GWCHS experience and that of its feeder elementary schools, emerging initiatives in other communities like Bryk et al.'s study in Chicago promise to supplement this experience, particularly in deepening university-assisted research and further capturing data to document results from strategic school/community engagement. Although we presume that institutions of higher education can leverage resources to benefit K-12 school reform, further examination and documentation of the capacity and institutional alignment is needed for institutions of higher education to be further engaged in a meaningful way.

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