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STRONG PARTNERSHIPS REQUIRE COLLABORATION:
THE INVESTIGATION OF INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION EFFORTS BETWEEN
SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

by

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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The College of Education will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

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DEDICATION

To my dear son, Jathan, in the midst of my grief over losing you, I discovered a new purpose and desire to advocate for others, particularly children experiencing adversity, inspired by a mother's unconditional love for her child. Your memory has inspired my studies and everyday community service efforts as I attempt to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need. Your departure shattered my heart, but it also gave me the will and courage to increase my social work training and pursue my doctorate degree. I frequently tell myself that I can make a dent in the world, even if I can't change it. Your life may have been brief, but your influence will endure a lifetime as I commit myself to advocating for a brighter tomorrow in the lives of disadvantaged children experiencing homelessness. Jathan, I hope you are gazing over me from heaven and are pleased to call me your mommy. Though my love for you has no boundaries, I take refuge in knowing that God loves you much more. I look forward to the day when we will be reunited in paradise, and I will be able to hold you again. Until then, know that you will always have a special place in my heart, and that your spirit will continue to lead me in all that I do. This education doctorate degree is for you, son! May you rest in peace and know that your life left a lasting impact on the world.

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to achieve our goals in this world. In closing, I am humbled by the love and support that surrounds me, and I am grateful for each person who has played a part in my journey.

ABSTRACT

This study provides valuable insights into effective interagency collaboration strategies for supporting students experiencing homelessness. Through qualitative analysis, three overarching themes and seven sub-themes emerged, highlighting the importance of partnership building, support system enhancement, and addressing the complex needs of students experiencing homelessness. The findings underscore the crucial role of early relationship establishment, McKinney-Vento education, transparent communication, and shared information in maintaining and expanding partnerships. However, challenges persist, including discrepancies in definitions and misconceptions about homelessness, necessitating a more empathetic approach. Leadership engagement and culturally responsive practices are essential for navigating these challenges and fostering effective collaboration. By adopting a holistic approach and prioritizing the well-being of students and families, school and community organizations can better support the diverse needs of students experiencing homelessness and foster a more supportive and inclusive environment. Overall, this study underscores the significance of collaborative efforts and sustained commitment to assisting students experiencing homelessness in both school and community settings.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background of Problem

Homelessness can profoundly affect children in several ways, including their academic performance, emotional and physical well-being, feelings of security, and general growth and development (American Psychology Association, 2022). Adolescents and children experiencing homelessness with or without their families frequently do not have access to the support services that can potentially help them overcome the difficulties of being homeless (Beiner, 2022). Addressing homelessness among adults is a huge problem for government and non-governmental groups across the country; adding children and early adolescents to that list brings greater challenges. Therefore, schools and community organizations must work together to find, build, and sustain partnerships that positively impact students who are experiencing homelessness. This qualitative research study explored the dynamics of interagency collaboration between school and community agencies when supporting students experiencing homelessness. By examining the development, sustainability, and expansion of partnerships between these entities, the study sought to determine effective interagency strategies and challenges faced in supporting students experiencing homelessness. Through a qualitative descriptive case study approach, the researcher gathered in-depth insights from key stakeholders, including a high school administrator, a McKinney-Vento social worker, a dropout intervention specialist, a coordinator of parenting and pregnancy services, and local community agency representatives who possess firsthand experience in collaborative efforts across agencies to assist students experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness poses severe challenges for students, leading to heightened stress levels, instability, exposure to trauma, and frequent school changes (Benjaminsen, 2016; Coley et al., 2015; Gultekin et al., 2019; Levin et al., 2022; Schupmann, 2017). The consequences of

homelessness extend to students' overall well-being, academic performance, physical and mental health, sense of security, and emotional and behavioral development (Gultekin et al., 2019; Schupmann, 2017). Moreover, the adverse and transient living conditions associated with homelessness can worsen parental distress and anxiety, further impacting their children's welfare (Coley et al., 2015).

Poor housing conditions significantly impact a child's learning and potential (Benjaminsen, 2016). Students experiencing homelessness often face multiple barriers to obtaining academic success in school, because their environment outside of school may lack access to necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and hygiene products (Beiner, 2022). Students who face homelessness must endure many different housing situations. Some students sleep in motels/hotels with their families, while others live in double or triple occupancy with their families or friends (Levin et al., 2022). Other students have no family at all and are homeless or living in homeless shelters (Beiner, 2022). According to Levin et al. (2022), students experiencing homelessness have trouble finding a spot that is quiet where they can finish their homework, go to school consistently, and maintain their interest in schoolwork. In addition, students may continue to experience detrimental effects from housing instability long after their homelessness has ended (Levin et al., 2022). Schupmann (2017) emphasized that children living in impoverished conditions often face barriers to engaging in activities vital for their cognitive, social, and emotional development, such as playful and interactive experiences. These constraints limit their ability to explore, interact, and learn from their surroundings, particularly when living in unsafe or overcrowded environments. Consequently, homelessness may impede children's learning capacities, significantly impacting their long-term prospects for success (Benjaminsen, 2016). Despite the recognized importance of secure housing in overcoming such

obstacles, Hallberg et al. (2021) noted that the U.S. federal government does not recognize housing as a fundamental right, resulting in many families with children not receiving housing assistance. Establishing and sustaining robust interagency partnerships between schools and communities thus emerges as a critical public health strategy, essential for addressing the needs of homeless children and their families. Despite facing significant challenges, many homeless students demonstrate remarkable resilience and achieve academic and personal milestones through successful collaborations between school districts and community organizations (Levin et al., 2022). Recognizing the pivotal role of school districts, Levin et al. (2022) stressed the importance of identifying homeless students and providing comprehensive support to address their physical, emotional, and academic needs.

The establishment of effective collaborations between schools and community agencies has a beneficial impact on the academic achievements and overall development of students (Levin et al., 2022). Research demonstrates that a strong sense of community support is positively correlated with higher levels of academic achievement and overall success within educational institutions (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wang & Boyd, 2001). According to Sheldon (2003), educational institutions that actively cultivate and maintain connections with the community, while fostering internal collaborative partnerships, observe a greater proportion of students who demonstrate satisfactory academic performance. The phrase “it takes a village to raise a child” has its origins in an African proverb. This proverb sums up the notion that the upbringing of a child involves the collective efforts of numerous individuals, symbolized by the metaphorical “village” (Reupert et al., 2022).

Purpose of Study

Many times, the issue of homelessness among children and adolescents goes unacknowledged and unaddressed, resulting in this vulnerable population receiving insufficient support and resources (Beiner, 2022). This qualitative case study aimed to examine how district and school personnel, along with local community agencies, have managed successes and overcome challenges in developing, sustaining, and expanding interagency collaboration efforts. Specifically, this case study explored their experiences in establishing effective interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness. The study investigated interagency collaboration strategies that align with established collaborative practices outlined in the literature from Sunnybrook's six core competencies for enhancing the effectiveness of interprofessional teams (McLaney et al., 2022).

The research questions sought to gain a deeper understanding of the process's professionals employ in developing partnership strategies while identifying perceived collaboration barriers. The following research questions guided this investigation:

RQ1: How do district and school personnel, along with local community agencies, describe their experiences developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships that reflect effective interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness?

RQ2: In what ways have district and school personnel, along with local community agencies, achieved successes and managed challenges when establishing interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness?

These questions were intended to gather insights into the perspectives and practices of individuals engaged in school and community-based collaboration. The research study sought to fill a critical void in the existing literature by undertaking a thorough examination of approaches that foster effective collaboration between different agencies. Specifically, the study investigated

the activities used by schools to engage in partnerships with community agencies. Additionally, the study examined those community agencies' plans to work with the schools to provide a more holistic support system for students experiencing homelessness. The research aimed to uncover insights into optimizing interagency collaboration to better support the multifaceted needs of students experiencing homelessness. This research study holds significant implications for school and community partnership activities, offering practical insights into establishing and sustaining real-world interagency collaboration. Presently, there is a lack of literature examining partnerships from the critical viewpoints of stakeholders in both educational institutions and community settings.

Drawing on Pavlakis's (2018) insights, this study considered existing research indicating that successful interagency collaborations often exhibit characteristics such as mutual benefits, well-defined objectives, transparent responsibilities, a supportive infrastructure, and strong leadership. However, numerous obstacles hinder successful collaboration, including competitive environments, power dynamics, communication challenges, and conflicting organizational agendas (Miller & Hafner, 2008). While collaboration is essential to supporting homelessness among students, the complex nature of the issue presents significant challenges for cross-sector efforts (Miller P. M, 2011b). This descriptive case study offers nuanced solutions grounded in the lived experiences of participants, thereby contributing to the existing body of research in this area (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2010).

Statement of Problem

According to Harris (2022), around 25% of the total population of 600,000 individuals experiencing homelessness in the United States on a given day consists of children or teenagers. There are concerns that the situation may worsen with the lifting of the government eviction moratorium, which is tied to COVID. In addition, young individuals are becoming increasingly

detached from their main sources of support, both at home and in the educational setting (Mitchell, 2022). Schools and community groups often face difficulties in offering personalized assistance to students who are homeless. While these organizations provide valuable services and activities, they may not always have the resources to adequately support homeless students' multifaceted needs. If schools and community groups fail to collaborate successfully, there is a danger of providing inconsistent services. Negotiating with many service providers, each proposing limited answers to their challenges, may result in overlooking the needs of students experiencing homelessness (Mitchell, 2022). The absence of coordination can give rise to duplicate efforts, gaps in service delivery, and ineffectiveness in addressing the underlying causes of homelessness.

Significance of the Study

The study's significance stems from its focus on collaborative efforts between school and community organizations in providing support for students experiencing homelessness, which is becoming more acknowledged as a societal concern. According to Beiner (2022) and statistics from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) in 2020, the number of homeless students has increased by 10% in recent years. This development emphasizes the importance of identifying and finding support for these students' issues. Homeless students face numerous challenges, including a lack of stable housing, limited access to resources, and an increased risk of dropping out of school. To address this issue effectively, schools and community-based organizations must collaborate and work together to support these vulnerable students (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

For several reasons, investigating interagency collaboration efforts between schools and community-based organizations in support of students experiencing homelessness is important. First and foremost, collaboration between these two entities can lead to more comprehensive and

effective ways to support students experiencing homelessness. Schools and community-based organizations each bring unique resources and expertise to the table.

Working together, schools and community-based groups may improve their understanding of how homelessness affects students and their families, allowing them to provide greater support. Through this collaboration, they may also address the underlying causes of homelessness to prevent the problem from recurring among students and their families. In addition, collaboration between schools and community-based organizations can help to build a sense of community and support for students experiencing homelessness. These students often feel isolated and marginalized, but having a strong network of support can make a significant difference. Schools and community-based organizations can come together to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for students and their family's experiencing homelessness, helping them to feel valued and supported. Currently, the available research does not offer thorough recommendations or guidelines for establishing, maintaining, and strengthening collaborative efforts between school personnel and community agencies aimed at supporting the needs of children experiencing homelessness (Hands, 2023).

Clarification of Terms

This section defines certain key terms. Some of these terms are not used very often and are frequently linked to the official federal government definition of homelessness provided by the federal government. Community, as used in this study, refers to the set of individuals and institutions that possess a vested interest in the achievement and prosperity of students and educational institutions.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act offers a range of entitlements and support to minors and young individuals who find themselves in a state of homelessness. This includes people who temporarily live with others due to the loss of their housing. Additionally, it includes

those who are residing in motels, RV parks, or campgrounds because of the absence of a suitable alternative, as well as individuals staying in shelters and transitional housing.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers federal housing and urban development laws.

HUD Definition of Literally Homelessness is an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

The Homeless Liaison is responsible for fulfilling the obligations outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act. The homeless liaison plays a crucial role in providing necessary services to homeless children and youth. They serve as the primary point of contact between homeless families, school, and Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel, shelter staff, and other service providers.

Community Organizations play an important role in connecting people, meeting local needs, and encouraging good change. These groups are frequently nonprofit, churches, and/or social service groups and they address many areas of community well-being.

Interagency collaboration encompasses the establishment of relationships among individuals occupying diverse roles and disciplines within educational institutions, as well as between schools, human service agencies, and communities.

The No Child Left Behind Act is a federal law in the United States that seeks to enhance the quality of public primary and secondary schools and consequently improve student performance. It achieves this by imposing greater levels of accountability on schools, school districts, and states. The enactment of Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 largely reversed the structural changes made by the No Child Left Behind Act. This new legislation shifted a substantial amount of federal responsibility over education policy to state governments.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) serves as the primary federal legislation governing general education in grades K-12. This policy applies to all students enrolled in public educational institutions.

Partnerships refer to the formal or informal associations established between educational institutions and the surrounding community, wherein they agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a comprehensive overview of research on support that is provided to students who suffer from homelessness, with an emphasis on the demographic with the highest prevalence of homelessness among students. It also looked at the importance of school-community collaborations, leadership responsibilities in tackling this issue, and the obstacles that professionals in both school and community settings face while supporting students experiencing homelessness. The literature review focused on a thorough analysis of childhood and youth homelessness, including detailed information concerning the McKinney-Vento policy. It examines the significance of the McKinney-Vento policy in addressing the educational needs of homeless students and the challenges associated with its implementation. Additionally, the review explored the importance of interagency collaboration within educational institutions, leadership, and shared decision-making in providing comprehensive assistance to these students. The review highlights both the achievements and obstacles encountered by different organizations and agencies. It sought a broader understanding of the social and economic risks facing students and the advantages resulting from interagency partnership activities. This literature review provides a broader understanding of childhood homelessness, which proves valuable for evaluating different needs and potential initiatives aimed at strengthening the connection between schools and communities. Subsequently, this study explores leadership within the framework of relationship-building, particularly emphasizing theoretical models concerning interagency collaboration. This in-depth review synthesized current research on the obstacles that students experiencing homelessness encounter, policy considerations, the importance of interagency collaboration between schools and community organizations, and leadership.

Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests humans' fundamental necessities encompass sustenance, habitation, privacy, and attire (Maslow, 1943). According to recent scholarly findings by Levin et al. (2022) the task of attending and concentrating in an educational setting becomes significantly more challenging when a student's thoughts are preoccupied with concerns regarding their accommodation for the night or their ability to procure a meal, thereby highlighting the profound impact of such circumstances on academic engagement. The literature agrees that students who encounter homelessness tend to face a higher probability of suffering academic setbacks such as grade retention, inadequate attendance or chronic absenteeism, course failure, increased disciplinary problems, and premature withdrawal from school without obtaining a high school diploma, in comparison to their counterparts who do not experience homelessness (Levin et al. 2022; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wang & Boyd, 2001). Many students experiencing inadequate housing face challenges in having their range of essential needs met. For example, students who are living in a shelter may not have secure resources for food, healthcare, and clothing. Essential needs such as these could involve a school or community leader implementing interventions, establishing developmental support, facilitating access to healthcare, assisting parents with searching for employment, and ensuring other necessities are met (Havik et al., 2013).

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, passed in 1987, was the first federal law to explicitly address the social issue of homelessness. It laid out guidelines for assisting people experiencing homelessness, including students, and it did so in a comprehensive manner. The legislation has been recognized since its reauthorization in 2001 as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA) or simply McKinney-Vento. Before the 2001 reauthorization of McKinney-Vento under the umbrella of the No Child Left Behind Act, no universally

standardized definition for identifying a “homeless student” existed (Miller, 2009). Now various forms of living situations fall within the category of homelessness, including residing in shelters, inhabiting a car or the streets, and/or engaging in doubled-up living arrangements (McKinney-Vento – National Center for Homeless Education, 2022). However, based on recommendations from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. authorities have concluded that those who are suffering doubled-up homelessness or sleeping in self-paid hotels are not classified as homeless. Instead, they are designated as “unstably housed.” Hence, those residing in overcrowded conditions or self-funded hotels do not qualify for federal assistance for homelessness and are instead referred to additional housing support programs (Lee, 2023). Furthermore, HUD’s definition is in direct contrast with public schools’ objective and legal requirement (under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act) to proactively identify, enroll, and support all children and youth suffering homelessness (Lee, 2023).

According to the findings of the National Coalition for the Homeless (2023), the provision of homeless assistance systems resulted in a notable growth in the accessibility of both temporary and permanent accommodations in the year 2022. However, it is important to note that despite these efforts, the available resources remain insufficient to adequately address the needs of all those experiencing homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2023).

The population of K-12 students homeless in public schools is the most rapidly expanding subgroup of homeless individuals in the country (NCHE, 2020). Based on the January 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, the number of individuals facing homelessness on a single night in the United States was 582,462. This corresponds to around 0.18% of the population or 18 individuals per 10,000 people.

According to the 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), most individuals experiencing homelessness, specifically 72 percent, were adults living alone. However, 28 percent consisted of individuals who were part of families with children (HUD USER, n.d.).

Educational Support

According to Julienelle & Foscarinis (2003), the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA) has evolved into a crucial instrument for enhancing the academic achievements of students who are facing homelessness (p. 45). The MVA helps to equip schools with services to alleviate the many barriers' students experiencing homelessness face in pursuit of educational opportunities (Wilkins et al., 2016).

The significant variation among schools, districts, and states in their conceptualizations of homelessness, results in ambiguity that limits their ability to effectively develop and implement systematic initiatives aimed at supporting students in varied circumstances (Miller, 2009). For instance, some individuals categorize homeless students solely as those residing on the streets or in shelters, leaving those who cohabitated with friends and individuals living in motels forgotten (Miller, 2009). One key aspect to consider is the requirement for every school district to designate a homeless liaison, whose role is to act as an advocate for children experiencing homelessness (Miller, 2009).

Homeless Liaisons

Local educational agencies use federally mandated liaisons to uphold the provisions of MVA (Wilkins et al., 2016). The Local Education Agency (LEA) homeless liaisons are assigned five distinct responsibilities as mandated by legislation, one of which is to provide professional development and further assistance to school staff members. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), the responsibilities of LEA homeless liaisons encompass the following

tasks:

- Disseminating public notifications regarding the educational entitlements of homeless individuals.
- Facilitating the resolution of conflicts and disagreements.
- Ensuring that parents, guardians, or youth are informed about transportation services, including those regarding the school of origin.
- Engaging in collaborative efforts and coordinating with personnel from both the community and the school.
- Delivering professional development opportunities to other staff members within the LEA.

Liaisons play a crucial role in addressing the specific needs of their respective local districts. Their primary responsibilities encompass overseeing transportation-related matters, facilitating the enrollment of students into schools and programs, providing education to schools and parents regarding McKinney-Vento, and offering guidance to parents on navigating the intricacies of school systems (Miller, 2009). Legislative bodies instituted the role of local homeless liaison to provide a voice and support for homeless students within their academic setting (Miller, 2009). Among their many responsibilities, homeless liaisons are required to actively seek out and identify all homeless youth residing within the Local Education Agency (LEA) they serve (Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). Their role also involves facilitating the prompt enrollment of these individuals and linking them with suitable support systems and service providers. The aim is to assist in securing stable housing arrangements, access to fundamental needs such as food and clothing, and appropriate educational services (Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). According to the National Center for Homeless Education (2023), local liaisons should

review data and activities in their local educational agency (LEA) every year to make sure the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program is identifying and addressing the needs of homeless children and youth. The provided informal needs assessment tool offers a set of questions that local liaisons can utilize to assess the effectiveness of their services for homeless children and teenagers. Its purpose is to highlight areas that require attention and prioritize efforts toward meeting the most pressing needs of these pupils (NCHE, 2023).

In addition to their primary duties, liaisons are also tasked with ensuring school enrollment for students facing homelessness. They are also responsible for making referrals to medical resources that provide immunizations. Moreover, liaisons are responsible for facilitating access to educational resources, including special education services when necessary. Lastly, liaisons are responsible for ensuring that students and their parents are well-informed about their rights (Nix-Hoades & Hibachi, 2014). The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) proposed specific strategies that liaisons can utilize to effectively carry out their responsibilities. It is anticipated that liaisons will collaborate with district personnel and organizations operating within the community, with a specific emphasis on supporting students experiencing homelessness. It is easier for the homeless liaison to form partnerships between community and school personnel when roles and responsibilities are clearly defined (Edwards, 2023). Therefore, the homeless liaison needs to encourage school district personnel and community partners to familiarize themselves with each other's roles and duties to facilitate effective collaboration in supporting the students they serve.

According to the study conducted by Wilkins and colleagues (2016), homeless liaisons are faced with multiple tasks and obligations, which can hinder their effectiveness in successfully communicating their position and associated duties to schools' personnel, parents, and community service providers. An effective local liaison demonstrates excellence by providing support to students and families experiencing homelessness through active listening and facilitating the identification of appropriate solutions. These solutions may involve utilizing resources available within the school district for the student or accessing community resources for the entire family (Resources for Homeless Children and Youth, 2024). The local liaison possesses a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties encountered by underprivileged children, youth, and families facing homelessness.

Liaisons are well-versed in the rights and services students and families are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Act, as well as other federal and state laws and programs, thus serving as advocates (Dhaliwal & Gregori, 2022). According to Dhaliwal & Gregori, (2022), the primary responsibility of district homeless liaisons is to facilitate the coordination of actions regarding the identification and provision of support for students experiencing homelessness. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to effectively manage their liaison responsibilities, which encompass tasks such as identifying homeless students, facilitating their access to necessary services, offering referrals to relevant programs, educating students and families about the rights of homeless children and youth, and providing training to school personnel involved in supporting students experiencing homelessness. According to Dhaliwal and Gregori (2022), the local liaison must maintain ongoing communication with community members, students, and families experiencing homelessness, as well as district personnel and administrators.

Therefore, research suggests school districts should create strong interagency partnerships to meet the individual needs of students, ensure access to community resources, develop close relationships with students and families, and give students opportunities to form relationships with kind and reliable adult figures (Hallett & Skrla, 2017; Pavlakis et al., 2020).

Despite expertise and passion, liaisons are tasked with numerous duties and are unable to accomplish everything single-handedly (Pavlakis et al., 2021). Supporting students experiencing homelessness can make a significant impact. However, there is also the risk of causing harm if the local liaison lacks adequate support from administrators, district staff, and community agencies (Resources for Homeless Children and Youth, 2024.). Educational institutions often struggle to support these students due to a lack of internal communication and inappropriate navigation of resources (Pavlakis et al., 2021). To effectively meet the requirements set by state and federal law, homeless liaisons need collaboration, access to resources, and dependable partners, as emphasized by Resources for Homeless Children and Youth (2024).

Political Dynamics

According to the data provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (2023), school districts in South Carolina counted 11,906 McKinney-Vento students for the academic year 2020–21. Children and teenagers who are homeless confront a variety of educational obstacles because of their situation, including high rates of moving around, poverty and psychological trauma brought on by their homelessness (NCHE, 2023). Nevertheless, the experience of homelessness varies among children and youth. The influence of homelessness on a child's or youth's academic performance can be significantly affected by various contextual factors, including the specific sort of temporary living arrangement and the duration of their experience of homelessness (NCHE, 2023).

The study of academic strategies and supportive services for students who are experiencing homelessness allows administrators, social workers, homeless liaisons, and other district personnel involved in youth services to allocate resources in a manner that maximizes effectiveness, thereby promoting the academic success of these students (NCHE, 2023). Understanding the implementation of McKinney-Vento Act provisions by local education agencies (LEAs) can aid schools and school districts in maximizing the law's provisions to enhance services for homeless children and youth.

Funding

To assist school districts in the “identification, enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youths” (42 U.S.C. 11433(a)(1)), each state’s Department of Education gives out subgrants on a triennial basis, each with a term of three years (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) grants, administered by the U.S. Department of Education under the McKinney-Vento Act, are allocated to state educational associations (SEAs). The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) guidelines for 2023 state that every state in the United States, through a SEA (State Education Agency), conducts a rigorous selection procedure to identify the school districts (LEA) that will receive a McKinney-Vento subgrant. Section 11433(c)(1) of the 42 United States Code provides these subgrants through a competitive process, contingent on the district level of need within the school. A school district must fulfill all the specified requirements to be eligible for a McKinney-Vento subgrant. To qualify for an award, applicants must demonstrate that they have complied with both the federal McKinney-Vento law and any applicable state regulations that pertain to homelessness (South Carolina Department of Education, 2023).

However, the State Department of Education will only provide funding for proposals of very high quality and that go beyond the McKinney-Vento Act's minimum requirements (South Carolina Department of Education, 2023). Proposals must demonstrate a well-developed and feasible plan for meeting the needs of homeless children and youth. This plan should include, but is not limited to, professional development opportunities, an evaluation plan, coordination with the district Title I program, and strong collaboration with at least one community-based organization, public agency, or other nonprofit organization (South Carolina Department of Education, 2023). Program funding can be allocated towards many activities, including tutoring, supplemental instruction, and referral services.

Socio-Economic, Race, and Ethnicity Factors

According to Cheng et al. (2015), the racial and ethnic variety of the child population in the United States, as well as the socioeconomic disadvantage of the young population, are significantly expanding. Cornell University led the first study to report national and annual rates of sheltered homelessness across race and ethnicity over time (Cheng et al., 2015). Its findings showed that black and Indigenous Americans are significantly more likely to experience homelessness than members of other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. In addition to this, according to Cheng et al. (2015), children are disproportionately affected by poverty. According to Cheng et al. (2015), disparities in schools and health care settings that are related to an individual's ethnic or racial background as well as their socioeconomic level (SES) are well established and have become a significant focus for many communities' health-related organizations. It is essential to understand the factors that contribute to the existence of disparities surrounding homelessness, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Socio-Economic Factors

Students who are without a permanent home are not a homogenous group; they come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and geographic locations throughout the United States. However, due to inequitable access to housing and historical hurdles to economic opportunities, the likelihood of homelessness being experienced by students of color is higher (Levin et al., 2022). Student homelessness is almost always caused by financial hardships in the student's household. According to the American Psychological Association (2022), approximately one in six children, or 16% of all children, live in households with incomes that fall below the federal poverty line. The Census Reporter (2023) reported that most people living in poverty in the United States are of African American and Latino descent. In the same vein, children of color, particularly black and Hispanic children, as well as Indigenous children, have a disproportionately high rate of living in poverty (American Psychological Association, 2022). In more concrete terms, 35.5% of people living in poverty in the United States who are Black are under the age of 18 (American Psychological Association, 2022).

According to the American Psychological Association (2022), 40.7% of Hispanic persons living below the poverty line in the United States are younger than the age of 18, and 29.1% of American Indian and Native American children lived in poverty in 2018. In comparison, around 21 percent of white individuals living in poverty in the United States are younger than 18 years old (American Psychological Association, 2022). According to the statistics provided by the United States Census Bureau in 2020, the median household income of Hispanics is constantly lower than that of whites and Asians. According to Stephenson and Hampton (2023), many women are the primary breadwinners for their households, and a disproportionate number of homeless families consist of households with young children. In a review of the data provided by

the United States Department of Education (2023), the percentage of households led by poor women is significantly higher than the percentage of families led by poor men.

