MEASURING the EFFECTIVENESS OF an ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Collaborative in Improving Student Outcomes in Newark, New Jersey

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An increasing concern in public administration is the development of effective collaborative approaches to public problems through partnerships between government, private and nonprofit organizations. To address this concern, this research evaluated the relative efficacy of a newly developed collaborative alternative education initiative in the Newark public schools in comparison to the existing drop-out prevention program and the elements of the collaboration that may have contributed to these outcomes.

In 2007, Newark's graduation rate was 63% according to the new graduation calculation method approved by the National Governors Association, Graduation Counts Compact of 2005 (NPS, 2008). In 1999, The Newark Public Schools initiated The Twilight Program, a drop-out prevention program designed to meet academic, social and emotional needs of students that could not be met in the traditional high school setting. However, in 2003, when Newark's Office of Alternative Education (OAE) determined that the existing Twilight Programs had not fully addressed student needs, the Newark Public Schools added a research-based alternative education model built through a partnership with the City of Newark, local and state government agencies, Essex County College, private foundations, and local community organizations.

There is a broad consensus that collaboration can mobilize a broad array of expert experience and broaden a program's political basis of legitimacy. In practice, however, these partnerships are developing ahead of empirical research supporting their efficacy or delineating which specific elements of collaboration are most critical to observed outcomes. Informed by principles of process outcome and organizational collaboration, this dissertation compares the relative efficacy of alternative education placements in two Newark-based initiatives and evaluates the collaborative process among stakeholders in these initiatives.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this dissertation answers research questions: Does participating in an alternative high school initiative program make a quantifiable difference in the path of a student's academic career? and Was the AHSI collaboration successful?

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative study suggest that overall performance of the AHSI students is significantly higher than in the Twilight program. However, the achievement had less to do with the collaborative process and more to do with the resources.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my youngest brother, Brandon Genao. His innocent,

youthful mind continues to remind me of the importance of educating and why I am

always striving to be better

Acknowledgements

So many people motivated, encouraged, and inspired me to complete this dissertation.

My gratitude will never be noted by just listing their names because their efforts and

support will always carry on with everything I do. My professors, friends, and family

have done beyond what any words could describe and my love and recognition for them

will remain acknowledged. I am forever grateful and with all sincerity, Gracias!

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Chapter 1

Recently, considerable state, federal, and public attention has been directed to low high-school graduation rates. An estimated 1.2 million students drop out of high school each year (America's Promise Alliance, 2008). "Diploma Counts," a report by *Education Week* and the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, projected that three out of ten students would not have graduated in 2008. According to the new graduation calculation method standardized by the National Governors Association, Graduation Counts Compact of 2005 (National Governors Task Force, 2005), in 2007 the graduation rate in Newark, New Jersey, was 63 percent, which indicates that almost 40 percent of students who began high school have dropped out. This is considerably higher than the national average.

It is generally agreed that dropping out of high school seriously disadvantages youth. In addition, high dropout rates also disadvantage the surrounding communities. Researchers Neild and Balfanz (2006, p. 3) observe that cities with high dropout rates have "fewer economic development opportunities, acquire less tax revenue, and experience high social service costs, more crime, less civic participation, and higher levels of concentrated and inter-generational poverty." Thus, preventing students from dropping out of school is a credible community-development strategy as well as an important public commitment to youth.

Researchers in Chicago have created an "on track" indicator which appears to be fairly accurate in predicting, by the end of the freshman year, which students will

graduate from high school. Students who are on-track are four times more likely to graduate than those who are not[1].

Presently, there is obviously a catastrophe in high schools in the United States. Nationally, barely 30 percent of rising freshmen can read at grade level (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). More than 1.2 million U.S. high school students drop out every year— roughly 7,000 each school day (Editorial Projects in Education, 2007). In a survey presented by the National Center for Education Statistics, 42% of freshmen in community colleges and 20 percent of freshmen in public four-year institutions require remedial courses in reading, writing, or math to handle college-level work. After analyzing several assessments of employer satisfaction, it is apparent that the skills high school graduates have performed in recent years have expressed discontentment.   In 2005, 60 percent of U.S. manufacturing companies surveyed said that high school graduates were poorly prepared for entry-level jobs (National Association of Manufacturers, 2005). Employers and college professors by large majorities nationwide say public high schools are graduating students with just fair or poor skills in writing, grammar and basic math, and most do not consider a high school degree as any guarantee a student has mastered the basics. (Public Agenda 2002)

For the most part, Black and Latino students do not perform as well as their white counterparts. Instead of motivating social equity, our education system heightens a present divide for our Black and Latino students.   This is exemplified by the 2,000 U.S. high schools—called "dropout factories" and serving mainly minority youth—

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[1] Montgomery, Nicholas (Spring 2008). *Making the Transition.* Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research

whose students stand only a 60% or less chance of graduating within four years (Balfanz & Legters, 2004).

The penalty of this predicament for dropouts and for the public at large, are relentless. A high school diploma is barely a qualification for the greater part of employment. Nearly five years ago, a student who dropped out of high schools in the United States could be paid only $10, 000 less than a graduating student. On average, those with no high school diploma earn $260,000 less over the course of a lifetime than those who graduate from high school (Rouse, 2005).

Furthermore, high school dropouts are usually higher tax consumers instead of taxpayers, have a higher rate of welfare recipients as well as public health services, and commit crimes. Researchers estimate that each high school dropout costs society at large about $209,000 over the course of his or her lifetime (Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, May 2008, 2007).

Although times have changed, the educational system has not kept up to par. Our education system has not reformed in a manner that would allow our students to compete on an international level and have not met the ethical and financial aspects vital for graduating all students. At the time the "modern" high school system was established in the early 20th century, only 10%of 14- to 17-year-olds attended high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). High school was considered a treat among the upper-class families only and up until the early 1900s, students were not qualified to attend elementary schools in all states. Getting a well-paying job without a high school diploma was not simply possible; it was the norm ("Public Education," 2007).

There is clearly a crisis in U.S. high schools. Nationally, barely 30 percent of rising freshmen can read at grade level (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). More than 1.2 million U.S. high school students drop out every year—roughly 7,000 each school day (Editorial Projects in Education, 2007). Forty-two percent of freshmen in community colleges and 20 percent of freshmen in public four-year institutions require remedial courses in reading, writing, or math to handle college-level work (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Nationwide, a range of programs have been designed to prevent drop-outs and support reentry, particularly at high schools whose yearly dropout rates exceed the state average. Two of the better-known drop-out prevention programs are the America's Promise Alliance and the National Dropout Prevention Center. These programs aim to raise public awareness of the dropout crisis; assure collaboration between the private-business, nonprofit, public, and school sectors; connect high risk schools with one another; and generate publicity to reinforce and sustain their work to assist underprivileged youth and motivate local management to become a part of community-school initiatives.

The indicators of vulnerable youth (students who may be at risk of dropping out, students that are seeking a more rigorous learning environment and students that are experiencing academic failure) are fairly common knowledge and agreed upon by most. However, there has been a gap in the area of collection and analysis of the data, specific to the city of supports this "common knowledge". The Association for Children of New Jersey, located in Newark, conducts an annual assessment (Kids Count) that provides a snapshot of the state of youth in New Jersey. Still, site specific study is needed to gain a

full grasp of the issue of disconnected youth and the factors that contribute to their disengagement.

In 2004, the District's Alternative Education Task Force requested that the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Testing assist in developing and implementing a needs assessment process to identify strengths and gaps in the alternative programs. The assessment provided insight as to the perceptions, experiences and outcomes of our stakeholders. As a result, it was concluded that a reform of existing alternative education programs and administrative practices would be needed to effectively engage youth who are traditionally referred to alternative education, and transform existing programs.

The capstone of the collaborative initiative is the development of effective educational options for youth. Alternative Education programs have been proven to help decrease the dropout rate, reverse the student failure rate, and stem the onset of student disengagement.

The Newark collaborative was admitted as a member of the Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) Place-Based Partnership; a national network of youth development organizations convened by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the National League of Cities and the Big Picture Company. AHSI provides the technical assistance and facilitative support in implementation of high quality alternative education models characterized by rigor, relevance, and relationships. Although these models have demonstrated success in helping youth to graduate from high school and achieve college success, evaluations have not exposed what has not worked or what could improve the programs.

Alternative Education

In Newark, drop-out prevention efforts focused on alternative-education initiatives. In 2007, the Newark Public Schools Office of Alternative Education (OAE) began a coordinated program with the City of Newark, local and state government agencies, Essex County College, private foundations, and local community organizations to create a one-stop youth center, the Youth Education and Employment Success Center (YE²S Center) as part of its drop-out prevention efforts?

Historically, the Newark Public School system has worked to curtail the number of students dropping out and to generate new strategies to identify and remove the obstacles to student retention. The Office of Alternative Education (OAE) of the Newark Public Schools (NPS) has identified a number of reasons for student drop-outs, including family problems, poor attendance, course failure, gang involvement, lack of interest in school, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and interaction with the juvenile or criminal justice systems, as well as other mitigating factors. Given the prevalence of these factors among Newark youth, the Newark Public School's Office of Alternative Education (OAE) through reflective examination, determined that the existing program, The Twilight Programs, had not fully addressed student needs and called on Newark to adopt research-based alternative education models. In an effort to address these problems and re-engage disconnected youth, in 2003 OAE embarked on an Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) partnership with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Alternative High School Initiative is a network of youth-development organizations with more than 250 sites nationwide, committed to creating educational opportunities for young people for whom traditional school settings have not been successful. The goal of

the initiative is to develop programs that will "help to decrease the dropout rate, reverse the student failure rate, and stem the onset of student disengagement in the existing learning environments offered in Newark Public Schools" (OAE, 2008) and "prepare young people through programs characterized by rigor, relevance, and relationships, to graduate from high school and achieve college success" (AHSI, 2008 p.1). The initiative also works to extend various academic avenues for at-risk students in order to avert drop-outs or to engage dropout youth and encourage re-enrollment in school.

Evidence of progress in these quality alternatives for high school youth is generally based on such indicators as increased high school graduation rates, decreased dropout rates, higher rates of college entry, and preliminary signs that young people at high risk for dropping out will succeed in and complete postsecondary education. Together AHSI organizations present families, districts, and policy stakeholders with a portfolio of small, alternative high school options. A universal set of distinguishers is evident in the design of all AHSI schools: authentic learning, teaching, and performance assessment; personalized school culture; shared leadership and responsibility; supportive partnerships; and a focus on the future of students. These features are assumed to link directly to the attainment of program goals such as a reduction of dropout rates, increases in college entry, and early indications of post-secondary education success (National League of Cities, 2008).

The current research compares student outcomes and retention in the Twilight Programs with outcomes and retention from more recent alternative programs introduced to the district via the collaborative Alternative High School Initiative, Performance Learning Center (PLC), and Gateway to College (GTC). I explore the collaboration

process among the Alternative Education programs. In particular, the research will

consider the role of outside agencies, such as government, local authorities, and other

organizations, in supporting the collaborative process; explore the factors or conditions

that drive collaborative practice; identify those collaborations that stand out as best-

practice models; and delineate which factors are critical to these models. The two

alternative education programs whose collaboration processes will be evaluated are the

Performance Learning Center and Gateway to College. I will also look into the Twilight

Programs designed to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students who

could not adapt to the traditional high school setting. Students enrolled in the Twilight

Program have repeated course failures, repeated suspensions, repeated behavioral

referrals, chronic absence, and a high incidence of class-cutting, and substance abuse

while enrolled in their traditional schools. Students in the Twilight Program currently

range from 14 through 20 years of age. Their school day begins at 3:00 pm and ends at

7:30 pm. The Twilight Programs are housed in 8 traditional high school setting

throughout Newark, New Jersey

I employed a mixed methodological approach. The impact of partnerships was

assessed by comparing student outcomes via grades and retention rates at the AHSI to the

Twilight Programs. I also considered the effect of the collaborative process in eliciting

these outcomes as well as the likelihood of other process variables playing a role.

Descriptions of the AHSI programs under study

The study focused on the interrelationship and effectiveness of AHSI programs

compared with the Newark Public Schools' Twilight Program. The evaluative study will

focus on the relative effectiveness of two of the programs, Performance Learning Center and Gateway to College.

There are several factors to consider with respect to collaboration in the development of these model programs. First, stakeholders need to understand the framework of the educational initiatives. This is necessary, in part, because one of their key functions is to bring the right people to the table as well as to help the collaboration attract additional resources. Several different aspects of leadership influence the collaborative process. In particular, local leadership is important, as local leaders can provide goals, and links to others. In their research on partnerships, Sturtevant and Lange 2003 shared that local leaders can also provide

- legitimacy – in terms of collaboration, local leadership can legitimize the plan in the eyes of the community and elicit additional support and interest;
- local knowledge – volunteer agencies, local officials, and even local field staff bring local knowledge to the table; and
- political influence – without local leadership, a collaboration may lack political influence and the will to get things done.

Another important aspect of leadership is the idea of intermediaries. An intermediary is an individual or organization that brings networks and resources to the collaborative process, and bridges gaps in information and resources. Collaboration involves diverse stakeholders working together to resolve conflicts or achieve goals that cannot be achieved alone.

Performance Learning Center

Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) are small, nontraditional high schools geared towards students who are not succeeding in the traditional school setting—

students, who typically experience poor academic achievement, are chronically late to school or absent, and who have other risk factors that predispose them to dropping out of school. PLCs create a business-like learning environment and emphasize personal support with individual relationships and an intensive academic program anchored by an online instructional system and project-based learning. The centers also employ service learning, job shadowing, internships, mentoring and dual enrollment with technical and four-year colleges to keep students interested in school while preparing them for life. PLCs can be located in off-campus or detached centers, and use a small school model that generally enrolls 75 to 150 students per center. The first PLC opened up in 2002 in Georgia. Today, there are more than 30 operational PLCs in the national network, the majority of them in Georgia. Through an investment by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in the Communities in Schools national office, the PLC initiative has expanded to North Carolina, Washington state, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. With the support of a particular foundation, a PLC network has developed in Newark, New Jersey, as well. By 2010, 47 PLCs are expected to be operational and serving more than 5,000 students.

To enroll students in a PLC, school administrators and parents submit referrals to a student-selection committee. Students must successfully complete an interview process, take a Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASI) assessment, and sign (with their parents) a contract detailing their obligations. A seat-time waiver from the state department of education gives PLC students the opportunity to work at their own pace, first making up classes they've failed before moving on to additional coursework. The

time it takes to graduate from a PLC is flexible and depends on the number of credits a student needs.

Ultimately, PLCs offer credit-deficient students a way to obtain credits without losing additional time. The PLCs are part of the regular public school system; indeed, PLCs rely on strong financial and philosophical relationships with school districts. Students can graduate with their original high school class if they meet all requirements on time or they can graduate with their PLC peers. To graduate, PLC students must take the same required classes and successfully pass the same end-of-year course tests expected of all district high school students. To be sure students are on track to graduate; PLC staff collects and analyzes data on individual academic performance and school attendance on a weekly and monthly basis.[i]

The Gateway to College

Gateway to College offers a dual enrollment option to students who were formerly high school drop outs; providing an opportunity to young people who had given up on school-or those who felt school had given up on them.

Through the Gateway to College program, each student receives a detailed, individualized academic plan and ongoing support from a resource specialist who serves as a coach, mentor and advisor. During the students' first semester, they take classes exclusively with other Gateway to College students, including a "college survival and success" course that focuses on study habits, time management, test-taking strategies and other techniques for succeeding in college. After the first semester, students are mainstreamed into courses with other college students.

Since 1968, GTC has been serving youth 16 to 20 years old who have dropped out of school or are significantly behind in credits and unlikely to graduate. The dual-credit program allows students to earn a high school diploma while progressing toward a college degree or certificate.

According to the Gateway to College reports, students learn how to succeed in an educational setting, under the guidance of a caring team of instructors and resource specialists with experience and interest in working with dropout youth. In their first term, students learn in a small community of peers. This experience builds their academic and personal skills, preparing them for the transition to college courses with the general student population. In addition to reading, writing, and math, students take a college skills class to learn and practice the habits of mind needed to transform themselves into successful college students.

After completing the initial Foundation term, students transition to the comprehensive campus, taking classes with the general student population. Students focus their studies in a "pathway" or major that is aligned with high school completion requirements and college degree or certificate requirements. This allows students to maximize the acquisition of college credits toward their postsecondary goals. The courses are aligned to provide dual credit for high school and college. Students achieve a high school diploma and significant college credit toward an Associate degree or certificate.

In Newark, the Gateway programs are an integral part of the Essex Community College. All of the classes and staff offices are on campus instead of Newark Public School district office. The accessibility allowed for and flexible class times fit nontraditional students' schedules. The program adheres to the college calendar, and

some students take summer classes in order to graduate before "aging out." Students have

full access to college courses, facilities, and support services. Students feel like college

students because they *are* full-fledged college students. To be eligible for the program,

students must meet the following criteria: They must be between 16 and 20 years old;

have dropped out or be on the verge of dropping out of high school; be behind in credits

for age and grade level; have a GPA of 2.0 or below (or exhibits other risk factors); live

in an eligible district; have expressed the goal of earning a diploma; and read at an 8th

grade level or higher. Students are selected through an intensive intake and evaluation

process. Student reading, writing, grammar, math, and affective skills are assessed prior

to their acceptance. Network-approved selection tools and guidelines are used to assess a

student's chance for success while maintaining the Gateway mission.

The program serves as a clearinghouse for reconnecting youth to education. Those

students not selected are counseled to guide them to a better option. These options may

include GED, ESL/ELL, K–12 or college alternatives, and community-based programs.

New students begin each college term (including summer if possible).[ii]

Research Purpose

There is increasing pressure for school districts to assume responsibility for

helping students avoid school failure as well as provide the tools to be successful

academically. Efforts to raise academic standards in public schools enjoy wide bipartisan

support and led earlier this year to the enactment of President Bush's No Child Left

Behind Act. In demanding greater accountability from schools and educators, the act

provides stiff penalties for schools that fail to raise achievement, such as reorganization

and replacement of staff.

To get a share of the new money, states and school districts must adopt one of four approaches to fix their struggling schools:

_Turnaround Model: The school district must replace the principal and at least half of the school staff, adopt a new governance structure for the school, and implement a new or revised instructional program. In his remarks, Obama said a Rhode Island school that recently fired all its teachers is an example of how there needs to be accountability.

_Restart Model: The school district must close and reopen the school under the management of a charter school operator, a charter management organization or an educational management organization. A restarted school would be required to enroll, within the grades it serves, former students who wish to attend.

_School Closure: The school district must close the failing school and enroll the students in other, higher-achieving schools in the district.

_Transformational Model: The school must address four areas, including teacher effectiveness, instruction, learning and teacher planning time, and operational flexibility.

The administration also is putting $50 million into dropout prevention strategies, including personalized and individual instruction and support to keep students engaged in learning, and using data to identify students at risk of failure and help them with the transition to high school and college.

The Associated Press reported President Barack Obama's address regarding the nation's school dropout epidemic, proposing $900 million to states and school districts that agree to drastically change or even shutter their worst performing schools.

President Obama's persistent stems from as many schools continue to struggle to get children to graduation, a profound problem in a rich, powerful nation. Only about 70 percent of entering high school freshmen go on to graduate. The problem affects Blacks and Latinos at particularly high rates. Obama has been using federal money as leverage to push schools to raise standards and get more children ready for college or work. It is a

task that former President George W. Bush and Congress, along with many leaders before them, have long taken on, but the challenge is steep. Obama's 2011 budget proposal includes $900 million for School Turnaround Grants. That money is in addition to $3.5 billion to help low-performing schools that were included in last year's economic stimulus bill.

Recently, this responsibility has been extended to proactive strategies designed to curtail school-leaving among high-risk youth and to reengage disconnected youth. Local government agencies should not bear this responsibility alone.

As the recognition grows that high drop-out rates put the host community at risk for economic failure, school systems find themselves in new relationships not only with state and federal government, but also with a widening spectrum of other public and private organizations. These new relationships call for new ways of collaborating and local strategic and managerial responses that complement the usual governmental and bureaucratic processes, bringing what Agranoff and McGuire call "jurisdiction-based management" into play (2004).

Collaboration in drop-out prevention reflects a growing trend for local governments to construct collaborative networks involving a range of organizations to address a range of problems affecting America's cities. The problems are not necessarily new: public managers in both state and local government tackle the same challenges, including homelessness and a lack of affordable housing, joblessness, juvenile crime, and diminished civic involvement. A core issue in addressing each of these problems is the tension between relying on the traditional agency officially responsible for the problem

and the need for multiple partners. For instance, as it became apparent that juvenile crime cannot be dealt with effectively by tougher law enforcement alone, a growing role in addressing the problem has been given to youth programs, educational opportunities, and mentors. To prevent these parallel efforts from being piecemeal, however, it is necessary to build partnerships and to address the multiple challenges effective collaboration poses regardless of the substantive concern.

A traditional focus of public administration has been the challenge of governing bureaucracy. But in response to today's policy challenges, government increasingly fulfills its duties by managing networks composed of organizations with diverse structures, a trend described in *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector* (Kettl, 2004). Under this model, public managers rely less on public employees playing traditional roles and more on a web of partnerships, contracts, and alliances to deliver essential services. Here, the orientation of managers is horizontal as well as hierarchical or vertical. The rationale for this is twofold: First, government by itself lacks the resources to initiate full-scale community problem-solving. Second, the complex issues arising from poverty span several disciplines. In other words, interrelated challenges require networked solutions.