Race

Race plays a significant role in shaping societal structures and dynamics in the United States. The existing body of research acknowledges the diverse living circumstances of homeless students, considering factors such as their residential, regional, and family contexts. However, there is a scarcity of literature that specifically examines the connections between race and student homelessness (Pavlakis et al., 2020). Harrison et al. (2017) expressed concern about the disproportionate representation of students of color, who constitute around 75% of the homeless population. According to Edwards (2023), the prevalence of homelessness is higher among black students, with approximately 20% experiencing this issue, in comparison to 17% of white students. Humes et al. (2010) report a disproportionate representation of individuals from African American, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino communities in the homeless population, both nationally and in distinct geographical regions within the United States. It has been observed that Indigenous students encounter the most pronounced disparities regarding race, with rates as high as 31% (Edwards, 2023). Notably, LGBTQ+ learners face comparable risk levels for experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act does not explicitly address the issue of race, and the federal reports mandated by this act do not provide a demographic breakdown of student enrollment figures or achievement data based on racial categories (Gabbard et al., 2006).

Ethnicity

The findings of Murphy and Tobin's (2011) study provided evidence that homeless children and adolescents, particularly those of immigrants, had lower performance levels compared to their housed counterparts across a comprehensive range of crucial measures of

educational success. However, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act does not comprehensively tackle the disparities experienced by immigrant children (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). Although there are legal provisions in place to safeguard homeless students, the existing framework fails to sufficiently address the distinct obstacles encountered by immigrant children who are simultaneously experiencing homelessness (Gabbard et al., 2006). The hurdles encompass several factors such as language barriers, cultural disparities, and limited knowledge of the U.S. education system. Furthermore, the existing legislation fails to adequately tackle the needs of undocumented immigrants who may encounter barriers in accessing specific benefits and services (Gabbard et al., 2006). The provision of assistance to immigrant students within an academic environment is of utmost importance in mitigating disparities. According to Jamil et al. (2017), the provision of support encompassing academic assistance, social-emotional support, aid to immigrant families, and the cultivation of a collaborative home-school relationship will provide benefits for all parties involved. In conclusion, the implementation of collaborative efforts with community organizations aimed at policy reform to address systemic racism and prejudice against immigrants would effectively mitigate the educational disparities experienced by homeless immigrant children (Jamil et al., 2017).

Highest Student Group that Faces Homelessness

Based on data provided by the National Center for Homeless Education (2022), it was observed that a total of 1.1 million students, accounting for 2.2% of the overall student population, encountered precarious housing situations, characterized by the absence of a stable, consistent, and sufficient nighttime residence, throughout the 2020-2021 academic year within the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published research in 2021 that revealed 2.7% of high school students in the United States were living in unstable living situations. According to the findings of the study, 1.7% of high school students slept in the

home of a friend, family member, or other person; 0.3% slept in a shelter or emergency housing; 0.2% slept in a motel or hotel; 0.2% slept in a car, park, campground, or other public place; and 0.3% did not have a typical place to sleep (McKinnon et al., 2023). Students in high school who are experiencing homelessness are more likely than their counterparts who have stable housing to miss many days of school, switch schools in the middle of the school year, have poorer scores on their standardized tests, and ultimately quit school (Gallardo et al., 2022). They are at heightened risk for hunger, depression, relationship violence, alcohol, and drug usage, and even bullying. The high incidence of these outcomes among high schoolers who experience homelessness in turn contributes to low academic performance, restricting the capacity of these pupils to access the same educational opportunities as their housed classmates (Cai, n.d.)

Homelessness Among America's High School Students

The experience of homelessness during high school can cause significant levels of stress and anxiety among students (Klein, 2022). Many high school students who encounter these difficulties frequently have a sense of diminished security, stability, and agency regarding their circumstances. Educational institutions possess the potential to serve as a stable and supportive environment conducive to the pursuit of postsecondary goals, if they demonstrate a conscientious awareness of the distinctive requirements of high school students grappling with homelessness (Cai, n.d.). In contrast to their peers who can prioritize academic achievement and future educational prospects, homeless high school students face the persistent concern of meeting fundamental needs, including food, attire, and housing (Klein, 2022). Educational institutions are required to offer personalized assistance aimed at bolstering students' aspirations for higher education enrollment and fostering their self-efficacy in pursuing such opportunities.

Importance of Providing Support to Students Experiencing Homelessness

When homeless students are integrated into a school system, several issues arise for district homeless liaisons, school personnel, and students. As indicated by Sulkowski and Kaczor (2014), there is a common occurrence of delayed transfer of school records when a student enrolls in a new educational institution. The uncertainty surrounding the services received by a student before transferring poses challenges for service delivery among school professionals. The issue can pose significant challenges for elementary school students because of their limited ability to articulate the specific services they may have previously received at another educational institution. According to Sulkowski and Kaczor (2014), a lack of awareness is common among school professionals regarding the identity of their district's homeless liaison. The existence of diverse barriers can make it difficult for educational practitioners to effectively address potential concerns that may arise when working with homeless students.

Fundamental Necessities

In student homelessness, acquiring fundamental necessities such as garments, personal hygiene items, and educational materials is a big challenge (Levin et al., 2022). While these necessities may often be overlooked by numerous students, they possess the potential to serve as the determining factor between the continuation of one's education and the unfortunate decision to discontinue it, particularly for adolescents undergoing a period of transition (Levin et al., 2022). School districts across the country have devised innovative strategies to address the fundamental needs of their student population grappling with homelessness. Educational institutions, districts, and community organizations have implemented effective approaches, such as establishing resource hubs within school premises, establishing school food pantries, and implementing backpack buddy programs (Levin et al., 2022). These initiatives aim to address the

issue of food insecurity among students by providing them with access to essential resources, including food, particularly during weekends or holidays (Levin et al., 2022). The act of organizing individual meetings with students who are facing homelessness enables school administrators, community members, and social workers to establish connections with the most susceptible students. The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that educational institutions fulfill the fundamental necessity of sustenance through school meal initiatives, such as free and reduced lunch programs. However, numerous school districts surpass mere compliance with the legislation, striving to ensure that students' essential requirements are adequately addressed (Levin et al., 2022).

Districts and schools encounter constraints in terms of capacity and resources, necessitating the establishment of external partnerships to help students and families who are experiencing homelessness (Atwell et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated that the establishment of influential collaborations between educational institutions and the local community has proven to be beneficial for students, leading to enhanced stability, improved daily attendance, reduced chronic absenteeism, and a decrease in the rate of students dropping out (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

The provision of financial and in-kind donations from community members can be instrumental in acquiring clothing, personal hygiene items, and other essential supplies for students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Additionally, these contributions can support the enhancement of facilities, the procurement of curricular resources for classrooms, the improvement of programs for students and families, and the implementation of after-school activities (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Educational institutions benefit from community supporters by gaining the advantage of offering volunteer opportunities, thereby fostering an enriched learning environment for students.

Consequently, when community organizations establish strong partnerships with educational institutions, it leads to mutual benefits for all parties involved.

Interagency Collaboration

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council revealed that homeless youth encounter substantial obstacles to achieving success (National Center for Homeless Education, 2008). When compared to their counterparts who are not experiencing homelessness, homeless students exhibit a higher likelihood of academic underperformance, and less access to educational resources and community assistance (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Although our current knowledge of children and youth facing homelessness is extensive and comprehensive, we still face significant challenges in addressing the diverse range of issues they encounter, particularly within the educational environment. Collaboration among school professionals and school and community agencies is of paramount significance in supporting the needs of students within the classroom and in their home lives (Hall, 2007; Miller, 2011). School and community-based professionals should understand the diverse range of needs to facilitate a comprehensive and multifaceted approach (Hall, 2007; Miller, 2011). Collaboration between this cohort of professionals holds significance in guaranteeing homeless students' access to quality education while fostering community stability (Hall, 2007). This is due to the diverse knowledge and expertise that each professional contributes, thereby enabling a comprehensive and holistic approach. Collaboration enables educational professionals to acquire the necessary skills and assurance to effectively cater to this specific demographic (Hall, 2007).

Miller (2011) identified district and school personnel along with parents, shelters, and community-based initiatives as important persons in his description of support mechanisms for students experiencing homelessness. However, the author primarily focused on a wide range of literature related to schools, with limited attention to school districts, administrators, and community agencies. Miller (2011) also noted that existing literature mainly comprises descriptive narratives and shows a lack of significant diversity. There is limited research available on the nature of collaborative efforts between school professionals and community agencies in effectively supporting students experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the existing research is without a fundamental framework for establishing and maintaining interagency ties between school and community agencies, particularly in the areas of supporting students facing homelessness and enhancing related programs and services (Pavlakis et al., 2021).

According to research, cross-sector coordinated activity between community organizations like food banks and schools is particularly important (Altshuler, 2003; Miller, 2011). Additionally, federal policy mandates cross-sector collaboration. (McKinney-Vento, 2022). McKinney-Vento requires districts, also known as Local Education Agencies (LEAs), to designate a homeless liaison who will connect with community resources to address the academic, socio-emotional, and daily living needs of students experiencing homelessness (Canfield, 2015; Hallett & Skrla, 2017; McKinney-Vento, 2022; Miller et al., 2011).

Public School Obstacles

During the school year (SY) 2020-21, U.S. public schools identified 1,099,221 students who experienced homelessness (NCES, 2021). This represented 2.2% of all students enrolled in public schools in the United States (NCES, 2021). The situation is cause for concern due to the substantial obstacles that students experiencing homelessness encounter in achieving academic success and positive life outcomes (Sulkowski, 2014). According to Griffin et al. (2019),

homeless children face many obstacles, some of which are detrimental to their academic progress and engagement. These obstacles include inconsistent care from caregivers and a lack of academic resources (Griffin et al., 2019). Students experiencing homelessness encounter substantial barriers that impede their advancement in both academic and social spheres. These barriers include the absence of a stable place of residence, parental absence, transportation difficulties, chronic absenteeism, frequent relocations, caregiver instability, social disconnection, and limited access to essential resources such as food and clothing (Canfield, 2014; Casey et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). Those who support K-12 students experiencing homelessness must understand the influence of outside variables, such as the presence or absence of interagency collaboration partnerships, on these students. The success of schools serving students experiencing homelessness can be enhanced by the establishment of robust collaborations with local community agencies (Miller & Hafner, 2008).

Partnerships Matter

According to Wilkins et al.'s (2016) findings, "results indicated significant differences in perceived implementation in the level of collaboration at the district level as it relates to community partnerships. Many school districts often encourage schools to accept Federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth funding without providing awareness of student homelessness in terms of general geographical awareness, community interaction, state policy, and students' needs" (p. 57). The findings indicated that collaboration and awareness are major factors that affect perceptions of implementation (Wilkins et al., 2016). Furthermore, the results indicated that liaisons must take steps to ensure a collaborative environment to implement the MVA (Wilkins et al., 2016, p. 63). The importance of collaboration cannot be emphasized enough. Homeless liaisons' perceptions of collaboration suggest that although it may be imperfect, it is important (Wilkins et al., 2016, p. 63). In practice, communities, schools, and

district personnel should acknowledge their shared responsibility in supporting children and youths experiencing homelessness to not only receive an adequate education but also to have the social and emotional support to build self-esteem (Wilkins et al., 2016, p. 63).

Social Capital

According to Sanders (2003), educational institutions that demonstrate high levels of achievement have a propensity to cultivate students who exhibit greater levels of engagement and participation in societal affairs. Social capital can be defined as a comprehensive term including the various connections and interactions that exist among individuals. This encompasses the connections among individuals within social groupings, interpersonal connections, and relationships between individuals who share similarities (bonding) or differences (bridging) (Al-Tit et al., 2022). The concept of social capital can be understood as institutionalized resources accessible to individuals, offering a perspective rooted in structuralism (Al-Tit et al., 2022). This encompasses the range of amenities and resources offered by service providers, as well as the level of ease with which people can use them. Furthermore, this component pertains to how services, through policy, can shape environments that either foster or undermine social capital (Al-Tit et al., 2022). Social capital refers to the potential ability to obtain resources, perks, or knowledge through connections with others. This encompasses the resources or advantages of certain partnerships that generate social capital. This dimension strongly correlates with the body of literature concerning social support, frequently alluding to its subcategories, namely emotional, practical, and informational support (Al-Tit et al., 2022).

A strong nation's functionality is intricately linked to its citizens' educational achievements and societal contributions. Understanding the processes involved in building and maintaining effective partnerships is necessary to fully harness the benefits that a thriving

relationship between educational institutions and the surrounding community provides. Accomplished students contribute to the overall success of educational institutions, thereby leading to the community's prosperity (Al-Tit et al., 2022). The cultivation of genuine relationships and connections between educational institutions and their local communities is crucial for establishing productive partnerships that align with the objectives of all involved stakeholders. It is crucial to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between educational institutions and the surrounding community, particularly through the perspectives and experiences of employees associated with a school district and local community organizations (Wang & Boyd, 2000).

School and Community-Based Collaboration

The collaborative efforts between educational institutions and community organizations yield mutual advantages for all stakeholders involved. Partnerships have the potential to enhance, bolster, and even revolutionize the development of individual partners, leading to enhanced program quality, optimized resource utilization, and improved alignment of objectives and curricula (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010). Many types of educational reforms have been attempted to improve schools and student outcomes. School community partnerships have emerged as one of the prevailing reform initiatives in contemporary times. Within these initiatives, educational institutions endeavor to broaden their conventional educational objectives by incorporating health and social services for both children and families, as well as fostering engagement with the wider community (Valli et al., 2016). These collaborative alliances help to improve student education, strengthen educational institutions and familial units, and contribute to the prosperity of local communities.

According to Berman and Crosas (2020), there has been a growing trend in the popularity of partnerships between community agencies and school personnel. This is because community agencies can establish direct connections with the community, enabling them to effectively reach students and their families to provide essential social services. Brown, Shinn, and Khadduri (2017) highlighted the importance for school districts and community agencies to understand the diverse range of support needed for students faced with homelessness. Collaboration among professionals within this specific cohort holds significance in guaranteeing the provision of suitable resources for students facing homelessness, as each professional contributes their individualized knowledge and expertise, hence facilitating a comprehensive and multifaceted approach (Hands, 2023).

According to Peterson (2013), collaboration among school personnel enables them to acquire the necessary skills and self-assurance to effectively cater to this specific group. Fostering a willingness to accept the objectives and goals of collaborators and giving opportunities to alter collaborative activities over time to better serve those needs is crucial to the development and maintenance of partnerships, as argued by Hands (2023). The purpose of collaborative endeavors is to create a nurturing environment for students, wherein they receive the necessary support and stability to foster their personal growth, actualize their aspirations, and thrive (Reupert et al., 2022). This requires the creation of an environment that prioritizes the perspectives of students, and where a diverse range of individuals, including parents, siblings, extended family members, neighbors, educators, district professionals, community agency members, and policymakers, collectively take responsibility for the well-being and development of students experiencing homelessness.

Collaboration does not occur in solitude; productive partnerships are dependent on the social environments that render collaboration across various sectors and organizations either straightforward or complex (Hands, 2023). The variables and obstacles within the social environment that impact school-community interagency collaboration efforts cannot be ignored.

The existing literature on collaborative alliances presents a diverse range of models, strategies, and objectives. However, it clearly emphasizes the crucial significance of effective leadership (Valli et al., 2016). Various types and patterns of partnerships can be formed between educational institutions and the local community. The success of school and community relationships is significantly influenced by school and community leaders (Miller et al., 2015). An administrator who embraces and implements the principles of transformational leadership theory is most likely to effectively foster constructive collaboration between a school and its surrounding community.

Transformational leadership emphasizes the need to engage in collaborative efforts toward enhancing school improvement by utilizing collective teams (Northouse, 2010). The current body of literature exhibits a significant scarcity of qualitative research regarding the examination of the relationship between community and school collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness. While the literature overwhelmingly agrees educational institutions and community partners should establish a collaborative approach to effectively support the specific needs of students who are facing homelessness, research is less clear on how to accomplish collaboration goals.

Pavlakakis (2018) suggested that school districts, in partnership with community stakeholders, should foster collaboration among agencies to develop a comprehensive framework to assist students who are homeless, ensuring that efforts are thorough and responsive. Formal guidelines should add more levels of assistance to enhance and inform school districts and community agency professionals' practices (Pavlakakis, 2018).

A persistent necessity to conduct additional research on the collaboration between educational institutions and the surrounding community exists. Knowledge of how partnerships are established, and the benefits partnerships bring to everyone involved is needed (Wang & Boyd, 2001). The partnership principle applies to community and school agencies' cooperation to advance their mutual interest. Often, community agency partnerships prioritize their interest and guide students toward decisions aligned with their mission, vision, and commitment strategies rather than the schools' (Wang & Boyd, 2000).

Transformational Leadership

According to a thorough evaluation of the literature, transitional leadership is a potent tool that helps school and community partnerships succeed (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The presence of both community and school district leadership has consistently been identified as a pivotal element influencing the caliber and enduring nature of partnerships (Valli et al., 2016). The administrator assumes a pivotal role in establishing an atmosphere of hospitality cultivating constructive interpersonal connections and fostering a collaborative form of transformative leadership characterized by shared oversight (Valli et al., 2016).

Leaders supporting collaboration for students experiencing homelessness entail fostering a common vision and collective effort to enhance outcomes for this vulnerable group. By providing direction, support, and inspiration, they empower stakeholders to work together effectively addressing the complex challenges of student homelessness. Therefore, they

exemplify the characteristics of a transformational leader. James V. Downton first introduced the concept of transformational leadership in 1973, as Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) documented:

"The cultivation of a compelling vision and the display of a charismatic personality were indispensable in motivating team members to willingly adhere to a leader's guidance".

These affective states foster a milieu wherein adherents show a willingness to exert themselves beyond their initial perceived limits. The rationale behind this assertion stems from the fact that transformational leaders extend to their followers a proposition that surpasses mere personal benefit, namely an inspiring mission and a sense of self-identity (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Hence, a critical aspect of fostering partnerships lies in clarifying boundaries and responsibilities regarding information sharing. The establishment of more comprehensive forms of partnership necessitates a substantial overhaul of conventional school structures and norms (Valli et al., 2016). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), this transformative vision recognizes the vital, overlapping roles played by families, community partners, and schools.

The establishment of a collective vision also serves to prevent partners from engaging in counterproductive actions and instead encourages them to collectively strive towards a unified objective of achieving student success (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2010), the likelihood of a successful partnership increases when school leaders adopt a vision for student success that encompasses not only academic outcomes, but also considers the physical, emotional, and social well-being of students. In contrast, when competing agendas are at play, the probability of success diminishes.

Leadership: School & Community Change

In the past decade, there has been a notable increase in research and practices focusing on the involvement of schools, families, and communities in young people's education. This trend has brought about positive changes in educational approaches and outcomes (Perkins, 2015). Several reasons contributed to this trend of change, most notably low academic success, and high dropout rates among underprivileged and marginalized students (Dyk, 2015). Educators and social scientists have recently gained a greater awareness of the necessity of school, family, and community partnership involvement to bring about change (Wood, 2016). Epstein's model, which delineates various forms of school-community relationships, underscores the necessity for leaders to foster collaboration with families and communities in effecting change within schools (Epstein et al., 2018). Epstein's partnership model is linked to the processes and outcomes of educational change and school improvement.

A change in a school and its surrounding community does not occur without effort. Each school and district face ongoing issues and strives to ensure the success of all children through things like school improvement and community partnerships. Creating better learning communities in schools and improving existing ones both require transformation. Individuals, the educational system, and the community at large all have a part in the change process, which involves accepting the change, adapting to the change, and putting the change into effect (Wood, 2016). It reflects the underlying norms and values that help define patterns of behavior, attitudes, and expectations between the various stakeholders in the school (Benner, 2023). Great leadership influences everything, from the happiness of teachers to the accomplishments of students.

Creating a successful educational environment of change through school and community leadership demands a commitment to empowering and supporting teachers, facilitating the creation of a common vision for both the school and the community, and the formation of effective partnerships with parents (Wood, 2016). Schools and communities may establish a safe and supportive atmosphere when leaders make these changes, which can lead to greater student outcomes, increased teacher job satisfaction, and a more positive community culture.

Develop a Shared Vision

The school's mission and vision are essential elements of the school's culture (Six Actions to Keep Moving Your School's Vision Forward, 2023). Leaders often establish their own goals and ideas for the school (Shared Vision - Casel School guide, n.d.). Instead, leaders should include staff and other community stakeholders in crafting the school mission and vision statements. In this manner, everyone involved will have a personal stake in achieving the school's objectives, fostering a robust, optimistic, and cooperative school and community culture (Shared Vision - Casel School guide, n.d.). It also ensures that the school's goals are realistic and achievable, based on the insights and experiences of those who work there and live in the community (Six Actions to Keep Moving Your School's Vision Forward, 2023). When school leaders are not on the same page, having a clear vision makes it simpler to delegate leadership responsibilities and decision-making to a collective group (Six Actions to Keep Moving Your School's Vision Forward, 2023). The group has already committed to the school's direction and is enthusiastic about finding ways to maintain momentum.

Build Partnerships with Parents and the Community

School leaders can encourage change by including parents in school life, asking for their feedback, and incorporating their ideas wherever possible (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2010).

Students benefit greatly from school administrators' efforts to forge partnerships with local businesses and community organizations. Volunteering, joining school committees, and organizing school-wide fundraising events are all great ways for school administrators to get parents involved. Maintaining an open-door policy for parents and community members can help them feel more at ease (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). Each adult possesses a vested interest in the welfare and education of children. Adults must build bridges to work together for the health and safety of children. Offering children a stimulating and nurturing educational setting is of paramount significance (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). Families, communities, and educational institutions must recognize these shared objectives and collaborate for the benefit of children (Hanmer, 2010). A strong education gives students a favorable self-concept as well as good emotional and mental health (Palencia & Siegel-Hawley, 2023). This will allow students to build healthy, productive connections with their parents, family members, and the rest of the community. Education alone cannot instill these ideals. Similarly, parents and community organizations cannot raise well-rounded students on their own. As a result, to get the best results for students, the school and the community must collaborate (Bryan et al., 2020). Students, staff, and parents all feel a sense of belonging when there is a strong school-community tie. It expands student learning opportunities while also establishing a welcoming learning atmosphere (Bryan et al., 2020).

Palencia and Siegel-Hawley (2023) found that a community's investment in learning outcomes increases when it perceives itself as an equal partner. A healthy school-community relationship results when school administrators make it obvious to all stakeholders that they are an equal partner in the student's growth. Schools can build relationships with stakeholders by getting out into the community (Bryan et al., 2020).

Teachers can communicate with school neighborhood organizations, and administrators can connect with nearby businesses to assist with school needs. When administrators share their school's vision with community members it helps to foster mutual understanding (Smith & Stormont, 2011). An administrator, for example, may bring in a community mentor to connect with the students and help with various challenges the students are encountering, such as bullying, homelessness, or gun violence. This not only provides students with practical experience, but also strengthens the relationship between the school and community-based mentorship programs, thereby increasing community involvement and reducing school absenteeism (Smith & Stormont, 2011).

Successful Leadership in the Twenty-First Century

Successful schools require effective leadership, particularly as challenges become more intricate (Boiling, 2023). Effective school administration is critical for achieving success, particularly given the increasing complexity of student issues such as homelessness, bullying, and mental health. Effective leadership in the twenty-first century necessitates the adoption of a global perspective on education and community that transcends routine managerial responsibilities to coach diverse teams and resolve complex issues. All stakeholders are made to feel valued, respected, and supported as they foster a positive school culture (Boiling, 2023). School administrators and community leaders should support continuous professional development and growth by offering opportunities for collaboration and learning (Boiling, 2023). Additionally, they establish collaborative alliances with parents and community stakeholders to foster robust partnerships that bolster students' achievements not only in the classroom but also in the community. For a leader to truly enhance educational and community outcomes, in the twenty-first century, he or she must exemplify all four framework models of leadership and operate with a servant leadership mindset.

Four Frame Models of Leadership

Adopting diverse perspectives significantly helps to effectively address prevalent challenges, according to my experience and reading. Bolman and Deal's (2017) Four Frame approach has been particularly useful in this regard. Bolman and Deal (2017) characterized the Four Frames as structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. A skilled leader can combine and employ multiple Frames, or all four, at once, or they can use one frame for a while before switching to another (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The concept posits that a leader should use many models to obtain a comprehensive perspective on a given issue, thereby examining it from various vantage points. This practice facilitates the leader in gaining insights on potential issues that may have been overlooked if they had approached the matter from a single perspective (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Leaders who employ the structural frame motivate their teams by concentrating on objectives, execution, and oversight (Bolman & Deal, 2017). They ensure that both themselves and their teams are held accountable, and they make logical decisions that benefit the organization and team, rather than being influenced by personal preferences. Leaders prioritize employee needs, morale, individuality, and motivation when they implement the Human Resource Framework (Bolman & Deal, 2017). They strive to establish a professional setting characterized by compassion, trust, and candid communication. Leaders who employ the political frame prioritize negotiation to obtain critical resources and garner public support for their initiatives (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Additionally, they acknowledge the existence of distinctions between the requirements of individuals and those of groups. Finally, leaders who employ the symbolic frame acknowledge the significance of purpose and contentment to individuals, and they assist their teams in deriving significance from disarray, particularly in times of upheaval (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

This fame employ rituals, symbols, roles, and shared values to foster unity, clarify events for others, and commemorate significant junctures. A leader risks ineffectiveness if he or she operates with a single habitual frame (Koçak & Özdemir, 2019). As a result, leaders should implement all Four Frame approaches, creating greater flexibility as school administrators or community leaders (Koçak & Özdemir, 2019).

Servant Leadership

The importance of effective leadership in schools has never been greater than it is today (Artis & Bartel, 2020). Schools require forward-thinking administrators who can position institutions for success in the face of increasingly complex challenges. A servant leader prioritizes the requirements of the institution and strives to reach decisions that are advantageous for all parties involved. The leadership paradigm commonly known as “servant leadership” was initially conceptualized by Robert Greenleaf during the 1970s (Artis & Bartel, 2020). To embody the qualities of a servant leader, one must abandon the conventional authoritative style and adopt a servant-centric approach to leadership. The promotion of “collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment” is how servant leaders fortify an organization (Hart & Nakai, 2011). Recent research (Artis & Bartel, 2020) has underscored the significance of the servant leadership model regarding school satisfaction, which includes teacher retention, strong learning environments, and increased student achievement. Servant leaders frequently prioritize the organization's interests over their own and value individuals over programs and politics. In the end, this leadership approach benefits students because it encourages administrators to first serve teachers as the teacher serves the students and confidently guides them through their studies (Hart & Nakai, 2011).

A Call to Service

In my role as a community leader, I have personally witnessed the benefits of cultivating a culture of service, which has significantly enhanced my leadership skills. I demonstrate my commitment to Christian values and perspectives by prioritizing the well-being of individuals and selflessly dedicating myself to serving and addressing the needs of others above my own. The leadership style I acquired was derived from the teachings and practices of Jesus of Nazareth. In the Gospel of John, Jesus exhibited a profound act of humility by washing the feet of his followers, despite his evident role as their leader. This act of servitude, as described in John 13:1-17 of the New International Version, exemplified Jesus' servant-like nature. Numerous instances may be found within the biblical text when Jesus demonstrates his conviction regarding the role of a leader as a servant to others. Consider the excerpt extracted from the Gospel of Mark: "Jesus assumed a seated position, summoned the twelve disciples, and imparted to them the following instruction: 'If anyone desires to be foremost, he must willingly assume the position of utmost humility and serve the entirety of humanity'" (Mark 9:35, New International Version). The teachings of Jesus unequivocally indicate his belief in the notion that an effective leader should embody the qualities of humility and servitude. In contrast to many individuals who prioritize being a leader out of a desire for status or monetary possessions, Jesus claimed that a servant leader puts service first (Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, n.d.). A servant leader, according to Greenleaf (n.d.), is someone who "shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible." Leaders within the community and educational institution can optimize their efficacy in their meaningful responsibilities by precisely defining and executing servant leadership.