Even as local schools partner with a range of organizations to improve retention and reduce drop-outs, so too do they recognize the need for programs that address a range of student needs beyond education. This is the dual function of networking—to bring a diverse range of resources to bear on drop-out prevention and to expand the scope of drop-out programs to address the range of issues that contribute to high drop-out rates. This is especially important. Many urban youth in particular do not fit into the traditional

high-school setting—some may have a child; some experience homelessness or family problems; some may have fallen behind in coursework; many simply do not do well in a large-school atmosphere. Thus, programs address postsecondary plans, employment, health care, child care, training needs, and technical assistance, with the goal of meeting the needs of every segment of the NPS population.

The Newark Public Schools' strategy is to develop various educational avenues for students to pursue academic success in the district and beyond. Research finds that delinquent youth may not understand how their behavior can jeopardize their goals, or how exactly they are performing in school (Siennick & Staff, 2008). The AHSI models are specifically designed to address the needs of 21st-century students: AHSI programs strive to increase college access; encourage a need- and competence-based approach to funding; support rigorous, reasonable academic standards and assessments; increase accountability; provide expanded options for parents and students; promote enhancement of the "open sector" in education; and recognize the need for coordination with city and other public agencies and community organizations (National League of Cities, 2008).

The Setting

Newark is New Jersey's largest city, with a largely minority population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). More than half of Newark's residents are Black, 29.5 percent are Hispanic or of Latino origin and 27 percent are White. According to the *American Community* survey (2006), 24.2 percent of Newark's residents and 19.6 percent of its families are living below the poverty level—almost 10 percent higher than the respective national poverty rates in other cities throughout the United States. . Of persons 25 and older

residing in Newark, 65.5 percent are high-school graduates, and 11.9 percent have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The proportion of high-school students who graduate and go on to postsecondary education would obviously change this profile..

The aim of the current research is to determine if AHSI goals have been met and conduct a rigorous evaluation of the impact of program involvement on student achievement and postsecondary outcomes. This would add significantly to the scant evidence-based research on school drop-out prevention programs. The practical significance of evaluating the two AHSI models—PLC, and GTC—in comparison with the Twilight program is that it allows one to determine if the collaborative initiative among all intermediaries has in fact reengaged disconnected students. Among the issues that will be explored, therefore, is whether the organizational structures specifically set up to support the collaboration is working. To what extent has the partnership been integrated into the school? Are the schools' aspirations and interests bound together, and is the perception among the schools that they are on a common journey? Do these partnerships have structural and resource-sharing implications?

SUMMARY

The Introduction concluded by stating the importance of increasing the proportion of high-school students who graduate and go on to postsecondary education in Newark, New Jersey along with exploring whether the organizational structures specifically set up to support the collaboration are working. The dissertation contains five additional chapters: Review of Literature, Theoretical Framework, Research Methods and Design,

Findings and Conclusion. Chapter 1 provides a picture of why drop-out programs are important, offering an overview of the effects of high dropout rates on Newark, New Jersey. The chapter highlights general information about why considerable state, federal, and public attention has been directed to low high-school graduation rates. Chapter 2 covers extant literature that investigates collaboration as a process that yields particular outcomes, concentrating on various roles stakeholders may acquire throughout their collaborative endeavor. The section on how the actors involved in the target programs perceive collaboration will present research that examines the importance of the process, in the course of which people, groups, and organizations work collectively to accomplish preferred outcomes. In terms of managing collaboration, there are numerous instances of collaborative initiatives and plans to encourage community-based collaboration among schools and organizations. However, much of the research on program evaluation assesses how individual, public or private schools function as largely independent within a top-down framework of policy direction. By contrast, the setting for this study affords an opportunity to observe the different motives to collaborate, since tendencies to do so cannot be taken for granted. The impact of low high-school graduation rates on the economy has helped draw attention to the nation's dropout problem. Young adults who leave school before graduating face a number of potential hardships. Chapter 3 explains the theoretical framework that guides looking at the collaborative process as a legitimate research focus. Chapter 4 explicates the methodological approach and outlines the research design, fully describing the sample and the rationale for data collection. Chapter 5 presents the findings of the mixed-methods approach comparing the AHSI and Twilight Programs as well as our evaluation of the collaboration process. Finally,

Chapter 6 returns to the original questions, this time with the answers provided by the analysis.

1. Does participating in an alternative high school initiative make a quantifiable?

    difference?

2. Which aspects of collaboration in drop-out prevention are most closely linked to

    positive student outcomes?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Today, public administrators increasingly operate inside a collaborative network, recognizing that, alone, they cannot solve the deep-rooted challenges affecting America's cities. The issues are not new: public managers in state and local government confront the same set of familiar challenges, including homelessness and a lack of decent affordable housing, joblessness, juvenile crime, and diminished civic involvement. The complexity of these problems, moreover, calls out for the involvement of multiple partners—i.e., can juvenile crime be effectively addressed by tougher law enforcement only, or is there also a role for youth programs, educational opportunities and mentors? The same principle holds true for other problems arising out of poverty: multidisciplinary, or networked, approaches are clearly needed. In order to respond to today's policy challenges, government increasingly fulfills its duties by managing networks rather then bureaucracies, a trend described in Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector. In these networks, public managers must rely less on public employees in traditional roles and more on a web of partnerships, contracts, and alliances to deliver essential services. The reasons for this are two-fold: first, government by itself does not have the resources to initiate full-scale community problem solving, and second, complex issues arising from poverty span multiple disciplinary fields—in other words, networked challenges require networked solutions.

The importance of examining collaboration between an inner city school district with high drop out rates and private, public, and nonprofit organizations is currently

supported by program effectiveness. This realm is documented within the literature as impacting the evolution of program outcomes within alternative education.

The National Academy of Public Administration's 2002 report on the evolving role of federal managers elucidated several trends changing the nature of public-sector work, including: increased technical complexity, a shrinking managerial workforce, flatter organizational structures, and demands for improved performance. Scholars such as Kamarck (2003) and Kettl (2005) have discussed additional trends that are transforming the nature of governance, including the "blurring of the sectors." These trends illuminate the need for governmental agencies (and thus, the people within them) to collaborate with nonprofit and for-profit organizations to address "wicked problems" where no single organization has all the necessary resources or solutions and the cost of failure is enormous. Similarly, the growth in the "hollow state," as described by such scholars as Milward & Provan (2000) and Light (2006), further illustrates the need for public-sector managers to span boundaries to ensure that an ever-growing number of third-party contractors are held accountable for results. Together, these complex trends speak to a changing environment in which collaborative action is replacing traditional hierarchical authority for achieving public-sector goals and creating public value.

Collaboration between inner city school districts and public, private and nonprofit agents presents a complex set of state of affairs that have not been specifically addressed within the research. These studies are parallels to the structure and purpose of the partnerships developing between public school districts and external organizations. Issues of systemic organization are being addressed at the administrative level (Cancelli & Lange, 1990; Kratochwill et al., 1995). Challenges and recommendations for successful

collaboration at the direct service level are also discussed (Alpert, 1995; Martens & Ardoin, 2002; Thomas, 2001). For these reasons, it is important to convey the link that can be drawn between this literature and the current study in order to provide a foundation for forward movement within this are of collaboration.

The main purpose of the review was to explore collaboration between schools and to provide evidence about the process of networks or partnerships that are operating for the same goal in different ways. In meeting this aim, the objectives for the research were to identify the effectiveness of collaboration between schools and agencies as well as consider the role of outside agents, such as government, local authorities, and other organizations in supporting collaborative working.

Collaboration:

To begin to understand collaboration as a process that yields particular outcomes, it is helpful to start with Gray and Wood's (1991) theoretical framework. To understand collaboration, they argue, scholars must examine three areas: antecedents to collaboration, the process of collaboration itself, and the outcomes of that process. It is noteworthy, however, that these three areas are rarely modeled clearly in collaboration research. Scholars often simultaneously associate antecedents with collaboration processes and outcomes, for example, and fail to distinguish mediating from outcome variables. The literature covering interorganizational relations (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994), policy implementation (O'Toole, 1997), cooperation theory (Axelrod, 1984), and collaboration research (Huxham, 1996) is rife with variables likely to enhance collaborations, but these variables either go unanalyzed or are not systematically

modeled. Hypothetically, a researcher's theoretical perspective can determine how collaboration is defined and which outcomes are measured (Gray and Wood, 1991). Thus, depending on their perspective, researchers focus on varying combinations of outputs, the structure of the collaborative effort and on process. Furthermore, process dimensions of collaboration are frequently presented as outcomes (Gray and Wood, 1991).

Collaboration among agencies or organizations is usually governed by accepted, if often contentious, governance practice. Potential participants in any collaboration include clients and customers, the agencies or organizations themselves, sponsors, and administrators, as well as the community and other stakeholders (Weiss, 1981). Consequently, any such endeavors involve complexities that can facilitate or obstruct the possible benefits of collaboration (Bardach and Lesser, 1996; Meyers, 1993). More and more, the question of organizational effectiveness is significant to the world of academia and those in practice. With respect to collaboration within the AHSI initiative, my research will look into whether collaborations attain the sought-for retention outcome, and, if they do, what the proven measures that indicate achievement are.

In the following survey, I examine past approaches to this question. I begin with a review of the literature on collaborative perceptions and understanding, followed by a discussion of collaborative practices that help prevent drop-outs. Then I review theoretical definitions of collaborative partnerships, and conclude with a review of the literature on processes that have been developed to educate stakeholders in collaborating with workers from different services to prevent drop-outs.

Perceptions of Collaboration:

The topic of collaboration has received considerable interest in recent years. Agencies such as the Department of the Interior set "collaboration skills" as a benchmark for hiring and promotion (Taylor 2007), although there is considerable disagreement among scholars, human resource practitioners, and those managers who are actually collaborating on what constitutes collaborative ability. A review of the literature found that a number of authors have attempted to identify and describe collaboration as a distinct process with distinctive elements and requiring distinctive skills. According to Goldsmith & Eggers (2004), managing across boundaries can take time and "requires attitudes and behaviors not commonly developed as part of the typical public manager's experience," (p. 165). The authors provide a list of skills necessary for working across boundaries, including: big-picture thinking, coaching, mediation, negotiation, risk analysis, contract management, strategic thinking, interpersonal communications, and teambuilding (p. 158).

Collaboration is a process of contribution, in the course of which people, groups, and organizations work collectively to accomplish preferred outcomes. Collaborative ventures can range from less-concentrated networks, in which the clusters are relatively self-governing, to more-concentrated networks, in which they are more interdependent. In one model (Kaplan, 1991); these differences in collaborative intensity define four common modes of working: networking, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration:

1. **Networking:** Organizations have a relationship in which they exchange information in order to help each participating entity do a better job.

2. **Coordination:** Organizations have a relationship in which they each modify their activities so that together they provide better services to their constituents.

3. **Cooperation:** When organizations cooperate, they not only share information and make adjustments in their services; they also share resources to help each other do a better job.

4. **Collaboration:** In a collaborative relationship, organizations help each other expand or enhance their capacities to do their jobs (Axner, 2007).

Studies have recognized certain distinctive features and dynamics that, along with the expertise of management, inform the collaboration process, including communication, continuity, unanimity, involvement, and a history of successful accomplishments (Hogue et al, 1995; Keith et al, 1993). Borden (1997) has identified four factors critical to successful collaboration: internal communication, external communication, membership, and goal-setting.

Another factor examined is the statement of purpose and focus for the collaboration. Making certain that a process and objectives are well-defined and comprehensible to all involved in the collaboration ensures that affiliates create a structure for the venture that best serves its purpose. Defining the path to the goal and the focal point of the collaboration in detail establishes its distinctiveness and basic principles. The actions taken must also be cumulative if they are to be of significance to the collaborative group and to stakeholders; having separate exercises with parallel objectives can be perplexing. The precise definition of duties and responsibilities for assignments can increase participation, discussion, and comprehension of issues related

to the process and structure for the collaboration, resulting in a better collective understanding of what the collaboration represents, the expectations for it, the internal and external circumstances, and the framework for finalizing the end results (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

In addition, Thomson and Perry (2006) identify five key dimensions of collaboration: governance, administration, mutuality, norms, and organizational autonomy. Each of these dimensions involves process-related activities such as: making joint decisions about rules to govern the collaborative effort (governance); getting things done through an effective operating system that supports clarity of roles and effective communication channels (administration); addressing the implicit tension exhibited in collaborations between organizational self-interests and the collective interests of the group (organizational autonomy); working through difference to arrive at mutually beneficial relationships (mutuality); and finally, developing trust and modes of reciprocity (norms); all of which take commitment to process over time.

The ability to cultivate trust is very important for managers or those directing collaborative relationships (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Trust is accumulated on understanding and account. How intentions and behaviors are perceived affects whether trust can be achieved. If there is trust, people or groups will share. If personal agendas are included or implied, the participating groups and individuals will be reluctant to become involved in the collaboration. Jarvenpaaet al (1999) used Hofstede's idea of comparing Internet trust in individualistic and collectivistic cultures to examine a cross-cultural rationale for an Internet customer trust model. They discovered that customers in diverse cultures may have conflicting perceptions of what made a Web transaction trustworthy.

Although significant cultural differences concerning the basis of trust were not found, their study sheds light on the assessment of cultural dissimilarities in the knowledge of trust and the stages of trust in the e-commerce perspective which can be usefully applied to other types of collaborations.

A few researchers have studied the challenges posed by focusing on accountability in terms of responsiveness. In *The New Economics of Organization,* Terry Moe describes an appealing dispute that illustrates the challenges of accountability and the responsiveness of administrative agents to citizens. Moe argues that for principal-agent theory to be useful in the study of implementation, we must take account of the fact that administrators are not necessarily motivated by the efficient production of public service; they may be more concerned with political efficiency rather than production efficiency. Moreover, the major problem of control might not be shirking, but could involve several different possibilities, including material benefit of some sort, ranging from budgetary slack to promotion, but might also be policy related. At a minimum, scholars utilizing the principal agent frameworks would need to grapple with the issues of political efficiency and diversity of goals—not trivial alterations. He concludes that administrative representatives are more responsive when there are more imperative actions that need to be taken; they are reactive to the governing body and management. Because administrative representatives are not in competition, he believes, they do not set objectives or standards to evaluate their work. Although they are capable of stellar performance, they will generally avoid assuming responsibility. They have learned to beat control in a way that legal, political, budgeting, and executive oversight systems have been unable to overcome.

Like Moe, John Huber, a researcher known for his experimental work with legislative bills and their effects on agents, assumes that performance can be higher among agents, but the failure to oversee these agents causes more harm than good. Several studies offer theories about what motivates service agencies or organizations to collaborate with other agencies or organizations, and a number of researchers have evaluated these hypotheses and their implications (Hill and Lynn, 2003; Reitan, 1998). These academic perspectives provide a useful summary of the characteristics of agency and organizational processes that are connected with constructive incentives to partner with other agencies and organizations. Taxonomy of such theories is most likely very important for creating effectual collaborative governance.

Collaboration is often criticized as being unsuitable because the outcome is unpredictable. When collaborations fail, the failure may be a sign of a lack of universal perception or understanding of the significance that motivated agencies or organizations to contribute in collaborative partnerships to begin with. The accountability expected from each partner is called into question when goals are not met. Yet organizations should encourage collaboration and activities because their own environment is never entirely predictable and stable (Moon, 1999). Indeed, the organizations' administrations must promote collaboration and experimentation by providing room for failure in order to encourage practice actions to solve complicated problems (DiIulio, Garvey, Kettl, 1993).

How to Manage Collaboration:

Collaboration between public agencies does not come naturally. Apart from the obvious realities that job goals, job descriptions, personnel decisions, reward systems,

and accountability structures are institutionally specific, a range of other issues may make collaboration a low priority. These include time constraints, differences in work cultures, the extent to which agencies are often competing for scarce resources as well as attention, misunderstanding of what collaboration entails or why it should occur, varying understandings of the problem being addressed and, of course, politics. Although collaboration is not a particularly new idea, its meaning varies among many people. Students, for example, face a constant competition to outdo peers or to carry out the task presented in the best manner possible. Collaboration can represent a deviation from what one is educated to do. Assuming that they conceive of information as diffuse (and controlling access to information can generate disproportionate influence for an individual or group), people may be less prone to connect in dialogues and collaboration.

Besides the list of competencies identified by Goldsmith & Eggers (2004), Foster-Fishman et al (2001), identify a number of core competencies that members need for a collaborative effort, including the ability to resolve conflict, communication skills, ability to understand other perspectives, and expertise in the problem area(s). According to Chrislip & Larson (1994), excellent collaborators are those who convene others to solve joint problems, energize around a problem, facilitate the work of others, create vision, and solve problems. Bardach (1998) adds listening skills to the list of necessary competencies (p. 44). Similarly, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has identified a list of competencies it described as critical to "building coalitions" across organizational boundaries. These include partnering, influencing/negotiating, and political savvy. While these lists are insightful, most are anecdotal and some are contradictory. Regardless of the lack of consensus on what constitutes collaborative

competency, one thing is certain: "People with network skills—collaborative skills not currently highly sought nor valued by government—need to be recruited, rewarded, and promoted" (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004, p. 159).

In most variations of collaboration, an atmosphere of innovation should be encouraged. On the other hand, when innovative ideas are successful, some structure is needed to allow for regularity; both should be cultivated. But attending to process is also important. Issues of politics and bureaucracy must be understood and dealt with in the context of the agency or organization and from the perspective of the collaborative endeavor. High-quality ideas aren't always the ones that are implemented; those plans that would probably be effective may not be adopted, or may be adopted but not ultimately implemented. Usually ideas that are tied to influential leaders are implemented most quickly (Gladwell, 2006). This usually has less to do with their personal charisma than their relative status in the political system, the status of their organization and the extent to which they are seen as power brokers. Influence on chief outcomes may not necessarily be used via proper protocol or procedures, and the collaboration's stakeholders may not be the essential voice of reason when "outsiders" can influence the main decision makers.

Some organizations appear to be better prepared than others for internal as well as external collaboration. Past research reveals that functioning on an egalitarian level, whether officially or unofficially, can bring diverse outlooks to bear on a problem and bring about transformation. For collaboration to occur effectively within an agency or organization there must be an encouraging culture and task setting, support from higher administrators and recognition of the importance of collaborative performance. In order

for collaboration with outsiders to be successful, agencies and organization must be clear, direct, and able to exchange ideas and concerns.

Collaboration in Public Education:

Collaborative relationships among schools and parents, the public and private sectors, businesses, universities, and social service agencies in the community have been encouraged (NCREL, 1996), supported by school leadership and research organizations such as the Council of Great City Schools and regional educational laboratories supported by the U.S. Department of Education. These organizations have established task forces, issued reports, and encouraged school-community collaborations. For example, a 1998 report from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) described the potential value of collaborations with external organizations, especially for schools in low-income areas:

> Through school-community partnerships and school-linked services efforts, educators have found ways to connect with and integrate services and supports that help low-income children achieve academic success and develop into independent, educated, self-sufficient adults. These partnerships have become much more widespread as schools have sought out allies to provide additional support for students and their families to improve education-related results. Schools also have increasingly become more active partners in efforts to revitalize low-income communities and neighborhoods (CCSSO, 1998, p. 3).

There are numerous instances of collaborative initiatives and plans to encourage community-based collaboration among schools and organizations. These typically have a number of goals, such as advancing educational results, improving the competence and success of health and social services, addressing a broader range of the developmental needs of youth, and building the human, social, and economic capital of communities (Melaville and Blank, 2000).

Unlike many areas of community services, however, where stable concerns, wrap-around services, and multiproblem clients provide obvious arguments for organizational and mutual responsibilities, the mutual responsibility of individual schools with other local organizations is not vigorously supported in either theory or practice. To a certain extent, individual or private schools are observed as largely independent within a top-down framework of policy direction. Consequently, public school collaborations represent the predominant opportunity to examine the different motives to collaborate, since tendencies to do so cannot be taken for granted.

Proponents have advocated for improved linkages between education systems and social services systems for the past decade (Behrman & Center for the Future of Children, 1992; Bowen & Richman, 2002; Franklin & Allen-Meares, 1997). Some advocates urge school systems to become the coordinating point for local social services (Cousins, Jackson, & Till, 1997; Harvey, 1995; Tyack, 1992), whereas others suggest the need to develop integrated services systems throughout the local community, in which schools would play an integral role with other domains—for example, juvenile justice, and health care (Corrigan & Bishop, 1997; Rivard, Johnson, Morrissey, & Starrett, 1999; Tapper, Kleinman, & Nakashian, 1997). These proponents also recognize barriers that

have prevented successful accomplishment of their ideas. Some of the barriers identified include financial considerations (that is, which system pays for what services), identification of appropriate clientele (that is, who should receive which services), disparate goals and objectives among services, location and coordination of services delivery, and evaluative approaches.

Research on the impact of community collaboration is ongoing. Two major programs that have been studied are full-service community-schools and the Annie E. Casey Foundation New Futures initiative. Some of the positive results found at full-service community-schools are improved reading and math performance, better attendance rates, a decrease in suspension rates and a decrease in the dropout rate (Schargel & Smink, 2001, p. 201).

The New Futures initiative did show some interim steps that may lead to improved outcomes: increased awareness about the problems of at-risk youth; initiating a dialogue among leaders and community representatives; development of rich school-based information systems; and demonstrated how to build strong relationship between public and private sectors by combining leadership and money (Schargel & Smink, 2001, p. 202).

Concerning Dropouts:

Different philosophical approaches to schooling have also led to differing ways of computing the dropout rate (Coley, 1995; MacMillan, 1991). *Event rates* measure the number of students who leave high school each year compared with previous years. *Status rates*, which are generally higher than the event rate, measure the number of all

students in the population who have not completed high school and were not enrolled at a given point in time. *Cohort rates* describe the number of dropouts from a single age group or specific grade (or cohort) of students over a period of time. The *high-school completion rate* is the percentage of all persons ages 21 and 22 who have completed high school by receiving a diploma or equivalency certificate.

Young adults who leave school before graduating face a number of potential hardships. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, relatively more dropouts are unemployed than high school graduates, and those dropouts who do find work earn less money than high school graduates. High school dropouts are also more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates who do not go on to college. This increased reliance on public assistance is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that young women who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and more likely to be single parents. In very poor communities like Newark, where earnings are not high for anyone, pregnant teens who drop out actually earn more in the long run than school completers. This is because they tend to enter the job market earlier. Since no one does well, the length of time in the job market determines earnings. Moreover, the completers then have children when they exit, so their job entry is also delayed. Secondary schools in today's society are faced with the challenge of increasing curricular rigor to broaden the knowledge base of high school graduates while at the same time increasing the proportion of all students who successfully complete high school. Advocates of reform have called for more effort to be devoted to linking schooling to the future, and have placed a strong emphasis on high

school graduates as skilled learners with the ability to continue their education in college, technical school, or work-based programs (National Research Council 2008).

The impact of low high-school graduation rates on the economy has helped draw attention to the nation's dropout problem. Practically every state governor has agreed to provide more transparent graduation data, and federal accountability policies are placing greater demands on schools and districts to improve historically low graduation rates. Even without demands from the administrative offices, there are compelling ethical, political, and financial motives for districts to increase graduation rates. Most significant, students want to graduate: Ninety-nine percent of high school sophomores expect to earn a diploma, and about three in four expect to earn a bachelor's degree (Ingels et al, 2005). That high a rate, though not impossible, is unrealistic, but the students' desire is thoroughly rational. More than thirty years ago, dropouts for the most part could still find jobs that compensated them adequately to support a family; but young people who leave school today face a lifetime of economic hardship. Indeed, as the nature of available work shifts, the relative earning power of those who leave school early has declined. Between 1974 and 2004, the annual earnings of families headed by a high-school dropout declined by nearly one-third (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2006).

Rising drop-out rates cause public and fiscal strains as well. Dropouts are likely to be unemployed, collect public assistance, turn to crime, and be incarcerated. Simultaneously, they are less apt to obtain job-based health insurance and pension plans, to maintain their well-being, and to vote and engage in other types of civic activity. In fact, the typical dropout contributes $60,000 less in taxes than the average graduate over his or her lifetime (Rouse, 2005; Waldfogel et al, 2005; Muennig, 2005; Moretti, 2005;

and Junn, 2005). Higher graduation rates would save taxpayer money, significantly increase tax revenues, increase employment, decrease crime, and boost civic participation.

School districts have therefore been involved in a wide array of initiatives to reduce dropout rates, stressing the policies, performance, and programs that can demonstrate that a difference is being made. These measures have been organized around an inclusive plan for increasing graduation rates—districts should be able to forecast, intervene, prevent, recover, and implement in a manner that will help more students complete high school.

Forecast: Who and where are the dropouts?

Even though successful interventions can be expensive, many decision makers do not take advantage of the data that will assist in directing limited financial resources most effectively. For instance, a chief assessment of federally funded dropout interventions revealed that programs often enroll the wrong students: "Dropout prevention programs often serve students who would not have dropped out, and do not serve students who would have dropped out" (Gleason and Dynarski, 2002). A secondary effect of this is that the "success" rates of such programs are artificially inflated, but overall school leaving is not changed. Targeting the right students will certainly raise graduation rates; even the most effective intervention programs will not succeed in reducing drop-out rates if the wrong students are targeted. But reducing errors in drop-out prevention strategies will furthermore preserve those funds being spent on students who would graduate on their own without additional help.

The issue is not only that educators make incorrect assumptions about who is likely to drop out. To be sure, most programs have created indicators for risk factors that are correlated with dropping out and the ways in which the likely dropout differs from the average graduate (Wells et al, 1989). Decades of research (Rumberger, 2004; Gleason and Dynarski, 2002) have yielded a long list of such characteristics, including:

Demographic background: Students who are poor, who are members of certain minority groups, who are male, who have limited English proficiency, who have learning or emotional disabilities, who move more often, and who are overage for their grade are more likely to drop out.

Family factors: Students who come from single-parent families, have a mother who dropped out of high school, have parents who provide less oversight and support for learning, and who have older siblings who did not complete school are more likely to drop out.

Adult responsibilities: Teenagers who take on adult roles such as becoming a parent, getting married or holding down a job are more likely to drop out—although the last depends on gender, type of job, and number of working hours per week.

Educational experiences: Dropouts are more likely to have struggled academically. Low grades, low test scores, Fs in English or math, falling behind in course credits, and being retained are associated with lower chances for graduation. Dropouts also are more likely to have shown signs of disengagement from school: High rates of absenteeism or truancy, poor classroom behavior, less participation in extracurricular

activities, and bad relationships with teachers and peers all have been linked to lower chances for graduation.

The difficulties here start with the fact that these risk factors describe a huge pool of inner-city students, including large numbers of "false positives," making them poor indicators of school leaving. Displaying a certain risk factor generally puts a student in a cluster whose members in broad terms are more likely to drop out, but does not mean that a dedicated student will drop out. Prediction requires more than simply knowing which general characteristics dropouts are likely to exhibit (Jerald, 2006).

Some research found that it is feasible to predict the likelihood of drop-outs with greater precision. Those studies follow individual students as they progress from grade to grade. By trailing groups of students in the same grade, analysts can discern patterns that occur before a student drops out and identify a more nuanced set of risk factors that substantially improve the sensitivity and specificity of predictive models.

In a study conducted by Roderick (1993) in Fall River, a small urban school district in southeastern Massachusetts, academic performance and school engagement provided the best forecasts of who did not graduate. By following a cohort of fourth-graders, she found that for the most part dropouts follow similar paths. Furthermore, Roderick found that the district had two very different subgroups of dropouts that followed different trajectories—early dropouts, who left school between seventh and ninth grades, and later dropouts, who left between tenth and twelfth grades. Those who dropped out between seventh and ninth grade could be expected to have had low or poor grades as far back as elementary school. However, those who dropped out in the later grades were more

difficult to predict. Looking as far back as the fourth grade, these students' grades and attendance were not much different from those who did graduate—these indicators were not as easy to forecast until they entered they entered middle or high school.

Roderick also found that so-called transition years were a critical point for many potential dropouts. Throughout the transition to middle school, academic performance and attendance decreased to some extent for most students, but the decline was much sharper among potential dropouts. The corresponding events occurred later, throughout the transition to high school.

Additional current cohort studies conducted in Philadelphia and Chicago have confirmed and expanded on Roderick's findings. Researchers working with community clusters in Philadelphia have found that they can identify about 50 percent of that city's likely dropouts as early as sixth grade and a full 80 percent of potential dropouts by ninth grade (Neild and Balfanz, 2006). They also revealed that risk factors occur at various points on the educational path:

- Sixth-graders with poor attendance (less than 80 percent), a failing grade for classroom behavior, a failing grade in math, or a failing grade in English had only a 10 percent chance of graduating within four years of entering high school and only a 20 percent chance of graduating a year late (Balfanz and Herzog, 2005).

- Eighth-graders with poor attendance (less than 80 percent) or a failing grade in math or a failing grade in English had less than a 25 percent chance of graduating within eight years of entering high school (Neild and Balfanz, 2006).

- Among entering freshmen who had exhibited no eighth-grade risk factors, those who had very poor ninth-grade attendance (less than 70 percent), who earned fewer than two credits during ninth grade, or who did not earn promotion to tenth grade had only a one-in-four chance of earning a diploma within eight years (Neild and Balfanz, 2006).

On the basis of similar cohort studies, the Chicago Consortium on School Research combined two highly predictive ninth-grade risk factors to create an "On-Track Indicator" for high-school freshmen. A student is considered on-track at the end of ninth grade if he or she has accumulated enough course credits to earn promotion to tenth grade while receiving no more than one F (based on semester marks) in core academic subjects. The indicator is 85 percent accurate in predicting which members of the freshmen class will not graduate on time, and nearly as good at predicting who will not graduate within five years (Allensworth and Easton, 2005).[2] (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Examples of Highly Predictive Risk Factors for Dropping Out of District Cohort Studies			
Type of Risk Factor	Philadelphia	Chicago	Fall River, Massachusetts
Academic Performance	Earning an F in English or math during 6th or 8th grade	Low grade-point average in 9th grade	Very low grades or attendance in 4th grade
	Failing courses and falling behind in credits in 9th grade	Failing grades in 9th grade Low credits earned during 9th grade	Significant decline in grades from 5th to 6th grade
	Failing to earn a promotion in 9th grade	Falling "off-track" during 9th grade; i.e., either receiving more than one semester F in core academic courses or not	Significant decline

		earning enough credits to be promoted to 10th grade	in grade-point average from 8th to 9th grade Being retained in any grade during K-8 or in high school
Educational Engagement	Low attendance (80% or lower) during 6th or 8th or 9th grade Receiving a failing classroom behavior mark during 6th grade	Low attendance during 9th grade	Significant drop in attendance beginning in 6th grade

Source: Adapted from Jerald, 2006

There is good reason to think that district programs would be more successful if they based their needs assessment on studies like these before investing in intervention and prevention.

To some researchers, educational variables are the prime indicators of the likelihood of dropping out—more so than race, poverty, age, gender, or personal circumstances. While educators frequently believe dropping out to be driven by personal and family conditions not related to schooling (Roderick, 2006), most dropouts display highly predictive educational warning signs. For instance, a federal survey showed that dropouts are two times more likely to cite school-related reasons than family- or work-related reasons for leaving school (Berktold et al, 1998), something that held true for all demographic subgroups (Jordan et al, 1999).[3] (See Table 2, "Why Teenagers Drop Out.")..

Table 2: Why Teenagers Drop Out Percentage of spring 2002 high school sophomores who had left school without completing a four-year program as of spring 2004, by reason for leaving school	
Reason for leaving school	Percent
Missed too many school days	43.5
Thought it would be easier to get a GED	40.5
Getting poor grades/failing school	38.0
Did not like school	36.6
Could not keep up with schoolwork	32.1
Became pregnant[1]	27.8
Got a job	27.8
Thought could not complete course requirements	25.6
Could not get along with teachers	25.0
Could not work at same time	21.7
Had to support family	20.0
Did not feel belonged there	19.9
Could not get along with other students	18.7
Was suspended from school	16.9
Had to care for a member of family	15.5
Became father/mother of a baby	14.4
Had changed schools and did not like the new one	11.2
Thought would fail competency test	10.5
Did not feel safe	10.0
Was expelled from school	9.9
Got married/planned to get married	6.8

[1]Percentage of female respondents only. The reason could only be selected by female respondents.

Note: This indicator shows the percentage of high school students in the spring of their sophomore year who, in the spring two years later, were not in school and had not graduated with a regular diploma or certificate of attendance. The 1 percent of sophomores who left school and earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate or other form of equivalency certificate as of the spring two years later are counted as having left school without a regular diploma or certificate of attendance.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Condition of Education Table 27-3, from Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002/04), "First Follow-Up, Student Survey, 2004," previously unpublished tabulation (January 2006).

Finn (1989, 1993) argued that it would be a good thing if educational vulnerabilities turned out to be better predictors because they are "alterable," as opposed to "status" risk factors that educators have little or no control over, such as poverty, gender, race, and family background. Finn's prescient advice to observe and tackle early educational warning signs has led to noticeable results in interventions retaining more students in school.

However, other educators disagree with Roderick's hypothesis about why students drop out. Pedro Noguera (2004), states that the dropout rate is a symptom of a problem and not a problem that can be solved in itself. Many schools, he argues, are designed for students to fail, and fixing broken school cultures is the best way to keep students engaged until graduation. Noting that 47 percent of students drop out because they are bored, unmotivated, and disengaged, Noguera recommends strategies such as providing all students with access to challenging, relevant coursework and implementing advisory systems that "create schools where students are known." He also contends that schools must be flexible enough to forge alternative pathways to graduation for the 32 percent of dropouts who leave school because their families need them to work. Moreover, he notes that schools should not be penalized for helping such students simply because they didn't conform to the standard four-year graduation rate. Schools should not be penalized for sticking with kids and providing support for a longer period of time. Poverty intersects with this issue, and it is foolhardy to focus narrowly on academic achievement.

These perceptive observations suggest that students across the nation are encountering more and more difficulties in their transition to high school. Not only are a significant number of students dropping out, but those who stay in high school graduate without the skills they need to become productive citizens. Several intervention strategies, from better academic preparation to structural reforms, are recommended to help students make a successful transition, and it is probable that all of them are needed and have an important place.

Furthermore, for nearly all dropouts, exiting school before graduation is not an abrupt or shocking event. Certainly, the vast majority (80 to 85 percent) follow discernible

patterns during the course of their education, displaying very obvious signs of educational complications and disconnection well before tenth grade, which habitually continue into high school. This indicates that schools and districts can recognize most possible dropouts soon enough to intervene. Researchers in Chicago have created another "on-track" indicator that appears to be fairly accurate in predicting by the end of their freshman year which students will graduate from high school. Students who are on-track are four times more likely to graduate than those who are not (Montgomery, 2008).

Transition years are major steps on the path to graduation, and several indicators of potential dropouts' initial performance show warning signs throughout the year as they go through middle or high school. This is not surprising. Along with having to adjust to new educational environments with greater academic demands, students in transition often receive less support from teachers, have greater difficulty in socializing with peers, and have less accountability (Roderick and Camburn, 1999; Neild et al, 2001). Issues appear early on, and dependable barometers of dropping out—such as plummeting grades or attendance—can be recognized very early in the year.

Attendance also plays a significant role in students' performance. Absenteeism is the most frequently identified characteristic of the at-risk student, and it has been proven to be strongly linked to achievement. Several research studies show that appropriate interventions can reduce absenteeism. Parental involvement in children's schooling is beneficial in combating absenteeism (Volkman, 1996), as are an orderly environment and strong teaching methods (Mora, 1997), positive reinforcement, and even compulsory attendance (DeKalb, 1999). If schools create a positive atmosphere and design appropriate interventions, the problem can be addressed.

Students with a record of disconnection and academic difficulty are more likely to run into transitional problems from middle to high school, but they are not in silos. About one in four students who entered Chicago high schools with high eighth-grade test scores (in the top quartile) fell off track during ninth grade, and only about one-third of those students recovered to graduate on time (Allensworth and Easton, 2005). Similarly, nearly one-third of Philadelphia dropouts exhibited no warning signs in eighth grade but "hit the wall" when they made the transition to high school (Neild and Balfanz, 2006).

Academics and engagement both matter in anticipating who is in danger of not graduating—a question about which there has been much recent confusion. In 2006, a nonrepresentative survey of dropouts indicated that most were given passing grades but were merely bored and unmotivated by school (Bridgeland et al, 2006), which quickly generated national news stories suggesting that academic failure does not have any significant role in the dropout problem. Balfanz and Legters (2006) countered that such findings conflict with evidence from cohort studies in places like Philadelphia and Chicago—where a good number of dropouts leave school without sufficient credits after not passing academic courses.

There is truth in the statement that academic performance and school engagement matter equally, and that they are very frequently—though not always—connected. Finn (1989, 1993) argued that disengagement, as reflected in absences, misbehavior, and poor class participation, can lead to failing grades. In other words, student who do not engage in school academically or socially but are present, attentive, and behaving may be likely to fail their classes. Conversely, academic failure—caused either by poor skills or little

effort—can cause students to feel alienated from school, leading to even greater withdrawal and lack of participation over time.

George H. Wood (2005) gives examples from his 17-year tenure as principal at Federal Hocking High School in Ohio, and says his highest goal was to help students become capable, literate citizens. Wood describes how his school had made personalization a reality by establishing an advisory program, a freshman transition program, smaller classes for earlier grades, and an engaging curriculum for all students. He identifies the use of performance assessments for students, as well as "job embedded professional development for our staff," as key pillars of such a system. Despite his school's efforts, Wood adds, Federal Hocking's supportive learning conditions mattered little to the federal government: The school did not meet its requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress and was labeled as a school at risk.

Wood laments the unfairness of a school accountability system that actually encourages principals to abandon students at risk of becoming dropouts if they take more than the allotted four years to graduate. He offers the example of one 18-year-old at high risk for dropping out, whom he had the option of either enrolling or turning away. He ignored the potential penalties and enrolled the student, but says that many principals would have responded to the perverse incentive to deny enrollment.

Without systematically analyzing local conditions, it is ill-advised to assume that districts can determine which procedures that affect academic performance and educational engagement will result in the best analysis. Teachers in Philadelphia gave behavior marks, which were more accurate than suspension rates in predicting which sixth graders would eventually drop out of high school. In both Philadelphia and

Chicago, further skewed measures of academic performance, such as classroom grades, turned out to be better indicators than ideal measures like test scores. Although low attendance is demonstrated to be a reliable indicator in nearly every study, how "low" attendance is classified can vary among districts or throughout grade levels within the same district. Although other districts can apply the predictors recognized in Chicago and Philadelphia, Jerald (2006) recommends that local education leaders strongly consider conducting their own cohort analyses to discover the most precise "high-yield" predictors for their own school systems.

An important lesson can be drawn from assessments of intervention programs sponsored by the federal government during the 1990s, namely that low-strength programs that offer intermittent tutoring, counseling, or actions to improve confidence—the general approach in most districts—do just about nothing to retain students in school. On the other hand, some high-intensity interventions can significantly reduce dropout rates (Dynarski and Gleason, 2004). For example, the federal School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program evaluated the effect of eight local programs aimed at middle school students. Four programs that provided low-intensity supplemental services—such as tutoring, counseling, or workshops to enhance self-esteem or leadership skills—had no impact on dropout rates (Dynarski and Gleason, 1998). Four other programs provided more intensive services, such as smaller classes, very intensive counseling, and accelerated instruction intended to help overage students catch up with their peers. Two were designed as schools-within-schools, and two were alternative middle schools with their own campuses. Both of the alternative middle schools—one in Atlanta and the other in Flint, Michigan—dramatically reduced dropout rates and

accelerated students' progress. As the evaluators concluded, "Compared with control group students, treatment group students admitted to these programs were half as likely to drop out and completed an average of half a grade more of school" (Dynarski and Gleason, 1998).

Retaining Students:

More than two decades ago, researchers learned that educators too frequently envision dropping out as a problem unrelated to schools, a social phenomenon they could do nothing about (Whelage and Rutter, 1986). Researcher Melissa Roderick observed that tendency first-hand during her tenure as director of planning for the Chicago Public Schools: "Educators argued vehemently that differences in the dropout rate across high schools were simply a reflection of differences in the students they served, and were not a result of any actual differences in the quality of a school's programs, teachers, or administrators" (Roderick et al, 2004). However, recent research has challenged that supposition, indicating that educational institutions may be equally as responsible as the students, and that some schools demonstrate a greater capacity for retention than others. For example, Allensworth and Easton (2005) found that dropout rates varied widely among Chicago high schools—even after they controlled for a host of individual risk factors, including race, gender, prior academic achievement, family socioeconomic status, and whether students are overage when they enter ninth grade.

Retention seems to correlate with whether schools improve or worsen the pressure of conversion years. Roderick and Camburn (1999) found that rates of ninth-grade course failure and recovery from first semester failure varied widely among Chicago high schools—above and beyond what would be expected on the basis of individual risk

factors. Their analysis found that only 30 percent of the overall variation in ninth-grade course failure throughout high schools could be explained by differences in their "intake," that is, the characteristics of entering freshmen.

Other researchers have begun to learn how schools influence graduation rates. Tellingly, just as with individual risk factors, some school characteristics that are adjustable, such as curriculum and teacher-student relationships, tend to have a greater effective impact on school completion than other factors that educators would be unable to change, such as the demographic makeup of the student body and whether a school is public or private (Lee and Burkam, 2003).

In general, the school characteristics that increase retention are placed in two expansive categories: cooperative environments and educational challenge. More specifically, researchers have found that students present in high schools that have fewer than 1,500 attendance days, better social relationships among their peers and adults, teachers who are more supportive of students, and a more focused, rigorous curriculum tend to drop out at lower rates (DeLuca and Rosenbaum, 2000; Croninger and Lee, 2001; Lee and Burkam, 2003).

The constructive influence of being present in a school with a more encouraging setting is particularly significant. Croninger and Lee (2001) found that, other things being equal, high schools whose teachers are highly supportive of students manage to cut the probability of dropping out nearly in half. The finding held equally true for students at low, medium, and high risk of dropping out. Alternatively, academic challenge also appears to have an immense role in student retention, which might explain why many

observers in and outside of schools believe there is a zero-sum tradeoff between higher academic rigor and higher graduation rates (Roderick et al, 2004).