Theoretical Framework

Many states, districts, and schools find it difficult to implement partnerships with homeless families, as well as to build and maintain strong relationships with them, according to Casape and Hernandez (2023). Educators frequently express a fervent aspiration to engage with families hailing from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to foster more robust collaborations characterized by shared accountability for children's educational achievements, yet they often find themselves at a loss as to how to effectively realize this objective (Caspe & Hernandez, 2023). The Sunnybrook framework was deliberately crafted as a collection of collaborative skills aimed at improving the efficacy of interprofessional teams (McLaney et al., 2022). A multi-stakeholder working group developed the framework through a thorough literature search and consensus building. This process was supported by extensive consultations, including patient representation, organizational development, leadership, and human resources (McLaney et al., 2022).

The Sunnybrook Framework

The framework comprises six actionable core competencies, each accompanied by associated team behaviors. The six competencies encompassed in this framework consist of shared decision-making, interprofessional values and ethics, role clarification, communication, interprofessional conflict resolution, and reflection (McLaney et al., 2022). Each competence and its corresponding behavior aim to utilize the knowledge and skills of all team members to establish and accomplish shared objectives. Teams designed these competencies to easily reference them and widely implement them across hospital and community settings. McLaney et al. (2022) demonstrated that collaboration and competencies are intricately intertwined with the organizational environment, encompassing practice, education, research, and leadership.

When successfully executed, these core competencies serve to cultivate and enhance the knowledge, and attitudes of individuals involved, enabling them to participate actively in fruitful collaborations that bolster both professional and personal growth while enhancing the advancement of the institutions (McLaney et al., 2022).

The framework is designed to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration. The competencies have four organizational contexts that include practice, education, research, and leadership (McLaney et al., 2022). The literature reminds us that interprofessional care involves collaborating to provide top-quality treatment, whereas interprofessional education involves learning together and from one another (McLaney et al., 2022). Interprofessional research and quality improvement involve multiple professions working together to combine their skills and scientific viewpoints to investigate a common research question or tackle a quality problem. The six competencies are shared decision-making, interprofessional values and ethics, role definition, communication, interprofessional conflict resolution, and reflection (McLaney et al., 2022). Every competency and its corresponding behavior aim to use the skills of all team members to establish and accomplish shared objectives. The Sunnybrook framework offers a structured approach to enhancing collaboration among interprofessional teams, which will assist the researcher in envisioning and implementing effective partnerships within my study. By providing a comprehensive guide to collaborative practices, the Sunnybrook framework enables the researcher to navigate and optimize partnerships across various stakeholders.

Foundations of the Methodology

In the past four decades, there has been significant advancement in the methodological aspects of case study research, as noted by Harrison et al. (2017). The evolutionary process yielded a pragmatic and adaptable research methodology, which can furnish a thorough and comprehensive understanding of a wide array of subjects spanning various fields of study

(Harrison et al., 2017). The emergence of change and progress can be attributed to the confluence of historical shifts in research methodologies and the individual researcher's inclinations, viewpoints, and understandings of this framework (Harrison et al., 2017). Scholars from various disciplines, each with their unique philosophical viewpoints, have enriched the field of case study research. As a result, there exists a wide range of definitions and approaches to conducting case study research (Harrison et al., 2017). When planning a methodological stance, it is critical to thoroughly consider the various approaches to conducting case studies. This contemplation is necessary to ascertain the most suitable design that effectively addresses the objectives of the study while also aligning with the researcher's worldview. This alignment's objective is to foster coherence between the researcher's philosophical stance, research inquiry, design, and methodologies used in the study (Yin, 2009).

Yin (2014) presented a conceptualization of case study research as a method used in social science. The presence of methodological pluralism becomes apparent in the author's delineation of "case study as a form of empirical inquiry" (p. 16). Yin (2014) articulated his methodology for conducting case studies as employing a "realist perspective" (p. 17) and emphasized the preservation of objectivity throughout the methodological procedures employed in the study's design. Although there are variations in certain aspects, there are shared characteristics that can guide the implementation of a case study research design. Prominent scholars in the field of case study research concur that the primary emphasis of a case study lies in the meticulous examination of a specific unit of analysis, treated as a self-contained entity (referred to as the "case"), over some time, while considering its surrounding circumstances (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2009). The adaptability of case study research in accommodating the researcher's philosophical stance provides a distinctive framework for a variety of investigations

that can yield enhanced understandings in various fields of inquiry (Harrison et al., 2017). The use of case study designs allows researchers to customize their approaches, allowing them to investigate a diverse array of questions about a given phenomenon's underlying reasons, nature, and mechanisms. This methodology proves invaluable in facilitating the exploration, elucidation, depiction, assessment, and formulation of theoretical frameworks surrounding complex issues within their respective contextual frameworks. The examination of outcomes can facilitate a comprehensive understanding of behaviors, processes, practices, and relationships within a given context (Harrison et al., 2017).

The Absence of Literature

Although there exists a substantial body of research employing quantitative methods to examine the correlation between educational institutions and their community collaborators, there has been very little scholarly focus on investigating this association through qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews, observations, and other qualitative methodologies. Through qualitative research, it is possible to examine the phenomenon being examined and the participant's perspective in greater detail. Interviewing enables a detailed examination of an experience with greater data to better comprehend a notion, to fully comprehend the connection between schools and their neighborhoods, and to gain a unique viewpoint on each of the involved participants (Creswell, 2007). Few studies highlight school and community collaborations concentrating on the viewpoint of the community agency and how the community agency can offer support to maintain the partnerships. Research utilizing quantitative data has shown that schools gain great advancements from establishing collaborative efforts, but they have yet to explore the process of how both entities partner to support students experiencing hardships like homelessness from a qualitative perspective.

Summary

Existing literature shows that collaborative partnerships positively impact the academic, mental, and social well-being of students facing homelessness. The formation of firm partnerships enables students from the educational institution and local community to receive better assistance. The establishment of community and school collaborations can manifest in various ways to address students' unique needs. School leadership plays an important role in fostering constructive collaborations with community members.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In Chapter 2, the researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the current body of literature about homelessness among children and young people, specifically emphasizing the McKinney-Vento statute. A discussion occurred on the difficulties associated with implementing this policy, as well as its considerable influence in addressing the educational requirements of students experiencing homelessness. In addition, the literature investigated the significance of interagency collaboration in providing comprehensive help to these children. It shed light on the benefits and challenges met by collaborative efforts by various organizations and agencies.

The primary purpose of this qualitative case study was to analyze how district and school officials, in collaboration with local community agencies, have managed accomplishments and tackled problems in the process of creating, maintaining, and extending partnerships. To provide a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon, the research makes use of Sunnybrook's recommendations for improving the efficiency of interprofessional teams (McLaney et al., 2022). This framework emphasizes the significance of specific practices for cultivating partnerships that involve collaboration between different agencies.

To gain insights into the experiences and collaboration practices of school district and local community agency employees, various data including a questionnaire, focus group interviews, artifacts, and observational data were collected. This study addressed the following questions:

RQ1: How do district and school personnel, along with local community agencies describe their experiences developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships that reflect effective interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness?

RQ2: In what ways have successes been achieved and challenges managed by district and school personnel, along with local community agencies, when establishing interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness?

Research Methodology

This qualitative case study of a single school district drew heavily on the perspectives of participants with direct involvement in overseeing or engaging in interagency collaboration to support students facing homelessness. For this investigation, qualitative methodology was chosen for its distinctive capacity to comprehend genuine experiences through the perspectives and insights provided by the participants. According to Wilson (1998), qualitative research aims to comprehend the world from the researcher's perspective and from the viewpoint of the participants who inhabit it (p. 1). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) assert that qualitative research encompasses diverse research methodologies. They posit that the investigator gathers "soft" information, which is abundant in depictions of individuals, locations, and dialogues, and not easily manageable through statistical methodologies (p. 2). The researcher sought a thorough description of the strategies and barriers that impede interagency collaboration in supporting the needs of students who are homeless.

Therefore, a descriptive case study was chosen to provide a narrative account of a real situation, specifically focusing on the problem of youth homelessness, and the approaches utilized by the relevant stakeholders to address this issue. Thematic analysis was utilized to facilitate a deeper understanding of relationships between school and community agencies operating to support students who are experiencing homelessness. By employing qualitative research techniques, the investigation facilitated the emergence of meaning from the data itself.

Data sets included artifact focus group interviews, questionnaires, and observation field notes from community agency homeless alliance meetings.

The researcher collected data from stakeholders in various roles such as district personnel, a school administrator, and community organization employees. The purpose of this data collection was to construct a comprehensive narrative that effectively captures participants' experiences and perspectives on interagency collaboration in the context of serving children who are experiencing homelessness. The data was subjected to a thorough examination by the researcher, who identified suitable quotes that accurately reflected the themes and patterns that surfaced (Tracy, 2019).

Case Study

According to Yin (2002), a case study is a “comprehensive research method that encompasses several aspects, including design logic, methodologies for data collecting, and specialized approaches to data analysis” (p. 14). He also identified the following as the primary characteristics of the “technical definition” of case studies:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and context are not clear.
- The case study investigation addresses the unique social circumstances in which there are more variables of interest compared to data points, resulting in a specific outcome.
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014, pp. 13-14).

According to Yin (2014), the primary objective of a descriptive case study is to provide a

comprehensive depiction of a phenomenon within its authentic real-world setting. This phenomenon is widely used in sociology and anthropology. Case studies play a crucial role by enabling researchers to examine and investigate a specific phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Yin, 2009). This descriptive case study focuses on interagency collaboration within the district, school, and community relationships. The case involved employers, employees, and stakeholders who possess extensive knowledge and experience in working together to provide support for students facing homelessness. The ‘unit of analysis’ in case study research can encompass various entities, including individuals, families, households, communities, organizations, events, or decisions (De Vaus, 2001, p. 220). The unit of analysis was the experiences, actions, and perspectives of district and school personnel, as well as local community agencies, regarding the development, sustainability, and expansion of partnerships for effective interagency collaboration in supporting students experiencing homelessness.

According to Bogdan and Biklen’s (2007) definition, a case study refers to an examination of a single context, individual, or occurrence. Case studies have been extensively utilized across multiple academic fields throughout history. According to Creswell (2007), this methodology has been applied in various fields such as social science, medicine, law, and political science, and is a strong fit for a better understanding of interagency collaborations, a primary goal of the proposed study. Furthermore, according to Yin (2009), case studies provide an opportunity to investigate and uncover human behaviors, including emotions, personalities, and thoughts, through research.

Setting

This study focused on a school district and local community agencies within a metropolitan area in a southern state. This area has a population of 73,589 (Census Profile: Greenville-Anderson, SC Metro Area, 2024). It is currently growing at a rate of 0.88% annually,

and its population has increased by 3.6% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 71,031 in 2020 (Census Profile: Greenville-Anderson, SC Metro Area, 2024).

Based on the latest census data, the racial makeup of the community is: 67.27% identify as white, 24.25% as black or African American, 2.93% as Asian, 2.71% as two or more races, 2.16% as other race, 0.44% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0.24% as Native American, and 11% Hispanic American (Census profile: Greenville County school district, SC, 2024).

This district and its surrounding community agencies were chosen based on a variety of factors. Firstly, the area was chosen because it has a substantial population of students experiencing homelessness. Secondly, the district has shown an active commitment to utilizing interagency collaboration to support these students. The entire school district caters to a total student population of 77,500, employing a faculty of 6,000 teachers and an additional 11,000 staff members. Pointedly, recent demographic data from the district indicate that more than 6,582 enrolled K-12 students are experiencing homelessness causing the studied district to establish partnerships with community agencies to assist (McMillan, 2022). The demographic composition of the student population within the district's schools is as follows: 51.2% identify as White, 23% as Black, 2.5% as Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 18.3% as Hispanic/Latino, 0.4% as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.2% as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (Census profile: Greenville County school district, SC, 2024). Meanwhile, the community population recorded in the year 2020 was 70,720 (Welcome to Greenville County Schools website, 2020). The median age of the residents is 35 years (Census profile: Greenville County school district, SC, 2024). The median household income stands at \$58,2592, accompanied by a poverty rate of 14.16%.

The primary goal of the district is to facilitate the academic success of students who are legally classified as homeless by allowing them the opportunity to remain enrolled in a single school, even in the face of repeated changes in their place of living (Clemens et al., 2017). The need to ensure balanced management of educational services for homeless students in school districts that receive federal financial aid and operate as public institutions has been emphasized by researchers (Clemens et al., 2017). The school district's goal involves removing barriers that could hinder a homeless student's access to public education. Therefore, the school district provides a wide range of services and support to its students and families. These include individual and group tutoring, transportation assistance, financial support for school-related expenses, assistance in accessing records, summer enrichment programs, and referrals for medical, mental health, and social services.

Despite the district's best efforts, students face obstacles both in and out of the classroom. Schools and surrounding community agencies, such as church groups, civic organizations, and social service agencies, collaborate to expand access to resources and information. These relationships help assist students suffering from homelessness by reducing barriers and providing them with essential resources, support, and routes to success. These community groups connect students with mentors and provide housing assistance, counseling services, school supplies, clothing, and food. The researcher selected two community agencies, the Continuum of Care and the GHA Alliance, to provide a community perspective on the research questions in this study. These organizations are committed to enhancing students' overall well-being by helping families. The Continuum of Care, comprising over 80 agencies committed to ending homelessness in communities, has been operational for over 10 years.

According to the Census Profile for the Greenville-Anderson, SC Metro Area in 2024, it has provided services to more than 13,399 people. Data from the Homeless Management Information System indicates that this assistance has benefited 10,484 households. The GHA Alliance, consisting of 565 activists and advocates striving to reduce homelessness, began operations in 2018. Its major goal is to lead organizational efforts to advocate for connections, services, housing, and legislation that help those who are homeless or experiencing housing instability. The alliance provides services to around 1,100 school-aged children who are homeless.

They both connect both students and parents to variety of resources, including vocational training, food assistance programs, transportation assistance, access to healthcare services such as medical, dental, and vision care, psychological counseling, substance abuse counseling, life skills and financial planning instruction, and housing legal advice. Smith (2023) reports that there is a growing number of people without secure homes in the areas around the school district, which is heightened by a shortage of affordable housing. According to Smith (2023), there has been a significant disparity between the growth in pay rates and the rise in house costs. The cost of housing has increased at a rate that is significantly higher than the rise in wages by a margin of 31% over the course of just six years. Smith (2023) observed that working-class families are facing growing difficulties in affording the purchase of their first home. As a result, several families feel pressure to relocate from their current neighborhood in pursuit of more feasible housing alternatives. Their options frequently entail living with friends or relatives, finding temporary sanctuary in emergency shelters, or investigating alternate options for long-term accommodation (Smith, 2023).

Participants

Participants in the focus group included an administrator, a McKinney-Vento social worker, a dropout intervention specialist, a social worker who specializes in working with pregnant and parent communities, and representatives from community organizations (see Table 3.1). The table provides a thorough summary of each participant's roles, position area, and duration inside the organization.

Table 3.1

List of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Job Title	Position Area	Years in Current Position
Daniel	Lead Dropout Prevention Specialist	District	12
Carolyn	McKinney-Vento District Social Worker	District	3
Theresa	Parenting & Pregnant Services Social Worker	District	21
Kimberly	Dir. of Schools & Community Engagement	Community	1.5
Carson	High School Administrator	School	5
Brandon	Special Projects Coordinator	Community	16

Every participant had first-hand experience working with other organizations to support students experiencing homelessness through collaborative efforts among different organizations. The participant selection in this study employed purposeful sampling, which is a method commonly used to identify groups who possess significant experience and knowledge regarding a specific phenomenon of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). These individuals in the group articulated their experiences and opinions in an uninhibited, candid, profound, and contemplative manner.

When seeking to conduct a study cost-effectively with limited resources, purposeful sampling provides the researcher with the opportunity to deliberately choose individuals or people who are known to be accessible and willing to participate (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling involves the deliberate selection of individuals and sites for study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2012). As a result, participants were selected using a purposeful sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, within schools and community agencies located in the same metropolitan area.

The recruitment process involved obtaining potential participants' contact information from the school district's homeless liaison in the identified metropolitan area. Individual requests customized to the specific roles of participants within the district, school, and community, were sent via email inviting them to participate in two focus group sessions. Each participant signed a consent form per the IRB protocol (see Appendix C). To qualify for participation, all individuals must possess prior or current experience with interagency collaboration efforts for students being served under the McKinney-Vento Act. According to the Institute for Children Poverty Homelessness (2023), the McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." Individuals who had no prior or current involvement in interagency collaboration efforts to support homeless students were excluded from the study.

Six participants who held positions within the school district or were members of community organizations participated in the study's focus group. Despite the limited sample size, conducting a case study offers the advantage of yielding in-depth and comprehensive data (Creswell, 2012).

Participants were individually assigned as either an administrator, McKinney-Vento social worker, dropout intervention specialist, parenting, and pregnant services social worker, or by their elected community agency position. In addition, it is expected that all participants will possess a minimum of one year's experience in their current or comparable position, specifically in providing support to students who face homelessness within public school and community environments. Every participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over three months, from January 2024 to February 2024, adhering to the guidelines established by the Anderson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (refer to Appendix A for details). Before the research began, participants were given a letter explaining the study via email (see Appendix B) and were required to provide informed consent. The informed consent process involved participants receiving a PDF form via email attachment (see Appendix B), which they printed, signed, and returned via email. A questionnaire created using a Google Docs form (see Appendix D) was utilized to inquire about participants' availability for focus group interviews, as well as to gather brief descriptions of their role in supporting students and/or families experiencing homelessness, along with the duration of their current position. Electronic documents generated during the study were securely stored in folders on the researcher's password-protected personal computer. Also, a backup copy of the working document was stored on a protected "cloud" platform to ensure accessibility in case of hardware failure. Any paper documents or files produced during the study were securely stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home.

Data Sets

During my 3-month engagement, I built credibility by collecting and analyzing data from various sources (see Table 3.2). Four primary methods of data collection were utilized:

examination of artifacts, focus group interviews, questionnaires, and observations. These data sources were used to collect insights into the experiences of district and school personnel, as well as local community agencies.

Table 3.2

Data Collection Methods

Data Sets	Data sources	Collection procedure
Artifacts: documentation consists of artifacts produced during the daily lives of participants	<p>Emails from school district homeless liaison to school district and community agencies personnel.</p> <p>"Know your Rights" school flyer; Community Agency Hygiene Donation Request Flyer</p>	<p>Emails forwarded from the school district homeless liaison to the researcher.</p> <p>Participants shared documentation</p>
Focus Group Interviews	<p>1st focus group interview with 6 participants for 60 minutes on February 16, 2024, at 2:30pm to 3:30pm.</p> <p>2nd focus group interview with 6 participants for 60 minutes on February 22, 2024, at 1:00pm to 2:00pm.</p>	Focus group sessions recorded via Zoom and later transcribed
Questionnaires	Questionnaire: participant background	Collected using Google.doc form electronically emailed directly to participants
Observation	<p>Field notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continuum of Care Meeting -GHA Alliance Meeting 	Observational notes written in real time. Audio recorded and transcribed.

Artifact Data

Previous research has indicated that qualitative studies have identified the usefulness of artifacts in the collection of data during qualitative studies. The advent of the internet and electronic communications has necessitated a heightened focus on digital communication within the realm of education and educational research. Artifact data included meeting minutes, community assistance flyers from schools, and email correspondence. The analysis of artifacts offered valuable insights into various issues, particularly regarding how homeless families are portrayed by both the school and the community. These artifacts provided supportive knowledge by offering contextual information about the values and prevailing attitudes of specific community agencies and schools that collaborate to support students experiencing homelessness. Consequently, the utilization of artifacts reduces challenges and improves understanding of intricate constructs or topics (Douglas et al., 2015; Eppler & Burkhard, 2007)

Email Correspondence

This type of data provides tangible evidence of communication between the researcher and the study's participants or stakeholders. These emails serve as authentic documents that capture the exchange of ideas, requests for participation, and any agreements. Analyzing email exchanges provided me with insights into the level of engagement and responsiveness of participants. It allowed me to understand how participants interacted within interagency collaboration, including their willingness to participate, and the clarity of communication. I had access to multiple email conversations. However, one of the participants specifically requested that I include a particular email in the dissertation for review. The email (see Appendix H) describes a circumstance in which, as of April 1st, an 18-year-old female student at St. Murphy High School will be homeless due to her mother's incapacity to provide for her.

School and Community Flyer

For numerous students who are facing homelessness, education serves as one source of stability in their lives. The purpose of the leaflet, titled “Know your rights,” is to raise awareness about the rights of students who are homeless. Additionally, it aims to educate parents and young individuals on how disclosing their position might enhance their access to education and promote stability in school. For more information, please refer to (Appendix G). Schools produce basic flyers for parents and unaccompanied children that can be customized for various communities. School buildings strategically place these posters in widely accessible locations such as building entrances, common bulletin boards, counselor/nurses' offices, corridors, the lunch line, locker rooms, restrooms, and other relevant areas, ensuring easy accessibility and reading for both children and parents. To safeguard privacy, posters are strategically placed in areas that allow students to view them discreetly, considering the student's age and height while they are at school. A flyer was designed to solicit donations of hygiene products for a school in the research district I studied (refer to Appendix G). Creating a major influence in the community enables students and their families to obtain the necessary resources. Many students and their families depend on community donations.

Focus Group Interview Data

Over the past two decades, there has been an increased usage of focus groups in academia that has yielded a greater methodological rigor as well as a variety of opinions on what constitutes a focus group and how and when they should, or should not, be used (Casey et al., 2015). A focus group is a process of collecting information from a small group of people (Creswell, 2012). The methodological strategy aims to stimulate reflection and discussion on a specific theme and stands out for enabling group interaction (Alves et al., 2023).

The operationalization of the group allows the researcher to identify the different analytical perspectives and explore how facts are articulated, confronted, censored, and altered in group interaction (Alves et al., 2023). For this study each focus group was recorded virtually, with the preapproval of participants, to ensure accuracy in the analysis of the data. The advantages of conducting virtual focus groups compared to face-to-face are cost reduction, convenience, and facilitating participation across distances (researcher and participants do not need to travel to a physical location), lower abstention rate of participants, speed to collect, record, and analyze the data, and a and a familiar environment (Alves et al., 2023). The utilization of focus group interviews as a data collection method facilitated the convergence of participants' experiences into shared themes, which subsequently contributed to the development of suggestions for interagency collaborations (Mertens, 2010).

Interview Protocol

A series of 10 open-ended questions comprised the focus group semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B), with questions 1-5 posed during the first focus group session and questions 6-10 during the second focus group session. Questions were ordered to build off the previous question. The interview protocol was generated by thinking about the research questions, consulting relevant literature, and using the dissertation chair's feedback. Before the initial focus group session, the focus group questions were presented to the homeless liaison, designated as the participant informant, to evaluate for clarity. The semi-structured interview protocol's goal was to have interviewees comprehensively express their viewpoints and insights regarding interagency collaboration in the delivery of services for students facing homelessness. Using a participatory method during the question generation stage, the researcher was able to create an interview protocol that participants could use to share their thoughts and experiences about how different agencies work together to help students experiencing homelessness.

Focus Group Procedures

This study employed a standardized approach wherein all participants were subjected to similar questioning procedures to facilitate response coding and identification of themes, as suggested by Nastasi and Schensul (2005). According to Patton (2012), data that expresses the beliefs that are held in common among a given pool may be essential to research. In addition, having similar perspectives, thoughts, and perceptions makes it possible to conduct research and data collection that is more credible and reliable. Purposeful sampling was used to achieve two objectives: firstly, to strive to include participants who possess prior interagency experience when working to assist students who are grappling with homelessness; and secondly, by specifically selecting a sample consisting exclusively of individuals who have engaged in interagency collaboration, the researcher increases the probability of attaining their research objective, which is to gain further insights into the efficacy of interagency collaboration and the challenges encountered in assisting students who are experiencing homelessness. On the Zoom platform, the focus group met virtually twice for 1-hour sessions.

Significant advancements have been made by qualitative researchers in visual techniques for examining culture and phenomena (Metcalf, 2016; Prosser, 2007). Therefore, the researcher decided to incorporate a video prompt called “Parents and Kids Talk About Homelessness” (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2017) during the first focus group meeting. The video enhanced the discussion of the focus group by incorporating the visual element prior to verbal discourse and served as an effective instrument in drawing the participants' attention to the students' firsthand experiences of homelessness. Through the viewing of this video, participants were able to gain an awareness of the perspectives and narratives of both parents and children who had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

The video, which was shown before interview questions were asked, gave participants the opportunity to empathize with and identify with the emotional experience of students experiencing homelessness. By using the video as a catalyst for thinking, participants were urged to address the human side of homelessness beyond statistical figures or academic frameworks. The inclusion of this video prompt played a role in the humanization of the research problem and the creation of empathy among the participants, which set the stage for the proceeding conversation and the richness of the qualitative data gathered. For this investigation's purposes, the data collected from the focus groups represents the primary source of data.

Questionnaire

The demographic and objective information was collected through a standardized questionnaire. This questionnaire included availability requests for focus group interviews, a brief description of the participants' job role in supporting students and/or their families who are experiencing homelessness, as well as the duration of their current position. To enhance the response rate, the researcher decided to incorporate a quotation from Hellen Keller together with a visual image (see Appendix B). Enhancing a questionnaire's aesthetic and graphical elements can increase the response rate to electronic questionnaires. This can be achieved by utilizing images suitable for the respondents, organizing things logically to avoid unintentional response bias, and ensuring that questions are clearly arranged on each page (Ponto, 2015). The distribution and collection of questionnaires took place on February 2, 2024. The researcher emailed a questionnaire to each participant in the form of a Google Doc. The researcher explained the questionnaire's objective in the email and obtained the completed questionnaire from each participant within the same day. The collected data were valuable in formulating and composing participant profiles.

Observational Data

According to Yin (2009), the production of a high-quality case study necessitates the researcher's ability to cultivate well-founded observations. Once the planning and selection of the participant section process was completed, the researcher proceeded with the research phase. Once the participant pool planning and selection were completed, the researcher proceeded with the research phase. This phase involved observing advocacy-related school and community committee meetings. As stated by Mulhall (2003), observation offers “insight into interactions between dyads and groups; illustrates the whole picture; captures context/process; and informs about the influence of the physical environment” (p. 307). The use of observational data provided insights into interagency collaboration in real-time support for students experiencing homelessness. It has been argued that in-person observation provides a more comprehensive understanding of the collaboration between the school and the community, allowing for an accurate assessment of its effectiveness (Mulhall, 2023).

The researcher employed a strategy known as nonparticipant observation, which involved observing a group without establishing any other form of interaction, including the practice of shadowing (Quinlan, 2008). The significance of observation lies in its ability to enable researchers to directly witness individuals' actions, as opposed to relying just on their verbal accounts (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005; Mulhall, 2003; Walshe et al., 2012). The recording methods employed in this study involved using unstructured field notes, as described by Walshe et al. (2012).