Lee and Burkam (2003) found that high schools offering a more focused and rigorous curriculum—composed mainly of academic courses with very few remedial or nonacademic courses—have significantly higher graduation rates, other things being equal. Simultaneously, other studies support the idea that curriculums ought to be appealing and pertinent to students' interests or occupational plans. For example, a team of Johns Hopkins University researchers found that career and technical education (CTE) can boost graduation rates for some students, especially in combination with rigorous academic courses (Plank et al, 2005). Their analysis found that the ideal ratio proved to be one part career or scientific coursework to two parts academic coursework.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) assessed the representative influence on dropout rates using an unusually sophisticated and rigorous experimental study design (Kemple and Snipes, 2000). Researchers tracked 1,764 students who were interested in and applied to Career Academy, 959 of whom were selected for admission and 805 of whom were not, based on a random lottery. The goal was to make certain that the treatment group and the control group were alike demographically, academically, and even motivationally. Additionally, the researchers targeted a subgroup at an extremely high risk of dropping out, on the basis of signs of poor academic performance or educational engagement. By the conclusion of their anticipated senior year, high-risk students in the Academy group were less likely to have dropped out than high-risk members of the control group (21 percent versus 32 percent, which translates into a one-

third reduction in the dropout rate). (See Chart1, "Targeted Interventions Can Reduce Drop-out Rates of High-Risk Students.")

Chart 1 Percent of Students Dropping Out by the 12th grade
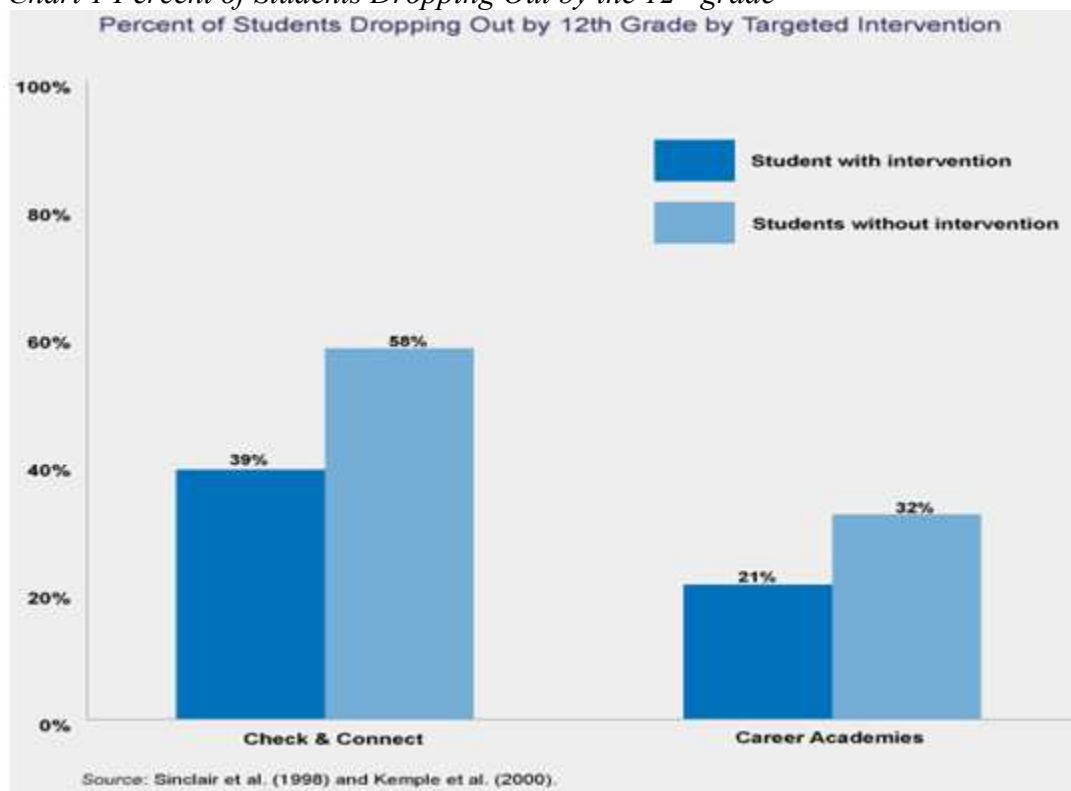
Researchers also examined which parts of the Career Academy plan aided in explaining the positive effect. Greater support yielded better results; students who had a high degree of support from teachers and peers during ninth or tenth grade were less likely to be absent excessively, while career academies that lacked support developed an increase in dropout rates.

Effective intervention and prevention strategies can noticeably reduce the number of students whose risk factors are exacerbated and who drop out. However, in larger districts with high proportions of at-risk students and low graduation rates, those

measures may not be enough. In order for intervention and prevention programs to be successful in these settings, a great deal of time is needed for programs to be effective. Most dropouts deeply regret their decision to leave school (Bridgeland, 2006), and many later attempt to earn a diploma or GED (Berktold et al, 1998). Furthermore, not every dropout can be recognized by reliance on early educational warning signs. In Chicago and Philadelphia, researchers were unable to predict 15 to 20 percent of eventual drop-outs. Those students did not show any early signs, would have dropped out in the later grades, and more than likely would have earned most of the credits needed to graduate. The researchers speculated that many members of this group might be "life event" dropouts who leave because of premature transitions to adulthood, such as work or child-care responsibilities, and find it difficult to attend school full-time (Roderick, 2006; Allensworth and Easton, 2005; Neild and Balfanz, 2006).

Recovery programs allow the students a second chance to come back and show improvement. Although little research has been done on recovery programs, an analysis conducted by New York City's Office of Multiple Pathways established that Transfer High Schools have a graduation rate of 56 percent, compared with a district wide rate of 19 percent for overage, under-credited youth in regular high schools (Office of Multiple Pathways, 2006). To improve these graduation rates, the District increased the number of Transfer High Schools.

On the other hand, a number of research studies on alternative schools elsewhere have yielded varying results. Mathematica conducted an experimental study of two alternative schools—one in California and one in Kansas—via random assignments of candidates (Dynarski and Wood, 1997). After four years, one school demonstrated a positive impact

on graduation rates for the handling group in comparison with the control group (17 percent versus 11 percent), but the other school did not. The researchers found that alternative schools are capable of helping students graduate at higher rates, but will not repeatedly do so.

Despite the alarming nature of the problem, research carried out over the past ten years discredits the notion that schools are unable to do anything about dropping out, and suggests that districts know how to help many more young people continue in school. The knowledge base exists to identify at-risk students, and data from programs that utilize this knowledge show that intervention, recovery, and prevention can substantially reduce school leaving.

SUMMARY

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on perceptions of collaboration, the management of collaboration and specific examples of collaboration in public education. The literature review then presented material that explored the importance of maintaining contact with stakeholders, students, and families along with highlighted gaps in current literature.

Students who dropout must adjust to returning to school if they are willing to succeed. Many students who drop out are immediately stereotyped; they do drugs, are stupid, lazy, unintelligent people, or many of the girls are pregnant or already have a child. (Dorn 1996) They immediately lose their status in the society and some may become more dependent on their families than they were prior to dropping out. Although, alternative education programs service the dropout population as well as those students who have had a difficult time in succeeding in traditional high school settings.

Chapter 3 presents an in-depth discussion of how organizational collaboration will be employed to anchor the study's theoretical framework and data collection methods. This section will outline organizational theory propositions and incorporate aspects from complementing role theories, such as dimensions of collaboration and process outcome. The chapter will then illustrate how collaboration is shaped for stakeholders.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Collaboration is an agreed system between organizations that entails compromise, production, and evaluation of obligations. The compromises, production, and evaluation of the agreements are founded on each stakeholder's mission and vision. This creative strain born within the course of collaboration gives collaboration its uncertain, vibrant, and multifaceted nature. Collaboration is a practice in which self-governing players interrelate through official and unofficial compromises, together developing the policies, regulations, and structures that inform their interaction and conduct, to proceed or come to a decision on the concerns that led the parties to unite; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions (Thomson and Perry 2006, p. 23).

Process Outcome:

According to the literature review, the process-outcome relationship is neither simple nor effortlessly conceptualized. Logsdon (1991), for example, in her study of two social problem-solving collaborative efforts, views solving concrete problems as a successful outcome of cross-sector collaborative efforts. Ostrom (1990), using a different theoretical perspective, views self-governance as the positive outcome of collective action, which emerges only if actors successfully and collectively solve the problems of institutional supply, credible commitment, and monitoring. Huxham (1996) argues that collaboration has both instrumental and ideological outcomes: as organizations interact, concrete goals can be collectively achieved and long-term substantive societal changes can occur.

From studies of environmental conflict resolution (ECR) comes a useful method of measuring performance given the density of process-outcome relationships. Various circumstances bring forward different types of outcomes at different phases in collaborative ECR processes. Bingham and her colleagues (2003), for example, suggest that, when evaluating the performance of ECR, evaluation criteria tend to fall in "clusters" that are unique to a particular stage of conflict (p. 330). Brogden (2003), in his analysis of a national policy dialogue on State Conservation Agreements, found that the process yielded at least six different outcomes, each with different evaluation criteria relating to different collaborative stakeholders.

Furthermore, in regard to the conceptualization of the process-outcome relationship, Bingham and colleagues (2003) explore the question of how to assess the relative success or failure of any particular collaborative process. "Consider, for example," they write, "that a collaborative process fails to produce full agreement, but does significantly narrow the range of disagreement and significantly improves relationships among participants. Is the process a success, a failure, neither, or both?" (334). Their conclusion stated that when evaluating outcomes, we should avoid labeling them in terms of success or failure unless we are able to identify that the most important indicators consistently point in the same direction over time and across different contexts (334–36).

Similarly to other studies on collaboration that have disputed that the value collaboration encompasses for a contemporary, progressively more systematic, general public good lies in its distinctive potential to create public value (Bardach, 1998; Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 1996; Sagawa and Segal, 2000). In this vein of study, it was

found conception of public value is often connected with maintaining an effective

collaboration. Cropper (1996) goes so far as to claim that the survival of collaboration

depends on the ability of the participants to create and command value (82). He makes a

distinction between two prime values, consequential and constitutive. Consequential

values, on the one hand, include productivity, relative efficiency, security, legitimacy,

and adaptability. Constitutive values define the very identity, place, and mode of conduct

that govern organizational relationships—the values that organizations negotiate. The

more value created through collaboration, the greater the likelihood of its sustainability

because "with value comes commitment and with commitment, continued existence"

(Cropper 1996, p. 97).

Bardach (1998), while he does not speak directly to the issue of maintaining

collaborations as an outcome, agrees that to be successful, collaboration (what he calls

"interagency collaborative capacity") should attain a value-creating rationale. He

distinguishes four measures for determining value creation: how much customers of the

collaboration value its services; the extent to which process values (fairness,

representation, inclusiveness, accessibility, openness, and integrity) exist; the extent to

which citizens value what collaboration does; and the extent to which the benefits of the

collaborative effort outweigh the costs (201–6). Bardach's view of public value falls

chiefly within Cropper's substantial values grouping (the focal point being the costs and

benefits and the perceptions of outcomes by clients and citizens), but process values

clearly fall within Cropper's constitutive category.

A distinctive part of process values is "voice," or what the procedural justice

literature suggests to be "process control" (Lind and Tyler, 1988). In their investigation

of the social psychology of procedural justice, Lind and Tyler reveal that voice cannot

simply be involved. Members of a collaborative effort may perhaps not be as concerned

with accomplishing a specific outcome as they are with equality of procedures that

guarantee that their voice will be heard in considering any specific facet of the

collaboration. Lind and Tyler (1988) found that as long as members in a collaborative

effort believe that they have had a fair chance to express their views; satisfaction is

expressed no matter the outcome of the decision. Satisfaction then becomes another,

independent form of the prospective end result that members may have initially decided

to follow by collaborating. The density of the process-outcome relationship not only

depends on the collection of outcomes of any phase, but also on those that may come

within these phases.

Throughout the literature on collaboration, it is clear that the process-outcome

relationship is complicated, but that there are still a continued number of scholars devoted

to comprehending the relationship in spite of the procedural and conceptual barriers. In

their chapter on the promise and performance of environmental conflict resolution,

Bingham and her colleagues (2003) advise scholars to analyze evaluation of collaborative

ECR "as part of an extensive, methodical, learning process" that systematically looks for

patterns in outcomes across cases over time.

Organizational Collaboration:

For the purposes of my research, I will rely primarily on Barbara Gray's (2000)

discussion of the issues surrounding evaluation of organizational collaboration, because

the different lenses through which she views the assessment of collaboration outcomes

seem particularly appropriate to my study. Gray identifies five different approaches to the

evaluation of collaborative efforts. These are: (1) problem resolution or goal achievement; (2) generation of social capital; (3) creation of shared meaning; (4) changes in network structure; and (5) shifts in power distribution. Each approach derives from a different theoretical perspective that only underscores what we already know—the process-outcome relationship is complex, and it is unlikely we will ever arrive at a single approach to evaluate collaboration outcomes (Gray, 2000).

Using student grades as variable scores, meeting minutes, and surveys from the original data I will test:

H0: There is no difference between student performance and grade outcome achieved by students in the Twilight Program and students in the AHSI Program.

H1: The greater the degree of joint decision making, administration, mutuality, and trust in collaboration, the more organizations will perceive collaboration as: effective in achieving goals, increasing the quality of partners' working relationships, broadening partners' views, increasing partner interactions, and creating more equitable power relationships among partners.

SUMMARY

Every collaborative initiative operates within systems that contain various roles, i.e. facilitator- facilitate, chair- member, employer-employee and so on. The role system contains the role behaviors and obligations of each possessed role that must be fulfilled to validate the individual's occupancy of their positions (Linton, 1945). At times, role obligations may conflict. In example, it may be quite difficult for an individual to effectively execute the role of an executive director parent and employee because both

roles have high expectations in terms of time and resources. Organizations may practice

role bargaining and only perform duties for one role and not another or partial duties.

Scholars suggest that a person's reaction to role strain depends on the moderating and

escalating effects within the individual and their surroundings (Allen & van de vliert,

1983; Moerings, 1983). The dissertation analyzed how organizational collaboration

managed the outcomes of student retention and outcome.

Chapter 4

Research Method and Design

The research used a mixed methods approach to evaluate the impact of AHSI's program in comparison with the Twilight program. I analyzed student grades and retention outcomes and identified those collaborative factors with the greatest impact on student achievement. An evaluation of the collaboration process conducted utilized student grades, attendance rates, staff surveys, interviews, and meeting observations. Student grades determined whether the students in the AHSI programs are outperforming students in the Twilight programs. Considering the process of collaboration and management illuminated which elements of the collaborative process contribute to the relative efficacy of the alternative program. The student data base consists of academic and attendance data (official school district data).

(I) Research Questions

The research questions that will inform the study are as follows:

(1) Does participating in an alternative high school initiative program make a quantifiable difference in the path of a student's academic career? More specifically, with respect to question l, I will ask

> (a) Does participation in an alternative education high school program increase academic performance in the classroom?
>
> (b) Do alternative high school initiatives raise student retention?
>
> (c) Does participation in an alternative high school initiative affect the personal, social and behavioral assessment of students?

(2) Was the AHSI collaboration successful?

With respect to collaboration, I will ask:

 (a) To what extent did the process embody the elements associated with

   effective collaboration?

 (b) Which aspects of collaboration in drop-out prevention are most closely

   linked to positive student outcomes?

The null hypotheses to be tested are:

   H_o: Participating in an alternative high school initiative makes no

significant difference in student outcomes compared to a traditional drop-out

prevention program. This hypothesis will be rejected if academic performance,

retention & assessment of students in the AHSI program > students in the

Twilight program

   $H_{o\,1:}$ Participating in a cross-sector collaborative makes no difference in

student outcomes.

This hypothesis will be rejected if the elements identified as key to effective

collaboration were present and perceived as effective. The literature would lead us

to expect that the greater the degree of joint decision making, administration,

mutuality, and trust in collaboration, the more likely it is that organizational

partners will perceive collaboration as effective in achieving goals, increasing the

quality of working relationships, broadening views, increasing partner

interactions and creating more equitable power relationships.

Collaborative members, who need to report to their supervisors or are concerned with personal accountability, will be using a variety of techniques for defining their own contribution to the team effort and outcomes. These include using a log book or diary to track one's inputs, activities, outcomes, and impact; using meeting minutes or other documentation to determine the role and influence of individual members; engaging members in evaluating each other in a nonjudgmental process; and using surveys, group discussions, or interviews with key stakeholders to collect data on member contributions and influence on outcomes. When individual members are responsible for a particular activity, it might also be possible to evaluate that event/activity and link the results to the member's effort.

In this case, I will utilize the minutes of meetings and use content analysis to keep track of decisions, actions, and achievements; and observe team interactions and discussions.

Surveys

Using an anonymity approach I conducted anonymous email surveys. These surveys will provide a more rigid analysis with a larger number of people. The surveys provided a limited amount of information from a large group of people and were useful for me to know what the current Office of Alternative Education staff thinks about the AHSI program. I reached out to the teachers, administration, guidance counselors and social workers of each school site. The surveys gave them an opportunity to tell me more about their knowledge of the models, concerns regarding these changes, their preferences of site of new models or Twilight, their desire to remain with OAE or not, and to provide

the information about the Alternative High School Initiative that interests them the most if any. The advantages of these surveys were speed, there was practically no cost involved, and the novelty element of an email survey probably stimulated higher response levels than ordinary spam mail surveys.

Interviews

Anthropologists usually study humans, and in doing so they must realize that any information they discover or provide may result in a change in lifestyle which can be either positive or negative, and as such, the anthropologist must try to avoid anything which can bring about harm to an individual or a group. In studying local positions, such as urban development, the researcher must understand that recommendations made by him or her can result in changes in the urban structure; such change should not be looked upon lightly, as even slight change can forever alter development of that community (AAA, 2000). For my study, I interviewed an Administrator/ Principal of a Twilight Site and an AHSI Program ,one Guidance Counselor, 2 Social Workers, 1 Research Associate, 1 education specialist from the Mayor's Office; City of Newark, 2 social service agents, and 2 teachers. All of the NPS interviewees have been employees for 3 years of more and are involved or have been in the both programs either simultaneously at some point throughout the year. Using Kvale's approach of categorization, I utilized a thematic approach for each question. This approach allowed me to ask questions about their current positions in with both programs. More specifically, I asked about the collaborative process outcome from their positions, the students' involvement in programs and transitional positions, parent involvement and knowledge, their interests,

their lack of interest, their knowledge of the AHSI, and their preference. The interviews

provided a great deal of information from individual or small number of people and

provided expert or knowledgeable opinion on the collaborative initiative.

Observations

Meeting or event observations have traditionally been conducted by

administrative staff or evaluators mainly for the purpose of program evaluation.

Observation is an intuitive process that allows individuals to collect information about

others by viewing their actions and behaviors in their natural surroundings. Sample

documents demonstrating the different research questions discussed are located in the

appendices (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001; McKernan, 1996). I observed strategic

planning and development meetings primarily hosted by the Office of Alternative

Education and the philanthropic community agents. I also gathered direct field notes,

written observations (dialogue, impressions, or feelings) about what transpired that

contained detailed information created a basis for the study. Field notes were formatted as

(1) a running record to track regularly scheduled occurrences, (2) a time log to record

events at designated interval, (3) an event log indicating things such as participation, (4) a

critical incident log to identify pivotal events, or (5) an anecdotal record to track growth

over time. Establishing predetermined abbreviations and format before beginning the

note taking process saves time (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001).

(I) DATABASE: NPS Database

The data on students came from Newark Public School's Twilight and AHSI programs. The Newark schools collect student data by district; the AHSI collects information on students enrolled in their programs; and the NPS keeps detailed academic and social background data on each student, even listing if the student has had a connection with other state agencies (e.g., the Division of Youth and Family Services). To determine whether either AHSI makes a difference for at-risk students, student cohorts in each of the four programs—AHSI—were compared with students in the larger NPS Twilight population. Appropriate controls were be used to minimize the influence of demographic differences in profiles of the experimental and comparison groups. Data from the NPS district database will be imported to a SPSS database. Data will be collected from the district database on the following variables:

W Gender

W Race/ethnicity

W Attendance rate

W Course grades

W Annual GPA

(II) Primary Data Collection

Research site

The research project focused on youth who attend AHSI programs at the Office of Alternative Education, located in Newark, New Jersey. Newark is a large urban center, with a large minority population (53.5 percent Black and 29.5 percent Hispanic or of

Latino origin). Of the 73 schools in the district, 13 are high schools. In 1995, because of documented deficiencies in administration, educational programs, and finance, the state government took control of the Newark Public Schools, and the district became the third state-operated school system in New Jersey (Hall, 1998). Since then, Newark Public Schools have renewed their commitment to combating the rise in the high school dropout rate. Newark has become an innovator in its approach to alternative education and joined in the movement to redefine alternative education, which is often misunderstood or mischaracterized as primarily serving students with learning issues or severe behavioral issues. Many of the students alternative education serves do not fit either profile.

Sample

The sample population is composed of NPS students, ranging in age from 14 to 21 years old. Although many alternative-education models focus on high school, researchers have identified the significance of examining the relationship between academic success and future drop-outs in middle school as well (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). Approximately 60 percent of district students are Black, 30 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent White. Twenty-five percent of Newark's residents live below poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Fewer than 15 percent of Newark residents age 25 and over have a bachelor's degree or higher.

For the comparison cohort, I will utilize grade and attendance data from the NPS database. The students in the AHSI (GTC and PLC) programs will be compared to all students in the Twilight Program. The combined population sample will also evaluate the effectiveness of each program (GTC and PLC); what program has a higher success rate with student retention.

My research compares student performance among students participating in an AHSI with NPS Twilight students. However, it is important to note that students in an AHSI over age 16 are self-selected and not forced to attend school. These students may have dropped out of school and received a mailing, referral, or phone calls recommending that the student attend an AHSI orientation. At the orientation, appointments are set up for students to speak with an intake coordinator in more detail about the specific programs. At that time, students were enrolled in an AHSI. These students take the initiative to re-enroll and may be inherently different from other at-risk students who have dropped out of school or from those students who have dropped out of school and returned to their previous school site. The population of students selecting these programs chose one over the other for various reasons. These motives can range from child-care issues, probation requirements, employment, or just the ease of time throughout the day. In short, the selection bias will stem from the students on a case-by-case basis.

I was assured access to the data required to perform the quantitative analysis. The qualitative phase of the research comprised of a sample of NPS employees, city, private, and social service agents throughout Newark, New Jersey. As part of my research, I conducted a process evaluation of the AHSI programs (AHSI) in which the mentioned agents were involved in the decision-making process. A process evaluation is the study and documentation of the processes involved in the establishment of the AHSI models.

Therefore, I received permission to attend strategic planning and implementation meetings on program development and management and collaboration building between postsecondary programs. This part of the assessment focused on lessons learned and best practices, including:

• Obstacles or unanticipated issues that arise and the actions taken to address these

issues

• Collaboration among partnering agencies

• Successes and failures in the evolution of each AHSI via collaboration

• Program stability (i.e., staff turnover, resources, student enrollment, etc.)

• Elements that were fundamental to the development of this model in other

jurisdictions

Process of Collaboration

In most forms of interschool collaboration, partnerships instigated by government,

private partnerships, and local community-based organizations appear to have a key role

in supporting partnerships. One of the primary factors influencing collaborative work is

the state of the existing relationship between schools and external agencies. A prior

history of cooperation between schools was found to facilitate working together, even

when a history of competitiveness, culture differences, and inequality between partners

could hinder it (Arnold, R., 2006). It is important for collaborating schools to develop

shared aims and values, since a failure to do so could lead to collaboration being given

low priority, difficulties in balancing the needs of the school and the partnerships, and

potentially the loss of school autonomy. Effective leadership of the partnership and

support from senior management will also be influential, as is the need to involve all staff

and stakeholders and to develop effective lines of communication. The commitment and

involvement of all staff and stakeholders is an important factor in facilitating progress

within collaborations, and the need for parties involved in collaborations to have the

necessary skills to work collaboratively together should be influential. The availability of adequate support for the partnership is important, as collaborations require skillful internal facilitation and external support. Having the funding and resources (including staff time) to implement collaboration should be considered vital. If funding ceases and it becomes a challenge for school staff to find the time for partnership activities, the sustainability of collaborations may be questionable.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the processes of the collaboration project, I logged meeting minutes in which, I was a nonparticipating observer. To support my observations, I used secondary data employed by Newark Public Schools to map out the trajectories for different programs within the district.

For each Twilight and AHSI program, academic performance and student retention rates of youth in Newark Public Schools were assessed.

(III) Data analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

The analysis procedures for collecting diverse information were divided into three areas: surveys, interviews, and event/meeting observation. All surveyors and other major participants in my research signed an informed consent before the surveying process begins and were given the option of not being recorded/remaining anonymous within my research.

Surveys: One of the ways in which I collected local histories, personal experiences, and the various accounts of the process as it unfolds were through anonymous surveys. These surveys provided evidence for the sorts of forces at work within the making of

such a collaborative endeavor. I surveyed key administrators, teachers, and staff about their views on, and experiences with their involvement in both programs.

Interviews: I also conducted anonymous interviews with key administrators, teachers, and staff about their views on, and experiences with their involvement in both programs.

Observations: In addition, I observed strategic planning and development meetings hosted by Twilight and AHSI staff, faculty, and partners. I also gather direct field notes, written observations (dialogue, impressions, or feelings) about what is occurring that which will contain detailed information that creates a basis for the study.

Data was analyzed and coded using Surveymonkey qualitative data software and the statistical package SPSS. Statistical tests will include cross-tabulation, logistic and multi-linear regression, factor analysis, and linear and time series analyses. The statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, with a summary of data. For continuous quantitative variables, I calculated statistics such as mean, median, minimum, maximum, and sum. For a discrete variable, I revealed the distribution of values such as percentages and counts of each distinct value in the variable. For instance, I used cross-tabulations to compare the outcomes of the AHSI schools with those of the OAE's Twilight Programs. I applied controls to acquire appropriate subsamples and segments for descriptive analysis. I conducted a logistic regression analysis to identify which program factors influence the probability of student graduation.

Summary

The goal of data collection and analysis was to understand how community of partners

use and enhance their knowledge of NPS' student needs and improvements. Hence, once

I interviewed, surveyed, and observed those involved the initiative, I began to analyze

and build my written analysis. The aim of my narrative addressed my research questions:

(1) Does participating in an alternative high school initiative make a quantifiable

difference in the trajectory of a student's academic career? Which aspects of

collaboration in drop-out prevention are most closely linked to positive student

outcomes?

The quantitative analysis will allow me to see the comparison of achievement or

lack of between the two programs and if in fact, the AHSI program does increase

retention and performance.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS

The findings will be presented in two major sections. The first section contains quantitative analysis of the data. Tables and charts will be included to support two main themes. The first set of analyses focused on a sample of 898 students for whom course grades and overall year-end grade point average (GPA) were available. The second set of analyses focused on a sample of 1321 students who stayed in the program, dropped out, or transferred. Finally, quantitative tables were prepared in order to compare Twilight Programs with the Alternative High School Initiative programs.

The second section contains qualitative analysis of the both programs. Beginning with staff surveys, interviews, and observations of meeting minutes of both programs, this section includes the administrations' collaborative roles in the implementation process of the Alternative High School Initiative programs. This chapter will encompass both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

The purpose of my research was to explore and evaluate whether collaboration between public, private, and non-profit administration positively influenced the performance and retention rates of alternative education students in Newark, New Jersey. The study compared performance and retention rates of students attending the existing Twilight Program and the Alternative High School Initiative Programs, Performance Learning Center and Gateway to College. The comparison was based on students' grades throughout the 2008-2009 school year and attendance rates.

The data set contained the grades by course and overall GPA for approximately 900 students in 8 twilight schools and the AHSI program. The overall GPA scores were inconsistent and in a large minority of the cases bore no relationship to the grades received in the individual courses. Courses from which students had withdrawn or had received no grade were also widespread. Several computer programs had to be written and extensive data file manipulations in SPSS had to be conducted in order to get this data set into usable condition.

The first set of analyses focused on a sample of 898 students for whom course grades and overall year-end grade point average (GPA) were available. The distribution of these students by program is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Distribution of students in Twilight and AHSI programs

	Frequency	Percent
Group:		
PLC or GtC	92	9.6
Twilight program	771	89.8
Sub-total	863	99.5
Missing	3	.5
Total	866	100.0

In constructing Table 3, if a student had taken both Twilight Program and AHSI courses, he/she was assigned to the program type in which he/she had taken the majority of courses. For five students, the type of program attended was missing or some other problem with their data was encountered which made their records unusable.

The distribution of the number of course records in the dataset is more revealing of the representation of the two program types, especially since there was quite a wide variation in the number of courses each student had taken. The distribution of completed courses between the two programs is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Distribution of completed courses across the two program types in the sample

	Frequency	Percent
PLC or GtC	514	8.6
Twilight Program	5483	91.4
Total	5997	100.0

The overall GPAs for student performance in the courses they took during a school year were inconsistently computed across students in the original data set. To ensure comparability across students, GPAs were recomputed, assigning point values of 4 to 0 for grades A to F, respectively. No differential weights for courses with more or less credits were used in these computations because the course credit data was not available. This introduced some bias into the GPA calculations in the sense that the more difficult and academically valuable courses were not weighted higher. This gave an advantage to the Twilight schools in the overall GPA calculations because lower credit courses were more likely to be taken in the Twilight programs than in the AHSI programs (e.g., Physical Education courses: 150 times more likely; Applied Skills Course: 15 times more likely).

Table 5 presents the comparison between the mean overall GPAs of the AHSI and Twilight programs.

Table 5

Comparison of mean overall GPAs of AHSI and Twilight program students

Independent Variable	Levels	Means	N	Difference Mean	Std. error of mean difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Program	AHSI	1.7532	92	.4375	.09639	4.539[a]	122.485	.000013
	Twilight	1.3157	771					

[a] Levene's test significant; equal variances not assumed.

Since the records for a substantial number of students contained a mixture of courses taken in the two types of programs, an alternative comparison was made between the mean GPA of all courses taken in the AHSI program and the mean GPA of all courses taken in the Twilight program. This comparison is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Comparison of mean grades of AHSI courses and Twilight program courses

Independent Variable	Levels	Means	N	Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Mean	Std. error of mean difference			
Program	AHSI	1.8969	514	.5229	.05239	9.980a	644.11	<.001
	Twilight	1.3740	5479					

[a] Levene's test significant; equal variances not assumed.

The comparisons in both Tables 5 and 6 indicate that performance in the AHSI program is significantly higher than in the Twilight program. When this comparison is made in a manner that allowed no overlap between the two programs (i.e., Table 6), the difference became even more pronounced and significant.

It is of interest to examine whether the superior performance of the AHSI program was maintained over all types of courses, or whether this advantage disappeared or reversed in some types of courses. The first step in making these comparisons was to group the 36 different courses into a smaller number of conceptually distinctive groupings. This was done judgmentally with the following results:

English Courses:	English I, English II, English III, English IV, Creative Writing
Math Courses:	Integrative Algebra I, Integrative Algebra II, Integrative , Geometry.
Science Courses:	Biology, Environmental Science, Comprehensive Science, Earth Science, Biology w/ Lab, Chemistry w/ Lab.
History Courses:	U.S. History I, U.S. History II, World History & Culture.
Social Science Courses:	Economics, Sociology.
Spanish Courses:	Spanish I, Spanish II.
Health Courses:	Health I, Health II, Health III, Health IV.

Applied Skills Courses: Office Systems Technology, Auto Technology I, Life Skills,

Computer Applications

Art Courses: Art Foundations, Drawing & Painting, General Art I.

Physical Education Courses: PhysEd I, PhysEd II, PhysEd III, PhysEd IV.

Table 7 presents the results of the comparison of the two program types on academic

performance in the above ten course groups;

Table 7
Comparison of academic performance of AHSI and Twilight program students in ten different course groups

Course group	Program	Means	N	Difference Mean	Std. error of mean difference	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
English	AHSI	2.117	102	.549	.120	4.576[b]	142.177	<.001
	Twilight	1.569	877					
Math	AHSI	1.785	65	.705	.142	4.961[a]	738	<.001
	Twilight	1.080	675					
Science	AHSI	1.452	73	.304	.113	2.690[b]	103.209	.008
	Twilight	1.148	704					
History	AHSI	1.797	74	.568	.149	3.799[a]	800	<.001
	Twilight	1.229	728					

Course group	Program	Means	N	Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Mean	Std. error of mean difference			
Social Science	AHSI	1.714	43			*		
	Twilight	.000	1					

Course group	Program	Means	N	Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Mean	Std. error of mean difference			
Spanish	AHSI	1.542	24	-.109	.261	-.417[a]	251	.677
	Twilight	1.651	229					
Health	AHSI	2.391	110	1.008	.110	9.196[b]	146.405	<.001
	Twilight	1.383	847					
Applied skills	AHSI	1.059	17	-.469	.178	-2.632	24.768	.014
	Twilight	1.528	265					
Art	AHSI	-	0			*		
	Twilight	1.854	233					
Phys. Ed.	AHSI	1.333	6	-.117	.215	-.543[b]	5.403	.609
	Twilight	1.450	920					

a Levene's test nonsignificant; equal variances assumed.
b Levene's test significant; equal variances not assumed.

* Insufficient cases in one of the groups to perform a t-test.

To summarize the results in Table 7, in all of the four most academically important course groups (i.e., English, Math, Science, History), mean performance was significantly higher in the AHSI program than in the Twilight program. This was also the case for the Health course group. Only in one course group, Applied Skills, was mean performance significantly higher in the Twilight program than in the AHSI program. In two of the course groups, Spanish and Physical Education, there were no significant differences in performance between the programs.

   Of further interest was the comparison of the two programs within grade. Specifically, did the differences between the two programs persist across all four grade levels represented among the enrollees (i.e., grades 9 - 12)? Again, t-tests were run to compare the programs within each grade. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Comparison of mean course performance between the AHSI and Twilight programs within each grade

Grade	Program	Means	N	Difference Mean	Std. error of mean difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
9	AHSI	1.6250	48	.725	.174	4.167[a]	1211	<.001
	Twilight	.9004	1165					
10	AHSI	1.7606	71	.601	.150	4.009[a]	1748	<.001
	Twilight	1.1596	1679					
11	AHSI	1.8767	73	.523	.137	3.826[b]	85.787	<.001
	Twilight	1.3538	1040					

12	AHSI	1.9720	322	.017	.070		.241[a]	1884	.809
	Twilight	1.9552	1564						

The significant superiority in performance of students in the AHSI program was evident for grades 9 to 11. This superiority completely disappeared in grade 12, however, with performance in the two programs being essentially equal. The performance of grade 12 students in the Twilight program appeared to have sharply increased over what it was in the lower grades, eliminating the previously existing performance gap between the two programs.

Finally, with 8 different schools offering Twilight programs, it is of interest to examine whether the superior performance of the AHSI program in comparison to the overall Twilight program is maintained in comparison to all Twilight program schools. This question was assessed by conducting one-way ANOVA using school as the independent variable and course grade as the dependent variable. Upon finding a significant overall F (Brown-Forsythe adjusted $F = 49.433$ with 8 and 5191.32 degrees of freedom, yielding a $p < .0001$), Bonferroni post hoc comparisons were conducted. The subset of comparisons between the AHSI program and the 8 Twilight schools is reported in Table 9.

Table 9
Bonferroni post hoc comparisons of mean course grades in AHSI program vs. each of the 8 Twilight program schools

PLC or GtC Mean (I)	School (J)	School (J) Mean	Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig. (Bonferroni $p = .00625$)
	Barringer Twilight	1.150	.747	.068	<.001
	Central Twilight	1.526	.371	.068	<.001
	Eastside Twilight	2.064	-.167	.073	.770
	Malcolm X. Shabazz	1.192	.705	.073	<.001
1.897	Pathways Academy	1.184	.713	.083	<.001
	Suspension Off Site Academy	1.448	.449	.072	<.001
	Weeqhaic Twilight	1.146	.751	.068	<.001
	Westside Twilight	1.289	.608	.083	<.001

Table 9 makes it apparent that while the AHSI performance advantage was maintained at 7 of the 8 Twilight schools, it was not maintained at one of the schools: Eastside Twilight. The reason for the greater apparent success of the latter school needs to be explored before arriving at any conclusion about the relative effectiveness of the two programs as a whole. It may be that the implementation of the Twilight program at Eastside Twilight is sufficiently more effective to enable Twilight programs to match the effectiveness of AHSI programs, at least insofar as effectiveness is measured by academic performance.

The second set of analyses focused on a sample of 1321 students who stayed in the program, dropped out, or transferred. The distribution of these students by program is presented in Table 10.

Table 10
Distribution of students in retained, dropout, and transfer categories by AHSI and Twilight programs

Program Type	Status	Frequency	Percent
	Retained in program	117	48.0
AHSI	Dropout: Incarceration	2	.8
	Dropout: Dissatisfied w/school	61	25.0
	Dropout: Economic or Employment	4	1.6
	Dropout: Married or Pregnant	9	3.7
	Dropout: Reason Unknown	43	17.6
	Transferred to other public school in district	3	1.2
	Trans to any public school out of district	2	.8
	Transferred to State/City institute for incarceration	1	.4
	Transferred to alternative adult education	2	.8
	Total	244	100.0
	Retained in program	851	79.0
Twilight Program	Dropout: Incarceration	2	.2
	Dropout: Dissatisfied w/school	6	.6
	Dropout: Economic or Employment	1	.1
	Dropout: Married or Pregnant	1	.1
	Dropout: Reason Unknown	79	7.3
	Dropout: Death of student	1	.1
	Transferred to another registration	1	.1

Program Type	Status	Frequency	Percent
	in same school		
	Transferred to other public school in district	92	8.5
	Transferred to non-public school in state	1	.1
	Transferred to any public school out of district	7	.6
	Transferred to State/City institute for Incarceration	23	2.1
	Transferred to State institute for treatment of disability	2	.2
	Transferred out of state or country	9	.8
	Transferred to alternative adult education	1	.1
	Total	1077	100.0

Table 11 summarizes the data in Table 10 even further, showing the totals of retained vs. dropped-out and transferred, by program.

Table 11
Distribution of students in retained vs. dropped-out and transferred categories by AHSI and Twilight programs

	Program Type		
	AHSI	Twilight Program	Total
Dropped out or transferred	127	226	353
Retained in Program	117	851	968
Total	244	1077	1321

The chi-square for Table 11 was 98.039, which was highly significant (p < .001),

indicating that there was a much higher likelihood of prematurely leaving the AHSI

program than the Twilight program. The losses in the AHSI program were almost entirely

due to dropouts rather than transfers (119 vs. 8). It is interesting to note that the

distribution of losses in the Twilight program was almost the reverse: 90 vs. 136 for

dropouts and transfers, respectively.

The distribution of retained students vs. dropouts and transfers did not exhibit any

significant disparities by gender. These results are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12
Distribution of retained students vs. dropouts, transfers, and total leaves by gender

| | Gender | | |
Transferred or not	Female	Male	Total
Did NOT Transfer Out	501	676	1177
Transferred out	53	91	144
Total	554	767	1321

| | Gender | | |
Dropped Out or not	Female	Male	Total
Did NOT Drop Out	461	651	1112
Dropped Out	93	116	209
Total	554	767	1321

| | Gender | | |
Stayed In Program or not	Female	Male	Total
Stayed	408	560	968
Did NOT stay	146	207	353
Total	554	767	1321

Ethnic comparisons were also made between Blacks and Hispanics, Blacks and Whites, and Hispanics and Whites on Retention vs. Non-retention, Dropouts vs. Non-dropouts, and Transfers vs. Non-transfers. In none of these comparisons did the disparities between ethnic groups even approach significance.

QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY

The results indicate that the overall performance of the AHSI students is significantly higher than in the Twilight program. In regard to the course grades and GPAs for the core required courses in both programs, the AHSI students' mean performance was higher in English, History, Mathematics, and Science than those in the Twilight program. There was not any indication of difference in the curriculum noted. The Twilight program did have a higher mean performance in the Applied Skills courses, however.

In addition, the comparison of both groups by grade indicated that mean GPAs were significantly higher among AHSI students in grades 9 to 11. This difference between the groups disappeared in grade 12. This was due to the fact that the mean GPA level of Twilight students in grade 12 was considerably higher than the mean GPAs in the lower grades.

Finally, post hoc tests following a significant F produced by an ANOVA in course grades for the 8 Twilight schools and the AHSI program revealed that the AHSI performance advantage was maintained relative to 7 of the 8 Twilight sites. The exception was Eastside Twilight, where the students achieved significantly higher

performance than that of AHSI students. This outcome needs to be explored further before a final conclusion is made regarding Eastside Twilight.

In regards to the retention rates, a sample of 1321 students in both programs was analyzed. The chi-square for the distribution of students retained vs. dropped out and transfers in both programs was 98.039, which was highly significant. The likelihood of students prematurely leaving the AHSI program is significantly higher than those leaving the Twilight program. The losses in the AHSI program were almost entirely due to drop-outs rather than transfers. In contrast, in the Twilight program, the distribution of losses was almost the reverse: 90 dropouts vs. 136 transfers.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

This section of the findings consists of a narrative of the faculty/staff survey results, interviews, and observations conducted. The objective was to evaluate the implementation process of the collaborative initiative; the Alternative High School Initiative as it pertained to student performance. Using an anonymity approach, I conducted anonymous email surveys. These surveys provided a more rigid analysis with approximately 50 people. The surveys provided a limited amount of information from a large group of people, which was useful for me to know what the current Office of Alternative Education staff thinks about the AHSI program. The survey respondents consisted of teachers, administration, guidance counselors and social workers of each school site. I retrieved email addresses from the Newark Public Schools' web site. The surveys allowed the respondents the opportunity to tell me more about their knowledge of the models, concerns regarding these changes, their preferences of site of new models or

Twilight, their desire to remain with OAE or not, and to provide the information about the Alternative High School Initiative that interests them the most if any. The email survey approach served as an advantage with time, no cost involved and the novelty element of an email survey probably stimulated higher response levels than ordinary spam mail surveys.