Observation Procedures

Observational data were gathered remotely during attendance at a one-hour Continuum of Care meeting and a one-hour-and-thirty-minute GHA Alliance Stakeholder Meeting.

The first step in effective community advocacy is formulating a specific, achievable goal that can be backed up by data (Pairman, 2022). Each meeting occur monthly or semi-monthly and utilizes a “partnership spectrum” to analyze and understand the various levels of relationships between schools and community organizations. The purpose of the observations was to examine the level of interaction between the educational institution and the surrounding community agencies, with the intention of evaluating the effectiveness of interagency collaboration when supporting impacted students. At the homeless alliance meeting, attendees emphasized the need for closer linkages between schools and the communities they serve. Hence, the meeting featured a wide variety of district, school, and community agency (including nonprofit) representatives. At the meeting, the committee chair of each working group presented their respective goals, accomplishments, and challenges. The working groups between the Continuum of Care and GHA focused on four main areas: advocacy, collaboration, education, and innovation.

Data Organization

To prepare the data for analysis, the researcher recorded two hours of focus interviews via Zoom, each lasting an average of 60 minutes. Verbatim transcriptions were created using Happy Scribe Transcription and Subtitling Services. The researcher read the transcriptions of focus group interviews and questionnaires before uploading them into the ATLAS.ti software. The coding process involved utilizing ATLAS.ti and descriptive coding methods to analyze the first two distinct data sets, namely focus group interview transcriptions, and questionnaires.

The data was uploaded to ATLAS.ti and document groups (DG) were established. At first, DGs were categorized based on data settings and types, such as focus group interviews, meeting observations, and homeless liaison email interactions. As data collection and analysis progressed, I created more detailed categories.

The data associated with individual participants was organized into document groups, such as community education, stigma, and community collaboration. These groupings enabled me to start the iterative process of creating themes, collaborating interpretations, and combining data segments from different evidence sources for triangulation.

For purposes of the analysis, a theme was defined as an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations ... The theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole (DeSantis & Ugarizza, 2000, p. 362). The use of document artifacts allowed for the convenient comparison and analysis of stakeholder meeting observations/field notes. These documents could be quickly retrieved and examined together. This organization facilitated the process of analyzing and understanding how school district professionals and local community agencies establish, maintain, and enhance partnerships that demonstrate successful collaboration across different organizations to assist students who are homeless.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves a range of methodologies, but fundamentally, it involves breaking down and examining a research question (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2014). Using the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti greatly supports the management and analysis of collected data (Yin, 2014). The researcher began the process by fully engaging with the data. The researcher examined the qualitative data, which included focus group interview transcripts, observational notes, questionnaire responses, and artifacts, to gain a comprehensive understanding of its characteristics and content. The researcher acquainted herself with the complexity and recurring patterns that arose from the collected data. By employing qualitative analysis software, the researcher was better able to comprehend the topic at hand by systematically organizing a priori and description-focused coded information into larger themes (Yin, 2014).

Using thematic analysis, the researcher analyzed the participants' data to extract phrases and keywords consistent with the Sunnybrook theoretical framework and the descriptive language of the participants, to identify patterns and themes (Creswell, 2010). Analyzing the data collected included reviewing focus group interview transcripts, observation notes, questionnaire answers, and artifacts. The researcher checked with participants following the focus group interviews to strengthen the study's credibility.

Code names are terms that serve as a concise representation of the qualitative data's contents (Wicks, 2017). The researcher systematically extracted words and phrases derived from Sunnybrook's Core Competencies for Interprofessional Team Collaboration literature and applied them to the participants' data as a priori codes. During a priori coding, the researcher adopted a sensitive mindset towards the data, to reveal patterns, themes, and significance. After the initial a priori coding phase, the researcher transitioned to descriptive-focused coding, honing in on specific themes and categories of interest. This approach allowed the researcher to identify patterns and themes within the language used by the participants (Creswell, 2012). According to Wicks (2017), descriptive coding plays a fundamental role in laying the groundwork for later qualitative analysis. The researcher employed these codes to extract more intricate themes or patterns. To condense the textual information into a concise description, the researcher used descriptive coding.

The chosen coding format was deemed appropriate for this investigation as it facilitated a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives, enhancing the reader's comprehension (Saldaña, 2013). The codes were concise and effectively encapsulated the core of the text. For instance, the researcher used the term "interagency success" in a section discussing "successes achieved between schools and community agencies through interagency

collaboration.” While reviewing the data, the researcher used these codes to analyze relevant components. The researcher systematically categorized and classified comparable categories of data. The researcher manually coded observational data using the categories that emerged from coding interview data in ATLAS.ti. The coding process in ATLAS.ti involved the utilization of words or brief sentences derived from participants' own words as descriptive coding labels. The codes were employed for data analysis, pattern identification, and theme development. After finishing the initial coding process, the researcher merged similar codes and conducted a second round of data coding. The researcher discovered data trends and subsequently grouped them into themes based on classifications. The data was analyzed, and themes were organized using the Sunnybrook theoretical framework.

The continuous examination of the data facilitated the exchange of information across different data sources. To ensure accurate results, the coding of the data involved the use of triangulation and member verification (Creswell, 2010). By combining and connecting various data sources pertaining to the same phenomenon, the triangulation of evidence aimed to enhance the study's investigation. Doing so increases the probability of identifying thematic patterns in the data (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 2010).

Data Findings

Data analysis from the questionnaire, focus group interviews, observations, and artifacts revealed three main categories, identified to answer the research questions. Themes were identified from categories by looking across the coded data, (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes & Subthemes
Relationship Building	Partnership Development Encompasses the processes involved in initiating, filling, and increasing collaborations between school personnel and local community agencies. It includes strategies for educating partners, building rapport, and establishing common goals.
Education and Community Relationships: Thriving	Enhanced Support Systems Highlights the successes attained in meeting the educational and social needs of students experiencing homelessness. It includes communication and shared information to enhance access to educational resources and support services.
Impact of Homelessness	Addressing Complex Needs Understanding homelessness as a crisis rather than an identity, we can work towards addressing the root cause of homelessness. It includes addressing the definitions of homelessness and challenging how students and their family's experiencing homelessness are viewed among educational and community stakeholders.

The primary finding that emerged from the coded data revolves around the process of partnership development between school personnel and local community agencies. This discovery encompasses themes related to educating partners, building rapport, and establishing common goals. It also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that both schools and communities

are well-informed about the McKinney-Vento Act, particularly its provisions for supporting students experiencing homelessness.

To build successful interagency collaboration to help students who are experiencing homelessness, the researcher conducted a systematic analysis and interpretation of the experiences, accomplishments, and obstacles that were encountered by district and school officials, as well as local community agencies. Independent analyses were performed on each of the data sets, and then qualitative thematic analysis was used to triangulate the results across data sets. This method made it possible to gain a full grasp of the complexity and subtleties involved in the process of creating collaborative efforts between communities and schools to address the needs of students who are experiencing homelessness.

Limitations

Due to the disproportionate representation of school personnel compared to community agencies, the study results could be limited by these factors. As such, the findings may reflect a bias towards perspectives and experiences predominantly within the school setting, potentially overlooking valuable insights and challenges faced by individuals accessing services and resources in the broader community. As the researcher, my focus was primarily on analyzing the implementation of McKinney Vento school policy rather than exploring the broader gap it created in community support for students experiencing homelessness. This difference in focus may limit the applicability of the findings to other contexts. It's important to note that the study was conducted in a metropolitan area of a southern state, where schools often have access to a variety of community agencies. However, schools located in rural areas may face different challenges, as they may not have the same level of access to community resources. In such cases, building partnerships with local community social groups or churches may become essential for

providing support to homeless students. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the data analysis chosen by the researcher renders the study inherently subjective, as it relies on the researcher's interpretation of the data.

Consequently, different researchers may analyze the data in varying ways, potentially yielding divergent results. Moreover, the collaborative efforts among different agencies are dynamic and subject to change over time. Without regular monitoring and updates, there is a risk that the findings of the study may lose accuracy and significance as the landscape of support services evolves.

Conclusion

To better understand how different agencies worked together to aid homeless students, the researcher conducted a qualitative case study. This study sought to identify the successful techniques and challenges to collaboration when supporting the needs of homeless students. An in-depth analysis of the collaborative efforts and obstacles in this setting was achieved using a descriptive case study technique. The researcher utilized thematic analysis, which initially combined a priori codes with descriptive codes, to examine various aspects such as the connections between schools and community organizations, the reasons for cooperation, the implementation results, key takeaways, and strategies for fostering effective collaboration. Gathering information required observing community and school meetings, collecting artifacts, and conducting focus groups. Stakeholders' experiences and viewpoints on interagency cooperation were captured through meticulous data analysis. To convey the findings, the researcher used quotes that show how certain themes and patterns emerged from the interactions amongst the stakeholders.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

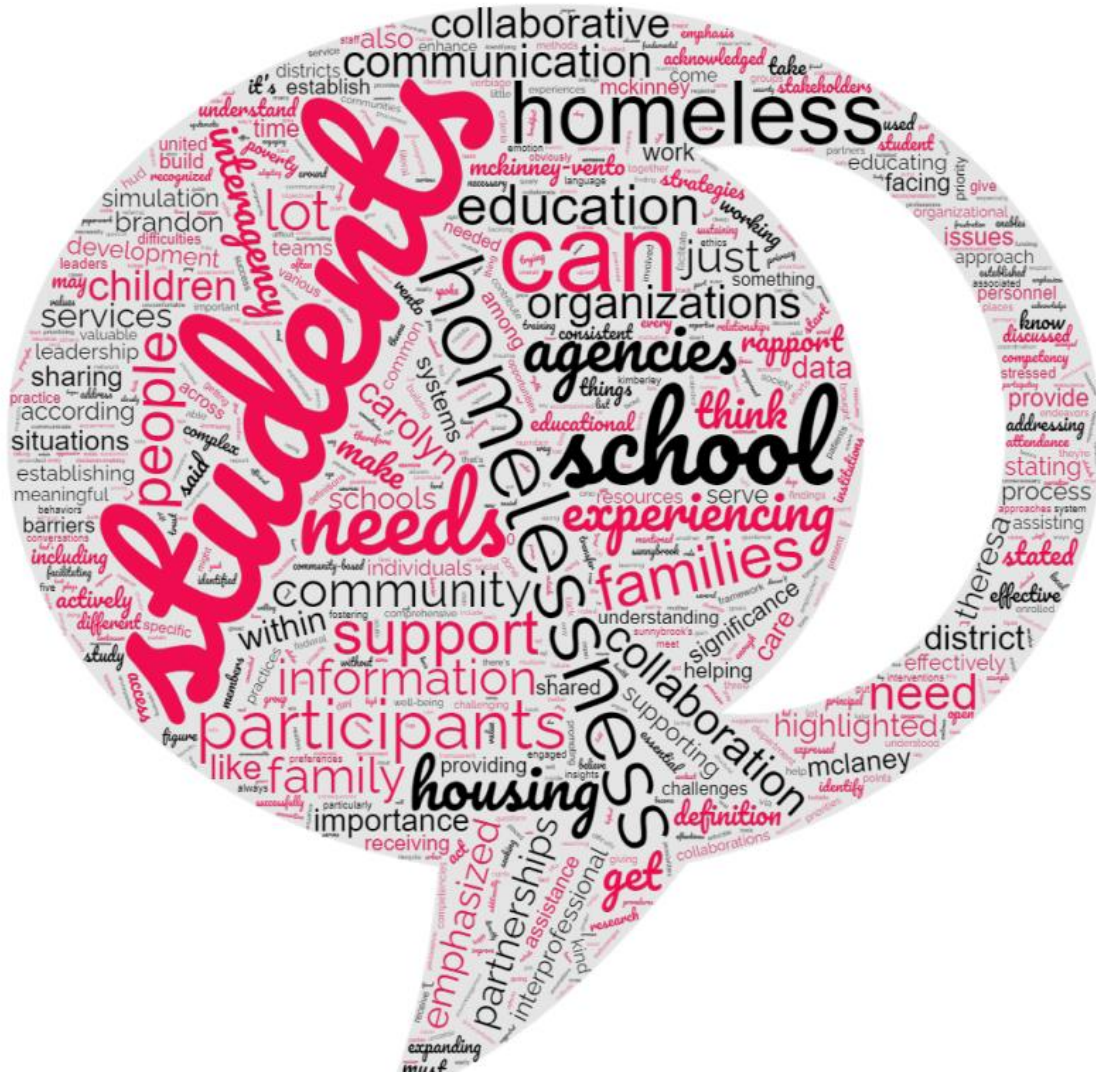
This qualitative case study's main objective was to examine the practices employed by district and school officials, with local community agencies, to effectively establish, sustain, and enhance partnerships. This study emphasized the examination of participants' experiences in effectively overcoming obstacles and successfully establishing efficient interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness. This chapter presents interview, observational, and artifact data collected in relation to three organizational contexts from Sunnybrook's framework: education, leadership, and practice. Sunnybrook's organizational contexts were analyzed in connection with three out of six identified core competencies: interprofessional values and ethics, reflection, and shared decision-making. Descriptive case study findings on interagency collaboration efforts between schools and community-based organizations to support students experiencing homelessness are presented as three distinct themes: partnership development, enhanced support systems, and addressing complex needs.

The administrator of the high school, Carson, was a fervent supporter of an interdisciplinary strategy to assist students experiencing homelessness. Considering the many issues that homeless students must deal with, he believes that effective agency coordination is crucial to meeting their needs. Carson appreciates the district's current support network, but he also recognizes its shortcomings and the necessity of using resources outside of the classroom. He highlights the value of providing both immediate and long-term assistance, emphasizing that it is important to support the parents of the students as well. Motivated by this confidence in teamwork, the researcher made the decision to produce a word cloud that would graphically depict the main aspects of interagency communication and cooperation.