Survey Respond Rates

A total of 61 responses were returned after two rounds of electronic mailings from November 2009 to January 2010. Of these 45 responses were classified as valid. The response rate of this survey is calculated by the number of surveys completed divided by the total number of survey instruments electronically mailed and multiplied by 100 (Fink, 2003; Fowler 2002). Therefore, for this study, the overall response rate was 55.4% (61/110*100) and the valid response rate was 40.9% (45/110*100).

While survey research experts like Babbie (1990) and Wysocki (2007) dispute that for social science research, a response rate of 50% is ample, 60% is good, and 70% is great, this does not hold true within public administration. The representative survey response rate is just about 30%. This is especially true for those studies whose focal point lies within metropolitan administrative offices and public service agents (see, for example, Brown et al., 1998; Kearny et al., 2000; and Wang, 2001). The main concern of low response rate is the non-response predisposition that may take place during the development of collecting data. Non-response in a survey with many sources of data and relationships between the sources is a very complex phenomenon. Evaluation of the effect of non-response is even more difficult because only limited data are available for

the non-respondents. To deal with these problems, multiple methods are used to investigate potential non-response bias. If in fact there are non-response biases, a low response rate might weaken the representativeness of the survey sample, and consequently its generalizability to the population (Folz, 1996). As a result, the representativeness of the survey responses has to be observed in this study given its response rate.

The representativeness of the survey responses in terms of employees of Newark Public Schools' Office of Alternative Education are shown in the Tables and Figures below in Table 13.

Staff Survey Responses
Table 13

Surveys Returned By Site

		Shabazz	5
Barringer	4		
		SOSA	9
Central	6		
		Weequahic	5
East Side	5		
		West Side	8
Pathways	3		
		Total Surveys Returned	45

Although all of the administrators and faculty from the OAE sites did not respond to the survey instrument, the responses were quite representative of overall group. Therefore, this study reflects current practices to obtain effective collaboration among the partnering agencies in the alternative high school initiatives and the perceptions and opinions of OAE staff within Newark Public Schools.

While the respondents represent the overall staff population, the reasons for the response rate needed to be explored. In particular, there are three reasons that may have led to the response rate.

1. Inaccurate email addresses. Although the contact information on the websites, which include names, addresses, and position titles, some of the employees were no longer employed, taken other positions within the school district, are retired, or do not access their emails as often. This was the biggest inconvenience of concentrating on specific respondents instead of a general post. Eight survey questionnaires were returned due to wrong email addresses posted on the web site, but several others have been rejected.

2. No time to fill out the surveys. Some OAE staff sent remorseful emails to the author, notifying that they were either too busy or could not take respond at that very moment of receiving the survey, although not drawn out. Aside from their responsibilities in daily public service roles, as key research subjects in the field of public administration in an urban city undergoing major transformation, the staff must also manage what is required of their time.

3. Hesitant to respond. According to the literature review, studies have recognized certain distinctive features and dynamics that, along with the expertise of management, inform the collaboration process, including communication, continuity, unanimity, involvement, and a history of successful accomplishments integrated services systems throughout the local community, (Hogue et al, 1995;

Keith et al, 1993).   Indeed, the organizations' administrations must promote collaboration and experimentation by providing room for failure in order to encourage practice actions to solve complicated problems (DiIulio, Garvey, Kettl, 1993).   That being stated, if OAE staff thought that collaboration was not being conducted as introduced in the introduction of the study, they may have decided not to respond. Assuming this is true, the response rates are likely to be accurate of the existing performance of collaboration. Consequently, this information would be revealing, demonstrating the scarcity of the form of collaboration this study aimed to achieve.

Demographic Information of Respondents

The greater part of the respondents (84.44%) were teachers and site administrators, of which 65.78% (n=25) were teachers and 34.21% (n=13) site administrators. The rest of the respondents 15.55% (n=7) were site clerks and school social workers.

Survey Responses

The goal of this part of the study is to determine to what extent the staff of the Office of Education had been as involved with the district-wide decisions made for the 2008-2009 academic year.

According to the valid responses, 56% of responding OAE staff members had enough working knowledge on Gateway to College and the Performance Learning Center, to make an informed decision in selecting a program for possible employment. However, 42% of the staff did not feel that they possessed enough information on the

models and the collaborative effort taking place. Some teachers shared that they were not aware of whom the partners were and felt they had not been informed of the roles OAE was responsible for overall. Staff would have liked more information on *program objectives, purpose, work hours, student eligibility requirements, expected deliverables, use, implementation, and availability of (support) resources, teacher and social worker responsibilities, and evidence-based research supporting the program success*. Staff also suggested that visiting and working at program sites and receiving model abstracts would have assisted them in making a better decision.

When asked about interest in putting the incoming relationships to work with partners, the staff had mixed feelings about their desire for employment with either one of the models. Outside of the direct OAE staff located in the downtown area of Newark, several staff members shared that their site locations have not been directly informed of the decisions and process of the AHSI models. In reference to the these relationships, 49% OAE staff stated they were interested in putting these relationships to work as long as there was job security. Thirty one percent shared they were not willing to work with the new partners and 20% were not certain. Those who were indifferent or did not interested at all expressed that the lack of information provided by the director of the Office of Education, has not given them the opportunity to make a constructive and informative decision on employment within the models. "Communication had not been effectively shared with the Twilight sites. There were only 3 staff development dates scheduled and the information regarding the new models coming in was only presented to all of the OAE staff on the last staff development meeting," was a shared theme among the respondents.

The OAE staff members were informed that the Office of Alternative Education will be experiencing significant changes that will directly impact their position within the department. This information provided was provided with expectations that views of these models would have broaden and that the current staff would have been just as eager to be a part of the models as they have been in the Twilight Programs. With this knowledge, 65% of the responding staff members want to continue to work for OAE considering their job is secured, 11% (5 respondents) do not want to maintain employment in the department, and 24% are unsure of their future plan with OAE.

Other NPS departments that OAE Staff expressed interest in are as follows:

- Attendance
- Central Office
- Day school
- Guidance (day time hours)
- Home instruction
- Media Department
- SAC
- Special education
- Staff development
- Teaching & Learning
- Testing & Evaluation
- Traditional High School
    - Art HS
    - Weequahic HS

Since the collaboration was implemented, OAE and partnering agencies and organizations required that students have increase interaction with all faculty and staff throughout Newark. In order to conceive an increase in working with partners, the AHSI models required that faculty and staff work hours in the day or evenings in order to have the most effective amount of internal and external services for the students. With this information, 60% percent of the responding staff members prefer to work with

stakeholders, 31%, and 22% responding that they do not have a preference. Eighteen percent did not respond to the specified question.

The training sessions for NPS staff will take place during the summer months. These trainings were be attended by stakeholders who have taken part in the initiative. Each training was alternately hosted by partners in order to help the collaboration make partner organizations' influence on each other more equal. When inquiring about staff willingness to participate in mandatory staff development training, OAE staff members overwhelmingly stated that they anticipated their participation in summer training sessions *(78% responded-Yes; 4% responded-No; 18% did not provide an answer).* Overall, the staff shared they wanted to build a relationship with the stakeholders prior the models taking effect and felt it would benefit the program outcome if there was a consistent basis of meetings among stakeholders at all level.

When responding to the question regarding the student's role in the development of the education process, staff members described student characteristics as opposed to their role. Many stated that students should be actively involved, prepared, and willing to learn, but failed to indicate the student's ongoing role. The following concepts were expressed:

- Preparedness and willingness to learn
- "Ready, willing, and compliant"
- "Perform, achieve, and succeed"
- Involved, interested, committed, and motivated
- Possess an open mind and strong desire to learn and succeed
- To seek knowledge
- Equal partner in the learning process
- Parental support and community engagement are necessary
- Students provide teacher with a sense of direction when expressing their interest and help to guide their educational attainment

When describing their hopes and concerns about the AHSI models, staff mentioned that

they had **concerns** about the following areas:

- Timely updates
- Measurable outcomes
- Maintaining structure consistent with the model
- Meeting the social and psychological needs of students
- Placement of low functioning students
- Adjustment of OAE students to models
- Fine-tune selection process
- Providing students with assistance for college application and etc
- Student discipline

Hopes
- Increased recruitment
- Increased student interest in education
- Molding proactive citizens
- Increased use of technology and other educational resources
- Utilizing multiple teaching strategies
- Acquiring energetic, innovative, creative, and motivated staff
- Having an education process characterized with vigor, relevance, and personal relationships
- Innovative curriculum
- Excitement in classes
- Staff able to work as a team
- Increased staff and student dedication

Ninety-eight percent of OAE staff members' state that they can adapt to new

experience. Sixty-two percent of staff members are able to easily adapt with 36% finding

it somewhat easy to adapt to new experiences. Two percent of respondents did not

answer this question.

Other questions, concerns, or comments to address in the monthly newsletter:

- How and when will the Twilight program end
- Program locations/space
- Programs do not fit the needs of OAE

- Placement of low functioning students
- Overcrowded classes
- Lack of recognition of staff that go far and beyond for students
- Unable to obtain approval to get newsletter printed
- Maintain open line of communication
- Will the selection process include non-NPS employees?
- How will student discipline issues be addressed?
- Paid training?
- Provide clear information on the direction of the department, staff should be included in the process
    - Provide,
        - Workshops
        - Seminars
        - Training
    - Do not provide
        - Speeches
        - Memos
        - Surveys

Interviews

Anthropologists usually study humans, and in doing so they must realize that any information they discover or provide may result in a change in lifestyle which can be either positive or negative, and as such, the anthropologist must try to avoid anything which can bring about harm to an individual or a group. In studying local positions, such as urban development, the researcher must understand that recommendations made by him or her can result in changes in the urban structure; such change should not be looked upon lightly, as even slight change can forever alter development of that community (AAA, 2000). For my study, I conducted anonymous interviews with an Administrator/ Principals of a Twilight Site and 1 from an AHSI site, a Guidance Counselor, 2 Social Workers, 1 Research Associate, 2 teachers, a City of Newark representative, 1 nonprofit representatives, and 1 philanthropic representatives.

All of these interviewees are involved in either the current program or the new collaborative reform or both. I asked questions about their current positions in with both programs. More specifically, I asked about the collaborative process outcome from their positions, the students' involvement in programs and transitional positions, parent involvement and knowledge, their interests, their lack of interest, their knowledge of the AHSI, and their preference. The interviews provided a lot of information from an individual or small number of people and provided expert and knowledgeable opinions on the collaborative initiative.

Analysis of the Data

The interview questions revealed that for those stakeholders who had experienced the reorganizations in 2008-2009 or processes were not fairly transparent.

For the most recent collaborative reform, in order to take an in-depth look at and analyze AHSI models, I determined that it was critical to understand the roles of the stakeholders as they saw themselves. Furthermore, since collaboration is defined in the organizational literature as a process of contribution, in the course of which people, groups, and organizations work collectively to accomplish preferred outcomes. All notes were transcribed following the interviews. At the end of the day the researcher prepared a written version of each interview. Details of the origination of the transcript were noted via hand written notes.

After reading each interview line by line marking off each time a particular idea or concept was mentioned or explained, and indicated in a code the subject of each response. The coding process was initiated by rereading the interviews, so the content

became clear and helped capture dominant ideas expressed by the participants in their own words. As this process continued, common patterns or themes began to emerge that captured the collective responses of the study participants. The responses were informative and I gained insight by seeing the descriptions from each stakeholder's initial and follow-up interviews side by side. After the data was coded, I made smaller categories, and began reassembling the information into themes. This process of categorizing data was used to reflect the experiences and emotional responses of the participants. The qualitative data obtained from this study were analyzed using a thematic analysis procedure in an attempt to construct a meaningful conceptual pattern across participants' responses.

Interpretations of findings from the transcribed data are presented in accord with the study's research questions: a) Does participating in an alternative high school initiative make a quantifiable difference? b) Which aspects of collaboration in drop-out prevention are most closely linked to positive student outcomes?   Emerging themes within each of the study questions are discussed.

The Bozeman *et al.* study (on which my interview instrument is largely based) selected participants from categories of contractors, managers and researchers (Bozeman, *et al.* 2001). My study attempted to pick potential participations guided by segments of change. I wanted to identify the most promising individuals to approach when requesting participants for in-depth interviews.

In deconstructing the process and its effects I wanted to analyze the perception of the district's decision-making process via those who were involved in the process or not. By sectioning individuals I let the process itself guide me in selecting those interviewees

most able to reveal observable facts at the core of the change. I anticipated that the stakeholders involved in the collaborative process throughout Newark because of the thrust of the reform.

I had originally planned 13 interviews, placed in divisions and selected according to the level of interferences experienced by administrators, teachers, philanthropic agents and community based organization agents. Due to the length of the interviews and the richness of data provided, this number proved unrealistic. In addition, whether or not interviewees had experienced extreme disruption or remained logistically relatively intact did not seem to influence their opinions relative to the 2008-2009 reform. I therefore decided on 11 interviews.

Largely following the guidelines set out by Kvale (1996), I interviewed 11 employees working throughout the city of Newark. I judged this top level of the academic model or bottom layer of the bureaucratic model to be critical to the success or failure of any attempted organizational change.

I devised a questionnaire for interviews questions that was open-ended in nature. This was largely based on the instrument used by Rainey and Bozeman (2000). My own selection methodology served as a guide, not always rigidly adhered to, that enabled me to select a cross-section of participants based on how much the collaboration had affected their working conditions and affected their morale.

I chose participants within Newark Public Schools, a representative from the Mayor's Office, a philanthropic agent, and social service agents throughout Newark. My initial contact was by phone, where I explained the purpose of my study, assured confidentiality and specified the estimated amount of time the interview would take. I

also assured potential participants that I had the approval of the Individual Review Board (IRB) and all other relevant managers. They were all very concerned about anonymity or confidentiality.

My interviews necessitated setting up the interviews on designated days. All in all people were available and seemed eager to participate.

There were 11 questions in my questionnaire each having, for the most part, succeeding prompts and follow-ups. In some occasions, if the interviewee directed it, some of these were truncated.

I followed Kvale's methodology of transcription and categorization and analysis. The interviews were transcribed and subsequently categorized according to the factors condensed as they aligned with the research questions.

B. Meaning Categorization

I first established a meaning categorization for each transcribed interview. To do this I isolated the 11 factors which comprised the major subject matter of the questionnaire. Each would then be touched on and ascribed varying orders of importance by the interviewees. Some were deemed to be of little or no importance by researchers but overall all the factors were worthy of elaboration by some.

Collaboration (general): The collaboration in general was the subject matter of my first question. This was a broad question that often proved valuable when subjects expressed their contributions in working within collaboration or not. I asked each subject the extent to which they had been invited to participate or had indeed taken part in organizational change. Since I had limited my inquiry to only 11 stakeholders within the

collaborative initiative, very few expressed any involvement or participation in the decisions made for the 2008-2009 OAE transformation.

Prior Organization: I asked my subjects if any had been aware of the previous OAE administration or organizations in effect since 1999.   All have been around prior the new collaborative initiative and stated that it was an organization of complacency and not much vigor. The district participants seemed to have been so comfortable in their positions that the failure of the department was not apparent until minor discrepancies were difficult to deal with. Two of the participants stated that the failure became apparent when students were not coming back to school without any follow-up or reprimands.

Reason and Desire for Current Reorganization: This question elicited a variety of answers, many of a political and external nature. Nevertheless, the over-arching experiences were the challenges of inconsistent administrative behaviors and roles. The participants shared that the failure of the Twilight Programs had more to do with the internal administrative leadership of the OAE and not with students' accountability and performance.   The students were not able to meet the expectations because the teachers were not only teachers but also agents of several services that were not explicitly divided within the roles of those in the department. The participants mentioned there are also some positive and negative experiences working in a team setting within Newark Public School's Office of Alternative Education. The general consensus for the positive experiences was the ability to come together to build on resources and captivate the ideas

of several minds with the fundamental knowledge and experiences needed to meet expectations. The negative experiences stated were the lack of consistencies and follow through with agreed upon services, break down of communication, things that are outlined in a memorandum of understanding not being honored. A couple of the district participants mentioned the manipulation of staff members to perform duties outside the realm of their assignment that were not only qualified to do so, but were also paid for these duties; this payment was called *pro-rata.* This term was used because extra compensation was easily compensated without any tax deductions. Responses for this category depended on either the isolation or autonomy of the various employees. Those who were insolated by 'projects,' tended to be somewhat casual. Many, however, criticized the time, and other resources consumed by bureaucratic change.

Handling Collaborative Diversity: Within the concept of widening boundaries, this procedure proved to be the single most important subject in terms of impact and elicited the most passionate responses. Few were in favor of the implementation and results. Funding, diminishing resources and increased competition led not to rage but a demoralized acceptance. From the responses, it is safe to say that the external stakeholder have more to gain than the internal parties. District participants stated that although they tried to make sure that they were adhering to the districts policies and procedures, sometimes externals partners were so focused on the goals and objectives of the project that they were not considerate of the larger bureaucracy that were included in the process to implement the initiative.

Roles and Responsibilities: The participants stated that it was important for the inclusion team members to be completely supportive during the planning and implementation phases of a project. There is a need to be flexible and understanding towards situations that we have no to little control over and to communicate the goals and expectations of the partnership as well as to provide a means of checks and balances between the groups and most important to advocate for the students' needs. However, there were instances where power from specific stakeholders, specifically those who were financially banded, was clearly an issue. When it came to power, it was clear to the participants that in any change there are presumably winners and losers. Since the impact of organizational change on all stakeholders bench is of primary importance to this inquiry, opinions regarding this factor were relevant.

Information and Knowledge: Aside from those participants who represented the stakeholders contributing financially, not everyone was quite clear on all of the AHSI programs. Currently, the information provided to the current staff the literature that was provided via the models website and a half day tour of one of the schools in New York. Some participants stated they would have liked to have visited several schools in urban areas as well as interviewed teachers, students and parents more in depth during the planning stages. It seems that everyone who will be involved on some level with the transition and implementation of the models was not included in all aspects of trainings or the decision-making process.

Twilight? AHSI? Which do you prefer and why?: This question was primarily answered by the internal stakeholders. There was a dominant preference to continue to work with

the Twilight Program. The participants shared the concerns of bringing in new initiatives or models without having all of the necessary details, materials, or sufficient training to implement such an initiative. The participants felt it was more effective to mend the issues within the Twilight programs instead of re-inventing the wheel.

Effective or Affective? Participants shared that having these new programs added some additional stress at work.   There is also a lack of proper training to perform the duties effectively. As a result, the students do not gain all of the aspects of the programs. The programs are good for some of the students but not for students who have behavioral, social and emotional problems that need to be addressed. Also the demands of trying to accommodate the stakeholders and NPS policies can be challenging.

Working with Stakeholders: Services and Outreach- This is a flawed factor since, in reality; it deals with two discrete concepts and is thus broken into two separate topics. Service is defined as the enabling power and expertise stakeholder provide to the overall educational community – an important example relates to the archiving and distribution of educational data. Outreach, on the other hand, is the serious duty of passing on statistical results to the community, be they legislative, or academic. District participants shared that at times other stakeholders want their programs implemented according to the models plan, however working within a state operated district there are certain mandates that must be adhered to for students. External participants believe that the OAE is starting to address most of the basic needs of the student and parent population for the AHSI programs in, other participants see the OAE as focusing exclusively on education right now. They mentioned a lack of medical care, substance abuse, or quality

employment linkages. Usually the district stakeholder felt that external stakeholders are insensitive to that matter because they need their program implemented by their structured outline and again, have a personal goal.

Academic Alignments: Participants shared an interest in the PLC curriculum because it is structured with rigor. The GtC curriculum has not been thoroughly introduced to all of the stakeholders congruently. Some participants shared that they have never visited the GtC site, which for some is right across the street, because the administration had not introduced GtC as a site where visits were welcomed. Throughout the year, meetings were being held to ensure that the students will be taught the necessary courses that are needed to pass HSPA and other state assessments.

Challenges: One of the main challenges shared by all participants was the idea of collaboration and Competition. This was a revealing yin/yang topic since a reform would hopefully encourage collaboration and dampen competition. Surprisingly this was not always the case. District participants stated that although the external stakeholders had different goals and responsibilities, there were indirect cases of competition for power; specifically from those with higher roles or positions. The internal participants' concerns are that some of the external stakeholders have never worked with these students before and do not have the experience with the issues that are brought to school by theses students. In some instances, their issues are far more involved than students who are attending traditional schools. Some participants pointed to the philanthropic agencies and argued that weaknesses are solely communication and coordination-based. Conversely,

the external stakeholders believe that human resources need to be improved and that Newark's lack of resources may be an issue at some point.

Another issue was dealing with students and parents not being happy with the hours of the programs, the locations of some and the classroom structures. There have been some challenges due to the fact that students and staff are traditionally used to twilights hours and credit recovery. The participants shared that it would have been beneficial for the district to prepare for these programs a year prior in order to modify, adjust and assess the problems of implementation. Also, while some needs are being met by the AHSI, other needs may not be met such as healthcare and residential situations. Again, external stakeholders cite health and housing problems as key factors why some students do not succeed in traditional or alternative education.

Students and Twilight or AHSI: Overall, the participants shared that students have expressed their interest in both the AHSI, but have preferred to stay at their prior Twilight locations. These students are over-aged and under-credited and can pick up missed classes faster and in a shorter amount of time. AHSI models operate with a 6-7 hour block. Twilight operates from 4-5 hours for students. Although some adjustments have been made to align the time, the hours are still not closely monitored. Also, while some respondents from the Office of Alternative Education pointed to waiting lists as evidence of recruitment success, others also respond that the OAE were spreading the resources too thin and did not feel the students were being adequately served.

While these interviews with stakeholders took place over an extended period of time, there is consistent doubt about the intake process. Many stakeholders believe that this process must be transparent and clear for students, parents, and partners.

The above interpreted themes were then put in juxtaposed with the transcribed interview text. Interviews averaged from approximately 20-30 minutes – although some lasted considerably longer. As I gained facility with the format and process I was able to exercise more influence on duration. Nevertheless, it was often rewarding to let subjects speak freely often fitted nicely as other factors emerged.

Observations

Each stakeholder meeting was observed on-site once a month within the corresponding Office of Alternative Education school program for approximately three hours per session, resulting in a total of twenty-four hours of observation of direct service. These observations occurred based on the access granted by the OAE and the schedule of the stakeholders visits during the time frame of this study. The work experience of stakeholders varies from a long history in alternative education or alternative initiatives around the state to those with little background before the current project. Most stakeholders hold advanced degrees in one or more fields relating to education. However, the career paths of some stakeholders have taken them away from their original undergraduate or even graduate studies. These stakeholders were all invested in the development of AHSI. Observations included time spent by observing in the green room; the general meeting area located at the Office of Alternative Education with alternative education, the city of Newark administrators, community based organization leaders, and providing direct modeling and dialogue among all stakeholders.

In addition, stakeholders were observed taking part in the meetings. These observations averaged approximately three hours in length, depending upon the content and schedule of the activity. In total, there were eight observations completed culminating in approximately 24 hours of data.

The purpose of these observations was to verify the conveyance of knowledge from all of the stakeholders as delivered via the collaborative service. Information was collected via field notes which were also collected in a journal. Notes were content-directed, based in part on the agenda set forth for each activity and the information was designed to convey to its recipients. An additional review of these notes was conducted the morning following each observation to check for accuracy and omissions. Debriefing was also conducted, when possible, with the participants immediately following each observation.

My observation involved sitting in on eight stakeholder meetings when they discussed the dialogues I analyzed. Observations took place over the course of eight months on the first Friday of every month. During observations, I sat at different desks depending on availability; this allowed me close access, at some point, to all of the stakeholders. This was highly advantageous as it afforded me access to conversations that I otherwise might have missed. For example, in one of the meetings, I was sitting directly behind two officers from the philanthropic agencies who, after a discussion about the financial allocations of the AHSI programs, continued to discuss the topic in a rather passionate and discontent manner. Their body languages showed signs of disappointed outcome in reference to the performance measured of student grades and attendance. In fact, the most frequent occurrences were the disagreements when discussing these

matters. Apparently, the external stakeholders did not seem fond of the information provided by staff of OAE. As per the report presented in January 2009, twenty-nine percent of the students left school to earn money, 25% did not like school, 11% percent became pregnant, 11% either entered in the criminal justice system or were suspended from school and did not return. The remaining 46% of students left school due to homelessness, expulsion, familial problems, truancy, or street life. Seventeen of 25 students that provided a response to the question "when did you stop going to school," stated they stopped attending school at age 17. Obstacles for students in the AHSI programs include transportation to the facility, gang affiliations, unstable home environments, teenage pregnancy, and a lack of confidence. All of which are the same as the issues presented in the Twilight Programs. Uncertainty and skepticism exist for many students and parents about the unknown such as entering a facility such as the Office of Education, enrolling in higher education, etc. According to one of the representatives from a social service agency, students and parents were becoming frustrated because they felt their time is being wasted or if they are getting the "run-around." Therefore, it is essential to make sure that persons who are referred to the AHSI program are eligible. When students enter the Office of Alternative Education, there should be a clear and concise process that respects their time and effort for coming to the facility.

The future occupational aspirations of the student vary from massage therapist, to lawyer, firefighter, registered nurse, real estate, engineer, and criminal justice professional, and careers working with children. More than half (63%) of the students hope to graduate from either a 2-year or 4-year college. Through the information provided by the stakeholders, ie, social service providers and school social workers, I

learned that AHSI students have had contact with DYFS, the juvenile justice system, and the criminal justice system (due to parental incarceration). Five shared were mentioned to have shared a household with more than 7 other members. The youth indicated to the social service providers that re-enrolling in school has significantly improved their familial relationships, and many are looking forward to college, although some lack guidance and direction. This information, while compared to those students in the Twilight Program, did not seem to impress the other stakeholders, especially the philanthropic agency. In addition, Attendance of students should be a key priority for all relevant stakeholders. Even though the AHSI were doing well with student attendance in comparison to the Twilight Program, these numbers needed improvement for students to acquire the skills they need to succeed.

Each day I brought my laptop to class on which I recorded notes such as when someone raised her/his hand, etc. It was not possible to record every movement that occurred in the green rooms; instead, I recorded atypical occurrences or something which stood out as unusual. These occurrences included the boisterous discussions between OAE employees and other city stakeholders attempting to get floor time during a discussion about AHSI performance; also, when it appeared that the stakeholders were all sitting with representatives from their own agencies, the tension of disagreement was evidently there. Other instances similar to the unusual occurrences were also witnessing stakeholders answer personal cell phone calls while the meetings were in session, late appearances from either the lead administrators of the agencies or staff in general, and a lack of formal addressing from one representative to another.

The data from the observations of the eight meetings were transcribed, and I created one Microsoft Word file (which houses the transcriptions) for each meeting that I observed.

One point that should be made is that, during my observations, after each meeting, I usually had about five minutes to chat with stakeholders before their next meeting. It was during these times that the stakeholder and I really got to know each other and where some interesting information regarding their beliefs. Stakeholders that were not OAE employees shared their concerns about resources, especially human resources, may be needed. The current personnel did not seem to exemplify the abilities to operate the daily responsibilities required to assist students with the coordination of the services.

A general issue voiced by one of the philanthropic agencies was that there is a need for more consistent communication between partners so everyone knows what is going on at the Office of Alternative Education; specifically with recruitment updates on the AHSI. Some partners felt excluded from certain activities and do not feel that the OAE is marketing the AHSI programs in order to eventually tap into a larger drop-out population..

Overall, there was great excitement that permeated throughout the discussions in the meetings about the continued evolution of the AHSI AHSI programs. It is a near consensus opinion that traveling around the city for different needs is a problem for Newark students, parents, and other guardians. The schools should be built so that they are strong enough to survive changes in personnel within the center and administration changes in school and city level. No consensus image exists for what the AHSI is and

should be. Different people have different visions and this is acknowledged by many

stakeholders.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

First, gradually more complex social and economic problems are challenging governments all over the world. After the current recession in the United States, the vital roles governments play in providing public services, enhancing education, protection of the public and improving citizens' way of life were highlighted by all social outlets and the public. Consequently, the demand for accountability, transparency, and measuring performance has never been so prevalent among citizens. Concurrently, all sectors, particularly the public sector, have been facing incredible challenges due to declining fiscal and human resources. As a result, public, private, and nonprofit partnerships have become rather common in the field of public administration. The representation of public administration as Weberian hierarchy is bringing forth an image of the interorganizational network. Although not new in the world of public administration, it is rather part of larger global trends that transcend sector and place (Friedman 2005).

The research on collaboration, particularly collaboration for public purposes, is very consistent in recognizing the significant role of leadership in the success or failure of collaborative endeavors. Linden's study of collaboration in government and nonprofit agencies led to his conclusion that "leadership makes a huge difference" (2002, 146). Similarly, Jeff Luke (1998), following the work of Crosby and Bryson (2005), finds that in today's interconnected world, public leadership—which he distinguishes from organizational and public sector leadership—is essential. Public leadership "is a type of leadership that evokes collaboration and concerted action among diverse and often competing groups toward a shared outcome" (1998, 33). An abundance of research has

been conducted to rationalize the need and reasons for attainment. Moreover, the topic continues to exist with extensive experimental studies using quantitative as well as qualitative methods.

Pursuing the inquisitiveness, this study compared the performance and retention rate among students in an existing alternative education program with students in a new alternative high school initiative. The study is conducted quantitatively using data collected from Newark Public School and qualitatively using staff surveys, stakeholder interviews, and observations of meetings among several public, private, and nonprofit administrators throughout Newark, New Jersey.

This study provides a definition, based on the literature of collaboration, specifically process and organizational outcome commenced by public administrators. It then utilizes the collaboration as an empirical workstation in order to examine what aspects may contribute to a considerable position in shaping administrators' approach, which scholars mention as among central factors determining the accomplishment of collaboration among sectors.

This study establishes stakeholder's (public, private, and nonprofit administrators) position in regards to the collaboration as an assembly which consists of five level of involvements: sufficient knowledge to assess, interest in putting relationships to work, perceived broadening in views, willingness to work with partners, and willingness to work within cross-sectoral trainings.

The study established that, although the collaboration was being exceedingly publicized throughout Newark, New Jersey, there are undeniably noteworthy dissimilarities in the administrators' perceptions toward collaboration in terms of these

five levels of measurements. Dissimilarity in administrators' attitudes increased as the dimension of attitudes moved from theoretical to practical.

The study tested for the equality of variances to establish the validity of the AHSI models and empirically tested the mean overall Grade Point Average and grades of both, AHSI and Twilight Programs. Rejecting the null hypotheses that participating in an alternative high school initiative does not make a quantifiable difference, the results indicated that the students in the AHSI program do in fact perform significantly higher than those in the Twilight program. Taking a step further into the data and analyzing whether the greater performance of the AHSI program was upheld in all of the courses demonstrated that the mean performance was significantly higher in the AHSI program than in the Twilight program. The comparisons were grouped into 36 different courses into a smaller number of theoretically distinct groupings categorized under: English, Math, Science, and History. In addition, the performance was also higher within the Health courses and not so much in the Applied Skills courses. Even more interesting was the difference between the two programs across all four grade levels. When t-tests were run to compare the programs within each grade, the results indicated that the performance was significantly higher in grades 9 to 11. While the performance of the students in the 12th grade attending the AHSI program decreased, the performance of 12th graders in the Twilight program increased. Finally, in comparing the academic performance at each specific Twilight site and AHSI program, the one-way ANOVA using school as the independent variable and course grade as the dependent variable, the AHSI program had an advantage over 7 of the 8 Twilight sites. Eastside Twilight had a greater performance among all other Twilight sites and even the AHSI program.

The study also demonstrates that in reference to the retention rates of both programs, there is a stronger possibility that students will precipitately leave the AHSI program before leaving the Twilight program. Those who had dropped out of the AHSI program were utterly due to dropping out instead of transferring out. The outcome for the Twilight program was the reverse; students were likely to transfer out instead of dropping out.

Quantifiably, the data demonstrated two scopes of information that were linked directly to the second research question. First, the AHSI program has made a quantifiable difference in reference to student performance in comparison to the Twilight program. Secondly, although the student performance was significantly higher in the AHSI program, the retention rate was still higher within the Twilight program. In order to explore the reasons for this outcome, the second research question was qualitatively investigated. Looking into which aspects of collaboration in drop-out prevention are most closely linked to positive student outcomes, stakeholders had different perspectives of what the collaborative initiative had in fact created. While the majority of the OAE staff surveyed did have a sense of perceived effectiveness of the collaboration, 42% still felt they were not included in the decision-making process. They also suggested their desired interests regarding the aspects of the program models, roles, and responsibilities. The perception of the staff in regards to the increase in the quality of working relationships was mixed among those who did respond to the question. The major concern among the staff who did respond was that the communication was not extended beyond the central office and the Office of Alternative Education; which is located in the downtown area and only a few steps away from the central office. Those who were

indifferent or did not interested at all expressed that the lack of information provided by the director of the Office of Education, has not given them the opportunity to make a constructive and informative decision on employment within the models. "Communication had not been effectively shared with the Twilight sites. There were only 3 staff development dates scheduled and the information regarding the new models coming in was only presented to all of the OAE staff on the last staff development meeting," was a shared theme among the respondents. However, considering how the level of communication had not been as effective among the immediate department personnel, a large majority of the staff was still on board with wanting to continue employment with the agency, even if not specifically with the new models. That being said, when creating a level of perceived increase in network density in order to provide effective services, there was still a higher percentage of the staff that was willing to work evening hours. These staff members were specific in detailing that the school hours for both the AHSI and the Twilight programs required that the most effective services could only take place during the evening hours and that it was important for all stakeholders to be proactive in their roles and responsibilities. Building fundamental relationships with the external parties was an important statement overall- perceived increase in power relationships. The staff indicated that not knowing who the primary players were from the very beginning of the process, led to tension and animosity towards those who were aware and knowledgeable of the initiative taking place.

Taking a step further into the theoretical implications; organizational collaboration and investigating whether the greater the degree of joint decision making, administration, mutuality, and trust in collaboration, the more organizations will perceive collaboration

as effective in achieving goals. The participants interviewed and observations assist in looking into which aspects of collaboration in drop-out prevention are most closely linked to positive student outcomes.

Having a broader audience speak on their level of participation in the change of alternative education reform, not much was shared in reference to their personal position in the initiative taking place. They all shared that their superiors were the major decision-makers in the process and were responsible for the position assigned to them due to their own personal experiences. Other than the educational director working with one of the foundations primarily responsible for funding the programs, the other subjects were very forthright about their responsibilities. The stakeholders, however, did share and express that the need for the reform had become apparent by 2003. The need for reform within the OAE was in fact needed and called for. Situations were arising within the department that were not allowing the administration to be effective and therefore, were becoming destructive to the expected performance of the students. Teachers were taking on roles of social workers and a variety of social service issues that they were not academically trained to perform. The leadership within the department of the Twilight Programs was inconsistent and students were not being held equally responsible for their performance. The lack of attendance and retention was indicative of what the department was not doing in order to sustain the expected performance. There was also a mention of side-deals that had been going on within the OAE department. There was not a specific reason as to why the compensated employees were selected to perform duties outside of their specific position, other than that it was a topic not publicly spoken about. Those who were

insolated by 'projects,' tended to be somewhat casual. Many, however, criticized the time, and other resources consumed by bureaucratic change.

Handling collaborative diversity was also a concept in which the participants shared different perceptions on how the collaboration impacted the students' performance. Although the results indicated that the AHSI program had a better performance rate, those interviewed who had been in direct contact with the students on a daily basis stated that the implementation and results were not favorable. They expressed that part of the reason that the AHSI program had performed better was because AHSI students had more resources provided than the Twilight Program students. Also, due to the location of both sites, students felt safer to come to school and academics was no longer an option, instead it was a desire. These participants also shared that funding was also an evident issue. While financial and curriculum resources were being taken away from the Twilight Programs, AHSI was receiving more resources. From the responses, it is safe to say that the external stakeholder have more to gain than the internal parties. Some stated that although they tried to make sure that they were adhering to the districts policies and procedures, sometimes externals partners were so focused on the goals and objectives of the project that they were not considerate of the larger bureaucracy that were included in the process to implement the initiative.

The roles and responsibilities were definitely tied to the information and knowledge of the programs. While all stakeholders shared that it was imperative for all roles and expectations to be acknowledged, there was clearly a different take on the financial aspect of the collaborative initiative. Aside from those participants who represented the

stakeholders contributing financially, not everyone was quite clear on all of the AHSI programs.

In regards to the preference of the Twilight or AHSI program, the internal stakeholders shared that there was still a dominant preference among their peers to work within the Twilight Program. Although the change was needed, they also shared that it would have benefited the district to fix the problem instead of bringing in a new program. A couple of the respondents felt that the director of the OAE was not in compliance with what was being expected of him and that the reason for failure was due to complacent behavior in the workplace. There is a common thought that working in public service will lead to a permanent job placement. As a result, the students are not able to receive all of the aspects of the programs and the creation of a new program had commenced. The demands of trying to accommodate all of the stakeholders and NPS policies are also very challenging in order to be effective.

Participants shared that at times external stakeholders want their programs implemented according to the models plan, however working within a state operated district there are certain mandates that must be adhered to for students. The external stakeholders believe that the OAE is starting to address most of the basic needs of the student and parent population for the AHSI programs in, other participants see the OAE as focusing exclusively on education right now.

One of the main challenges shared by all participants was the idea of collaboration and competition. This was a revealing yin/yang topic since a reform would hopefully encourage collaboration and dampen competition. Surprisingly this was not always the case. Participants stated that although the stakeholders had different goals and

responsibilities, there were indirect cases of competition for power; specifically from those with higher roles or positions. Some participants pointed to the philanthropic agencies and argued that weaknesses are solely communication and coordination-based. Conversely, the external stakeholders believe that human resources need to be improved and that Newark's lack of resources may be an issue at some point.

Overall, the participants shared that students have expressed their interest in both the AHSI, but have preferred to stay at their prior Twilight locations. Also, while some respondents from the Office of Alternative Education pointed to waiting lists as evidence of recruitment success, others also respond that the OAE were spreading the resources too thin and did not feel the students were being adequately served.

Contextual opportunities were an essential part of the stakeholders' ideas about the initiative. Stakeholders who spoke positively about these opportunities seem to want to learn more and get better at finding a solution to the existent problem of dropout prevention, although they had already faced insurmountable obstacles in their own experiences in Newark thus far. Stakeholders wanted improve in a comfortable environment, have control and choice in their decisions and roles and learn new things as the implementation occurs.

Surprisingly absent from the discussions were social opportunities in the meetings, although many stakeholders mentioned that they shared similar ideas and experiences with other colleagues and engaged in social activities that involved a collaborative partnerships.   The observations show that very little partner and joint learning group work was done in these meetings, which may explain why the appropriate

features of a social environment did not transfer from their own jobs activities to the collaborative effort.

Many of the contextual features hinged on assistance but were very skeptical to ask for the assistance directly. Direct requests were not made often and when they were, there was a sense of vulnerability attached. Those providing the services showed a sign of feeling constantly dependent on the administrators asking for the services; especially the foundations.

Finally, stakeholders remarked on the expectations they were anticipating from each other.   Surprisingly, it was not so much the roles that were important to these stakeholders, as it was their levels of presentation to one another In addition, it was important that stakeholders were read texts that were accessible to them in terms of vocabulary and ideas.

As a final response to the research questions, an exploratory framework for successful aspects of collaboration can be constructed upon review of the presented case. Success of collaboration in these specific partnerships for dropout preventions may be a function of several factors. First, all participants describe the public school staffs acceptance of the services and changes as critical to the relationship. Acceptance, in this case, can be contingent on multiple scenarios: the perceived value and necessity of the services to the dropout prevention programs, the level of expertise and appropriate conveyance of that knowledge between stakeholders, and the stakeholders' abilities to use their interpersonal skills effectively. This last element also includes the recognition of the all of the roles in the partnership as well as an understanding of how to make suitable recommendations for best practices within the alternative education.

Second, philosophical and policy alignment between the all of the agencies and organizations are crucial to the successful merging of the systems. This includes addressing allocation of resources from the beginning, such as identifying budgetary restrictions, time scheduled for staff training, and the number of hours of consultation needed for effective intervention. These components can be resolved by administrators early in the relationship building process and eventually be supported by an ample level of supervision and involvement. Finally, distinguishing the objective of the services is also a factor that must be clearly discussed from the beginning with all parties involved in the partnership. The intention of the services must be corresponded to all parties as a way of enhancing best practices for students in alternative education in such a marginalized city like Newark- not as a supplementary process of supervision. All of these aspects manipulate the stakeholders' deliverance and reception of the collaborative initiative; which consecutively influence the outcome of the services and their impact on alternative education. In the end, student outcome had less to do with collaboration and more to do with the available resources.

The recommendations presented to future administrators by the participants of the surveys and interviews group provide to recapitulate the purpose of this study - to communicate to stakeholders and partners from both perspectives ways in which the partnerships can result in greater success. Future movements as discussed in this case tell us that these partnerships are expected to continue. This research is designed to shed light on a specific case where collaboration already exists, as well as the positive and negative aspects of the partnerships. Administrators who are planning to develop research-based models that include educational, social, and financial, services need to be aware of the

challenges involved in integrating these structures and their differing ideologies. Knowing these issues in advance can promote explanations and positive outcomes for both the administrators and the students in alternative education they are serving.

Study Limitations

Limitations to this research are: (1) the use of only two sites in comparison to eight for the comparison of student performance services; (2) the exclusion of students' academic, social and emotional experiences in the data collection process and (3) the exclusion of parents in the data collection process. Although an official assessment of short and long-term outcomes of collaboration is not performed here, this study design does allow for an informal social validity assessment to occur. As an addition to more formal measures, the goal of social validity assessments is to appraise and document the level of intervention satisfaction and acceptability by recipients of the service (Luiselli, 2002; Luiselli et al., 2001). Luiselli et al (2001) indicate that this type of evaluation is central to the maturity of collaborative practices and services, in that it "ensures that interventions are practical, contextually appropriate, and suitable to the unique characteristics of each public school" (p.22). Several pointers usually used in these kinds of measurement include how the staff perceives the specialized capacities of the partners, the manner in which the services are delivered, and the receptiveness of the partners when problems were encountered (Luiselli, 2002). Here, the partners' capability to come together with their own training with the ecology of the public school becomes critical in terms of evaluating the service and its outcomes (Luiselli, 2002; Thomas, 2001).

Implications for Future Research

This research intends to add on to the literature concerning these distinctive types of partnerships - specifically the integration of three very different systems into a collaborative service. This single case study presents support of how these services subsist within four settings and what force they have on special services for students in alternative education in the public schools. Implications for future research include: (a) the need for studies to reveal enduring, universal effects of collaboration; (b) longitudinal studies of the effects of collaboration on alternative education issues; and (c) an evaluation of the effectiveness of collaborative training.

In addition to these recommendations for collaborative research in general, there is also a need to study the opportunity for generalizability of these findings to collaborative efforts involving other alternative education populations. Further investigation is needed to support the growing number of partnerships that are on the rise between private, public and nonprofit sectors as they endeavor to improve alternative education services in our state of economy.

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Appendix A

Table 1: Examples of Highly Predictive Risk Factors for Dropping Out of District Cohort Studies			
Type of Risk Factor	Philadelphia	Chicago	Fall River, Massachusetts
Academic Performance	Earning an F in English or math during 6th or 8th grade Failing courses and falling behind in credits in 9th grade Failing to earn a promotion in 9th grade	Low grade-point average in 9th grade Failing grades in 9th grade Low credits earned during 9th grade Falling "off-track" during 9th grade; i.e., either receiving more than one semester F in core academic courses or not earning enough credits to be promoted to 10th grade	Very low grades or attendance in 4th grade Significant decline in grades from 5th to 6th grade Significant decline in grade-point average from 8th to 9th grade Being retained in any grade during K-8 or in high school
Educational Engagement	Low attendance (80% or lower) during 6th or 8th or 9th grade Receiving a failing classroom behavior mark during 6th grade	Low attendance during 9th grade	Significant drop in attendance beginning in 6th grade

Source: Adapted from Jerald, 2006

Appendix B

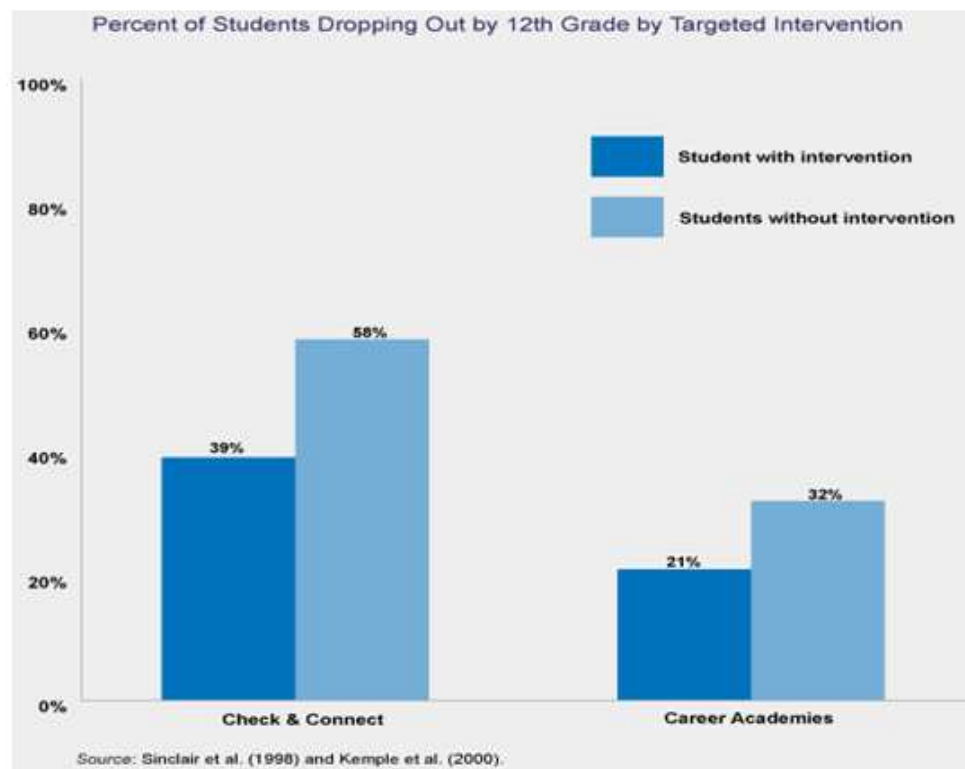| Table 2: Why Teenagers Drop Out	
Percentage of spring 2002 high school sophomores who had left school without completing a four-year program as of spring 2004, by reason for leaving school	
Reason for leaving school	Percent
Missed too many school days	43.5
Thought it would be easier to get a GED	40.5
Getting poor grades/failing school	38.0
Did not like school	36.6
Could not keep up with schoolwork	32.1
Became pregnant[1]	27.8
Got a job	27.8
Thought could not complete course requirements	25.6
Could not get along with teachers	25.0
Could not work at same time	21.7
Had to support family	20.0
Did not feel belonged there	19.9
Could not get along with other students	18.7
Was suspended from school	16.9
Had to care for a member of family	15.5
Became father/mother of a baby	14.4
Had changed schools and did not like the new one	11.2
Thought would fail competency test	10.5
Did not feel safe	10.0
Was expelled from school	9.9
Got married/planned to get married	6.8
[1]Percentage of female respondents only. The reason could only be selected by female respondents.	
Note: This indicator shows the percentage of high school students in the spring of their sophomore year who, in the spring two years later, were not in school and had not graduated with a regular diploma or certificate of attendance. The 1 percent of sophomores who left school and earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate or other form of equivalency certificate as of the spring two years later are counted as having left school without a regular diploma or certificate of attendance.	
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Condition of Education Table 27-3, from Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002/04), "First Follow-Up, Student Survey, 2004," previously unpublished tabulation (January 2006).	

Appendix C

Percent of Students Dropping Out by 12th Grade by Targeted Intervention

Source: Sinclair et al. (1998) and Kemple et al. (2000).

Appendix D
Table 3
Distribution of students in Twilight and AHSI programs

	Frequency	Percent
Group:		
PLC or GtC	92	9.6
Twilight program	771	89.8
Sub-total	863	99.5
Missing	3	.5
Total	866	100.0

Appendix E
Table 4
Distribution of completed courses across the two program types in the sample

	Frequency	Percent
PLC or GtC	514	8.6
Twilight Program	5483	91.4
Total	5997	100.0

Appendix F
Table 5
Comparison of mean overall GPAs of AHSI and Twilight program students

Independent Variable	Levels	Means	N	Differences in mean GPA		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Mean	Std. error of mean difference			
Program	AHSI	1.7532	92	.4375	.09639	4.539[a]	122.485	.000013
	Twilight	1.3157	771					

[a] Levene's test significant; equal variances not assumed.

Appendix G
Table 6
Comparison of mean grades of AHSI courses and Twilight program courses

Independent Variable	Levels	Means	N	Differences in mean course grade		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Mean	Std. error of mean difference			
Program	AHSI	1.8969	514	.5229	.05239	9.980[a]	644.11	<.001
	Twilight	1.3740	5479					

Appenix H

Table 7

Comparison of academic performance of AHSI and Twilight program students in ten different course groups

Course group	Program	Means	N	Differences Mean	Std. error of mean difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
English	AHSI	2.117	102	.549	.120	4.576[b]	142.177	<.001
	Twilight	1.569	877					
Math	AHSI	1.785	65	.705	.142	4.961[a]	738	<.001
	Twilight	1.080	675					
Science	AHSI	1.452	73	.304	.113	2.690[b]	103.209	.008
	Twilight	1.148	704					
History	AHSI	1.797	74	.568	.149	3.799[a]	800	<.001
	Twilight	1.229	728					
Social Science	AHSI	1.714	43			*		
	Twilight	.000	1					
Spanish	AHSI	1.542	24	-.109	.261	-.417[a]	251	.677
	Twilight	1.651	229					
Health	AHSI	2.391	110	1.008	.110	9.196[b]	146.405	<.001
	Twilight	1.383	847					

Course group	Program	Means	N	Differences Mean	Std. error of mean difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)

				-.469	.178		-2.632 24.768 .014

Applied skills	AHSI	1.059	17	-.469	.178		-2.632 24.768 .014
	Twilight	1.528	265				
Art	AHSI	-	0			*	
	Twilight	1.854	233				
Phys. Ed.	AHSI	1.333	6	-.117	.215		-.543[b] 5.403 .609
	Twilight	1.450	920				

a Levene's test nonsignificant; equal variances assumed.

Appendix I
Table 8
Comparison of mean course performance between the AHSI and Twilight programs within each grade

				Differences				
Grade	Program	Means	N	Mean	Std. error of mean difference	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
9	AHSI	1.6250	48	.725	.174	4.167[a]	1211	<.001
	Twilight	.9004	1165					
10	AHSI	1.7606	71	.601	.150	4.009[a]	1748	<.001
	Twilight	1.1596	1679					
11	AHSI	1.8767	73	.523	.137	3.826[b]	85.787	<.001
	Twilight	1.3538	1040					
12	AHSI	1.9720	322	.017	.070	.241[a]	1884	.809
	Twilight	1.9552	1564					

Appendix J
Table 9
Bonferroni post hoc comparisons of mean course grades in AHSI program vs. each of the 8 Twilight program schools

PLC or GtC Mean (I)	School (J)	School (J) Mean	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. (Bonferroni)
	Barringer Twilight	1.150	.747	.068	<.001
	Central Twilight	1.526	.371	.068	<.001
	Eastside Twilight	2.064	-.167	.073	.770
	Malcolm X. Shabazz	1.192	.705	.073	<.001
1.897	Pathways Academy Suspension Off Site Academy	1.184	.713	.083	<.001
		1.448	.449	.072	<.001
	Weeqhaic Twilight	1.146	.751	.068	<.001
	Westside Twilight	1.289	.608	.083	<.001

Appendix K
Table 10
Distribution of students in retained, dropout, and transfer categories by AHSI and Twilight programs

Program Type	Status	Frequency	Percent
PLC or GtC	Retained in program	117	48.0
	Dropout: Incarceration	2	.8
	Dropout: Dissatisfied w/school	61	25.0
	Dropout: Economic or Employment	4	1.6
	Dropout: Married or Pregnant	9	3.7
	Dropout: Reason Unknown	43	17.6
	Transferred to other public school in district	3	1.2
	Trans to any public school out of district	2	.8
	Transferred to State/City institute for incarceration	1	.4
	Transferred to alternative adult education	2	.8
	Total	244	100.0
Twilight Program	Retained in program	851	79.0

Dropout: Incarceration	2	.2
Dropout: Dissatisfied w/school	6	.6
Dropout: Economic or Employment	1	.1
Dropout: Married or Pregnant	1	.1
Dropout: Reason Unknown	79	7.3
Dropout: Death of student	1	.1
Transferred to another registration in same school	1	.1
Transferred to other public school in district	92	8.5
Transferred to non-public school in state	1	.1
Transferred to any public school out of district	7	.6
Transferred to State/City institute for Incarceration	23	2.1
Transferred to State institute for treatment of disability	2	.2
Transferred out of state or country	9	.8
Transferred to alternative adult education	1	.1
Total	1077	100.0

Appendix L
Table 11
Distribution of students in retained vs. dropped-out and transferred categories by AHSI and Twilight programs

	Program Type		
	PLC or GtC	Twilight Program	Total
Dropped out or transferred	127	226	353
Retained in Program	117	851	968
Total	244	1077	1321

Appendix M
Table 12
Distribution of retained students vs. dropouts, transfers, and total leaves by gender

	Gender		
Transferred or not	Female	Male	Total
Did NOT Transfer Out	501	676	1177
Transferred out	53	91	144
Total	554	767	1321

Dropped Out or not	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Did NOT Drop Out	461	651	1112
Dropped Out	93	116	209
Total	554	767	1321

Stayed In Program or not	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Stayed	408	560	968
Did NOT stay	146	207	353
Total	554	767	1321

Appendix N
Staff Survey Responses
Table 13
Surveys Returned By Site

Barringer	4	Shabazz	5	
Central	6	SOSA	9	
East Side	5	Weequahic	5	
Pathways	3	West Side	8	
		Total Surveys Returned	45	

APPENDIX O

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

January 21, 2010
P.I. Name: Genao
Protocol #: E10-240

Soribel Genao
School of Public Affairs & Adminisration
111 Washington Street
Newark Campus

Dear Soribel Genao:

Notice of Exemption from IRB Review

Protocol Title: "Measuring the Effectiveness of an Alternative Education"

The project identified above has been approved for exemption under one of the six categories noted in 45 CFR 46, and as noted below:

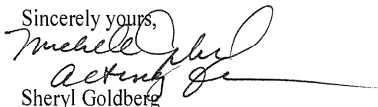**Exemption Date:**   12/14/2009   **Exempt Category:**   1

This exemption is based on the following assumptions:

- **This Approval** - The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted.

- **Reporting** – ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;

- **Modifications** – Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;

- **Consent Form (s)** – Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;

Additional Notes: None

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

The Federalwide Assurance (FWA) number for Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Sincerely yours,

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
egraser@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Evan Stark

Appendix P
**MEASURING the EFFECTIVENESS OF an ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION Collaborative in Improving
Student Outcomes in Newark, NJ**

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Soribel Genao, who is a doctorate candidate in the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University and Evan Stark, PhD, who is the faculty advisor of this study. The purpose of this research is to determine the effectiveness of collaboration in Newark Public School's Office of Alternative Education.

It will take about 15 minutes to answer the attached questionnaire, which is being sent out to administrators, teachers and staff throughout the 7 Twilight High Schools. Your opinion is very important as a means of understanding the effectiveness of the collaboration process at NPS' Office of Alternative Education.
:
This research is anonymous. Anonymous means that I will record no information about you that could identify you. This means that I will not record your name, address, phone number, date of birth, etc.

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be assigned a random code number that will be used on each test and the questionnaire. Your name will appear only on a list of subjects, and will not be linked to the code number that is assigned to you. There will be no way to link your responses back to you. Therefore, data collection is anonymous and will be revealed as summary information and anonymous status. Once the initial data is recorded, there is no association with your name or jurisdiction if any information you provided.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

You will not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at sgenao@pegasus.rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

By participating in this study/these procedures, you agree to be a study subject.

APPROVED
Date: 12|14|09

Appendix Q

The Newark Public Schools
Office of Alternative Education
200 Washington Street
Newark, New Jersey 07102-3091
Phone: 973-733-8383 / 6794
Fax: 973-733-7067

Dr. Clifford B. Janey
State District Superintendent
Education

Kevin R. West, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

Vincent L. Mays, Ph.D.
Director

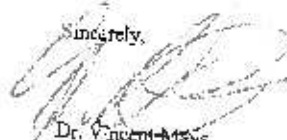Lucille E. Davy
Commissioner of

February 12, 2009

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

To whom it may concern:

The Newark Public Schools' Office of Alternative Education supports the dissertation proposal of Soribel Genao to conduct a comparative analysis of two of our Alternative High School Initiative: Gateway to College and the Performance Learning Center and our current Twilight Programs. This analysis will be conducted for the 2008-2009 school year in Newark, NJ.

To assist her research, Soribel Genao will have access to Newark Public Schools Office of Alternative Education's student grade and attendance data which will not identify students by name or student identification numbers. As such, she will also have access to and will participate in strategic planning and implementation meetings on our programs' development and collaboration capacity if needed.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vincent Mays
Director, Office of Alternative Education
Newark Public Schools
200 Washington St.
Newark, NJ 07003

Changing Hearts and Minds to Value Education

Appendix R

DATA COLLECTION AND SURVEY GUIDE

STAFF INTEREST SURVEY

Intro: Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. My name is Soribel Genao, and I am currently a doctoral student within the School of Public Affairs and Administration Rutgers University. I am conducting a study on the effectiveness of collaboration between Newark Public School's Office of Alternative Education and public, private and nonprofit agents throughout Newark, New Jersey, specifically by focusing on the new AHSI programs in comparison to the existing Twilight Programs.   I would like to ask you a few questions for your input on this topic, and our discussion should take no more than an hour.

Background/History: *Newark Public Schools will and has experienced significant changes within the last year. The following questions will give you an opportunity to tell me more about your concerns regarding these changes and information about the Alternative High School Initiative that interests you the most. Please answer all of the questions, openly and truthfully. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete*

1. *Sufficient Knowledge*:
   The Office of Alternative Education has implemented two (2) Alternative High School Initiatives throughout the district. These models consist of Performance Learning Center and Gateway to College.

   At present, do you have enough working knowledge on each model to perceive the collaborative effectiveness needed to make an informed decision in selecting the program that best fits you?

           ☐   Yes

           ☐   No

   If not, what other information would you require?
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. *Interest in putting relationships to work:*
   At the present time, are you interested in coming together with other partners and organizations to achieve the initiative's goals?

           ☐   Yes

	No
	Not Sure

Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. *Interest in broadening of view:*
   The Office of Alternative Education recognizes that these aforementioned significant changes will directly impact your position and perhaps broadening your views within the department. *Do you wish to continue to work within the Office of Alternative Education?*

	Yes
	No
	Not Sure

If you are no longer interested in working within the Office of Alternative Education, what other Newark Public School departments interests you?

_____

—

_____

—

4. *Willingness to work with partners:*
   OAE has collaborated with partnering agencies and organizations that require increased interaction with all faculty and staff throughout Newark. The AHSI models require that faculty and staff work hours in the day or evenings in order to have the most effective amount of internal and external services for the students. *Would you prefer to work with partners? Please check all that apply.*

	Yes
	No

5. *Cross-sectoral trainings:*
   Each AHSI model requires mandatory staff development training. The training sessions for NPS staff will take place during the summer months. These trainings will be attended by stakeholders who have taken part in the initiative. Each training will be alternately hosted by partners in order to help the collaboration make partner organizations' influence on each other more equal. *Did you feel this form of training was beneficial for you?*

	Yes

	No

   Why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. In your opinion, what is the student's role in the development of the education process?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. Tell me about your hopes and concerns as we move forward in the implementation process of the AHSI models?

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. How well do you adapt to new experiences? *Please check the statement that most closely reflects your experiences.*

	I can easily adapt to new experiences.

	I find it somewhat easy to adapt to new experiences.

	I find it somewhat difficult to adapt to new experiences.

	I find it very difficult to adapt to new experiences.

Appendix S

STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE AND CURRENT PROGRAM
Interview Protocols

Date of Interview:		
Time:		
Place:		
Interviewer:		
Interviewee:	Gender:	Degree(s):
(School Administrator, Public Service, Private Agent, Non-profit Agent)		

Intro: Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. My name is Soribel Genao, and I am currently a doctoral student within the School of Public Affairs and Administration Rutgers University. I am conducting a study on the effectiveness of collaboration between Newark Public School's Office of Alternative Education and public, private and nonprofit agents throughout Newark, New Jersey, specifically by focusing on the new AHSI programs in comparison to the existing Twilight Programs. I would like to ask you a few questions for your input on this topic, and our discussion should take no more than an hour.

Background/History: *Newark Public Schools will and has experienced significant changes within the last year. The following questions will give you an opportunity to tell me more about your concerns regarding these changes, and provide the Office of Alternative Education with information about the Alternative High School Initiative that interests you the most.*
    Collaboration

1. What are some of the experiences you have had working in a collaborative education situation?

Prior Organization

2. What are some positive and negative experiences you have had working in a team setting within Newark Public School's Office of Alternative Education?

Handling Collaborative Diversity

3. How have you handled such a collaborative diversity in your experiences at NPS?

Roles and responsibilities

4. What do you see as the roles and responsibilities of inclusion team members?

Information and Knowledge

5. Do you feel you have enough information and knowledge about the AHSI programs?

Twilight or AHSI?

6. What is your current position in Twilight? AHSI? Which do you prefer and why?

Effective or Affective?

7. How have these new programs effected or affected you and the students?

Working with stakeholders

8. Do you enjoy working with the other stakeholders? In what capacity do you work with them?

Academic Alignment

9. What do you think about the academic alignment of the curriculum of the new program vs. the old?

Challenges

10. What have been some of the challenges with introducing the AHSI models? Have the students given you any feedback? If so, what are they saying?

Students and Twilight or AHSI?

11. Which program do you think students prefer Twilight or AHSI? Why?

Appendix T

Observation Protocol

Date: Time: _____ to _____ Observer: Observed:	Activity Observed:
Descriptive Notes	**Reflective Notes**

---

[i] Communities in Schools. (2008). *2008Annual report.* Retrieved from http://www.cisnet.org/default.asp/downloads/pdf//2008annualreport.pdf.

[ii] Gateway to College. (2008). http://www.gatewaycc.edu/About/

VITA

1981 Born, April 16 in New York, New York

1999 Graduated from Seward Park High School, New York, New York

1999-2003 Attended the St. John's University, Jamaica, New York

2003 B.S., St. John's University, Jamaica, New York

1999-2006 Paralegal, Avelino & Associates, PC New York, NY

2004- 2005 Attended City University of New York Hunter College, Major - Urban Affairs

2005 Masters of Urban Affairs, City University of New York Hunter College

2006-2008 Program Director, Wildcat Service Corporation, New York, NY

2008-2009 Research Intern, Newark Public Schools, Newark, NJ

2006-2010 Attended Rutgers-Newark, School of Public Affairs and Administration

2010 Ph.D. Public Administration, Rutgers-Newark