The word cloud was created using wordart.com and serves as a visual representation of the focal points found in interagency collaboration and dialogue. The researcher chose to depict the adjectives and nouns taken from the data collected on interagency collaboration in supporting students facing homelessness by building a word cloud (see Figure 4.1). Each word's size within the word cloud is determined by its frequency in the data.

Figure 4.1

Interagency Collaboration Word Cloud



Theme 1: Partnership Development

The participants noted the importance of establishing partnerships at an early stage in the collaborative process to build a firm foundation for future projects. When asked about guidance or suggestions for other educational districts or community organizations aiming to build or enhance collaborations to assist students facing homelessness, Carolyn, McKinney-Vento District Social Worker, emphasized the significance of actively participating in meaningful conversations by stating:

I think you start with talking to people. You start by educating your environment, explaining what the needs are, explaining what the barriers are, and providing education about what schools and communities do, what our educational institution is, and the effects of homelessness on people.

Comparably, some participants promoted a proactive strategy that involves educating the community on the McKinney-Vento Act concerning “what the act is,” “what the act does,” and “how the act supports” students experiencing homelessness. Participants emphasized the importance of disseminating this type of information and providing unique examples of the needs and challenges faced by students experiencing homelessness. While bringing awareness to the crucial role community organizations and educational institutions play in addressing these issues. There was a notable emphasis on enhancing understanding of the ramifications of homelessness for both students and society. This aligns with Sunnybrook’s Interprofessional Values & Ethics, which prioritizes the incorporation of organizational values and ethics in collaborative endeavors (McLaney et al., 2022).

The participants emphasized the importance of agencies actively forming partnerships and engaging in meaningful conversations to promote understanding and take meaningful action.

This is consistent with the concept of starting with education and fostering open communication as fundamental measures for helping students who are experiencing homelessness. The primary areas identified for partnership creation were to educate partners, cultivate rapport, and establish shared objectives. In supporting the needs that students are experiencing, these approaches demonstrate a commitment to ethical principles and collaborative approaches in supporting students' needs.

Educating Partners

According to McClaney et al. (2022), “learning about, from, and with each other” is the definition of interprofessional education, which highlights the process of learning via collaboration among individuals from different fields of expertise. The participants seemed to believe that education plays a crucial role in helping schools and community agencies improve the lives of homeless students. By working together and committing to educating others about the McKinney-Vento Act and students’ needs, participants suggested both entities can effectively support homeless students and enhance their well-being. Carson, high school Administer stated:

When working with homeless families and students, it is important to emphasize the significance of [McKinney-Vento Act] education and consistent school attendance.

Therefore, training school staff members and community agencies on the various methods by which assistance is needed, requested, and obtained to support children, youth, and families is essential.

Theresa, Coordinator of Parenting & Pregnancy Services, emphasized the importance of educating stakeholders by identifying specific examples from her experience and offering possibilities for staff to be better prepared to help families. She said:

I think one of the obstacles is education, spelling out what McKinney-Vento is, what types of services are available, and helping families understand that we're here to support

them. It's as easy as the front office, it's as easy as the registrar. When it's time to enroll, you sense that there might be something more going on and a family might be in need, but us feeling comfortable enough and having the verbiage to ask, well, I see you kind of struggling on that part. Let me explain what that means. And it also goes back to what we [school personnel] know. We have 78,000 students, but being able to have that registrar, if it's in middle school or high school, or that attendance clerk that's doing the enrollment, being aware, giving them things to look for, giving them verbiage so that, like you said, it's uncomfortable for some people, but giving them some clear verbiage as to what they can do to make sure our families are identified and can be connected to those resources. I think that is sometimes an obstacle because it's nothing to be ashamed about. A closed mouth doesn't get fed. Let's get it and let's work with you.

The participants stressed the importance of educating individuals about the McKinney-Vento Act. Students who are homeless have rights and safeguards that may be better understood via this education, which also helps dispel myths and misconceptions about homelessness and will help them get the support they need to succeed. Carolyn argues that communities and schools may create a more welcoming atmosphere for all students by educating themselves on the McKinney-Vento Act.

Carolyn, who once was homeless but who now works with families as a McKinney-Vento social worker for over three years stated:

So, for me, a lot of community engagement comes through. Either, like Theresa said, families need help, or the [community] agencies are calling. And so when I have [community] agencies calling me directly asking about something, if I get any inkling that they don't fully understand McKinney Vento, or what the population is we serve or

how we serve them. I always immediately say, hey, as the McKinney-Vento social worker for the district, I'd be happy to visit and provide your teachers and or staff with some materials and resources that you can share with their families. We aim to maintain an open-door policy, ensuring everyone has access to support. I've scheduled two of those with people who know, they came into this conversation thinking they understood McKinney and understood what the school district could do for families and very quickly realized that was not the case. And so, we are going to go out and just educate their people because their [community agency is] helping us. And so that's what we're really trying to do is just spread awareness because that's how we can get things accomplished.

Meanwhile, Daniel, Lead Dropout Prevention Specialist, elaborated on the lack of education by stating:

I will echo what Carolyn said because I do think a major, major barrier is a lack of understanding [McKinney-Vento]. I think a lot of different educational groups, not just administrators, have a lack of understanding of cultural competency and the effects poverty plays on kids and families. And the time to do that level, that depth of professional learning is just not there. And so, students, families, schools' staff and individuals from the community must be curious and seek out information on McKinney Vento themselves.

The participants unanimously agreed that McKinney-Vento flyers should be placed in noticeable locations such as school halls and front offices. This strategic location allows students and parents to quickly access them, as stated by the participants, to raise awareness about McKinney-Vento's rights and services. The participants believed by increasing awareness in this way, schools can ensure that students experiencing homelessness and their families are aware of

their rights and the resources available to them. When the researcher viewed the “Know your rights” flyer, the clear language provided rights-based information, which could foster an atmosphere where all students, regardless of their living circumstances, feel supported and engaged in their educational journeys from reading it.

Building Rapport

The significance of trust and rapport in facilitating warm transfer referrals was reaffirmed by the participants, specifically Carolyn, Daniel, and Brandon. The smooth transition of students experiencing homelessness and their families from one service provider to another, guaranteeing continuity of care and support, is referred to as “warm transfer” (Smith & Stormont, 2011). The participants emphasized that trust is established by fostering rapport within collaborative partnerships, namely in the provision of the support services they promote.

Theresa provided more clarification by stating:

“The process of establishing rapport entails the cultivation of positive and respectful connections among persons or entities engaged in collaborative endeavors”.

Carolyn went on to say:

Interagency collaboration always helps me understand how processes work so I like to encourage people [students/ families] to work with community agencies but for that to happen rapport must be built between me and other providers [community agencies]. There's a lot of trauma and a lot of fear. And so, when I can explain the process, either prepare them [students/families] enough that they'll call for assistance, or that they'll go by themselves, it goes a lot smoother because they know what to expect. There's a lot less contention and stress on everybody involved when they're reaching out to other [community agencies].

The term “interprofessional care” refers to a model of healthcare in which different types of organizations collaborate to offer patients the highest quality treatment (McLaney et al., 2022). To do this, organizations must build rapport with their clients, communicate clearly, and work closely together to address demands. The participants recognized the need for open communication, active listening, mutual respect, and common goals in sustaining collaboration in interagency partnerships between community organizations and educational institutions. According to the participants, establishing rapport and trust allows partnering organizations to feel more at ease and confident during the transfer process for students. Through rapport, reassurance is provided to the party receiving the information that the students and their families' needs will be recognized and effectively addressed.

The researcher examined email correspondence between the homeless liaison and local community agency officials about a student who needed housing support after her mother kicked her out of the house. While reading, the researcher noticed a demonstration of warm transfer and interprofessional care in the email thread. The emails clearly indicated joint efforts among the people involved. The homeless liaison successfully conveyed the student's status and necessities to community agency officials, resulting in a smooth care transition. Furthermore, the tone of the communication was encouraging and compassionate, demonstrating genuine care for the student's welfare. The exchange of information and resources between the homeless liaison and community agency representatives demonstrated a warm transfer procedure in which the students' needs were prioritized and handled quickly. Furthermore, the researcher noticed that both sides coordinated seamlessly and followed up to ensure that the student had the appropriate support and assistance. In the questionnaire results, Carson pointed out the significance of establishing a clear vision for his school through building rapport.

He noted the importance of developing rapport, which allows for a variety of types of support, such as targeted remediation, access to food and clothing pantries, assisted transportation services, and more family support.

Establishing Common Goals

Participants explored the benefits of expanding current partnerships to reach a wider variety of stakeholders and satisfy the additional needs of students experiencing homelessness. When organizations have similar goals, partnerships emerge. In such cases, organizations collaborate to discover and capitalize on their respective successful outcomes to reach these shared targets (McLaney et al., 2022). The participants believe that the opportunity to connect with, learn from, and contribute to the same goal of providing support to students who are experiencing homelessness is an essential component of expanding collaborations. According to the participants, connecting with one another is a good way to broaden the scope of their educational or community-based endeavors since it allows them to tap into the expertise that is already there at their doorstep. Brandon, Special Projects Coordinator for a community agency, stated:

We're also helping, if they've got little, little ones, get them into a head start, for example, so their children are taken care of and obviously finding ways to get them connected to housing, whether we must do an assessment on them, and they get put on the continuum of care's housing list; we all have a common goal.

Carolyn expressed her thoughts on shared common goals by stated:

Our responsibilities become easier when we ignore cultural and racial differences and instead focus on understanding why students need support and how to successfully engage with each other schools and community agencies to achieve the same goal.

This strategy encourages students and their families to be involved and demonstrate their

commitment in obtaining the resources they need by believing, “I can push forward, and I can do this too.

When the researcher asked the participant group for feedback on the success of their collaborative efforts, Theresa spoke to the shared goal of connecting students and their families with an array of services. Theresa stated:

“We support them in obtaining medical insurance and effectively connect them with eye doctors, dentists, prenatal care, and routine healthcare. We ensure that appointments are booked and attended, and we frequently provide ongoing support by following families through the process”.

Theme 2: Enhanced Support Systems

The participants expressed that it is difficult to make tackling social issues such as homelessness a priority inside an organization if there are not people in leadership positions who are really engaged in tackling these issues and who are aggressive about doing so.

Daniel, Lead Dropout Prevention Specialist, elaborated by stating:

I think structurally, we’re [school personnel] just not designed to go that deep within [collaboration] in a school year. And so, it becomes a barrier. Unless you have people in leadership positions who are courageous enough to make it happen, it just doesn’t become a priority.

Carson added by stating:

“There are barriers in place that require leaders who believe there are ways to overcome them, but there are not many leaders that want to take on the burden, therefore there is still work that needs to be done”.

At the homeless alliance conference, the researcher witnessed a substantial conversation centered on the crucial role of leaders in actively promoting interagency collaboration efforts to enhance

the support provided to students experiencing homelessness. Representatives from both community groups and schools highlighted the importance of effective leadership advocacy in promoting partnerships and encouraging productive collaborative initiatives. They emphasized the importance of leadership support in developing a unified strategy to address the diverse needs of homeless students. One member of the advocacy group expressed that having a good leader in place in an organization may achieve successful alignment of resources, policies, and goals across organizations by pushing for and actively participating in collaborative activities, therefore creating complete support systems. The discussion emphasized the importance of leadership support for successful interagency collaboration, as such efforts may encounter difficulties in reaching their desired results without it. This emphasis on leadership's role during the meeting in developing collaborative activities demonstrates a shared commitment to improving outcomes for students experiencing homelessness by creating a more coordinated and supportive environment within the community.

According to McLaney et al. (2022), a skillset from the top is what establishes an organizational expectation for how teams should collaborate with one another. Leadership is responsible for assisting the team in determining what they are doing well and what things they may improve on. The participants informed the researcher that not all leaders prioritize social issues. Social apathy, especially at the leadership level, negatively affects students experiencing homelessness. An apathetic leader can be a barrier to the implementation of effective changes and support systems within the community or educational institution. Carson, a high school administrator, stated:

We had a kid who needed to be enrolled, who was experiencing homelessness, but we [school personnel in leadership] created so many barriers for them getting transportation

that it was just unnecessary. And instead of him getting enrolled on the day he was supposed to be enrolled, it took five more days. We wasted five more days with that kid's life, and that's just unnecessary.

Communication

During the focus group, participants acknowledged that the school and community personnel continue to successfully achieve good communication when developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships. They emphasized the importance of open and transparent communication to ensure that all parties are well-informed and actively involved in supporting students experiencing homelessness. The participants' perspectives on communication aligned with the Sunnybrook framework's communication competency.

The communication competency serves as a guide for high-performing teams to establish systematic and timely methods of communicating information, both inside and across teams. McLaney et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of team procedures, including communication and collective problem-solving. Many roles and professions widely acknowledge the processes mentioned above, which involve using commutative language, avoiding jargon and acronyms, providing explanations, and checking for understanding (McLaney et al., 2022). Participants noted that schools and community interagency collaborations maintain a unified perspective when communicating across diverse roles and professions. They prioritize active information exchange, both by sharing insights and seeking input from each other and other relevant stakeholders, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, participants mentioned the selection of innovative methods and resources to facilitate effective communication within and between organizations, thereby promoting enhanced information exchange. For example, during the focus group, Carolyn discussed her caseload, primarily consisting of McKinney-Vento cases involving

homeless students. She described working closely with these students, having a deep understanding of their situations, and sharing various scenarios and stories. She expressed working closely with these students and having a deep understanding of their situations, sharing various scenarios and stories. She mentions a particularly challenging case involving a mother with seven children, some of whom have special medical needs. The family was chronically homeless and faced difficulties with housing, employment, and school attendance. Despite the mother's efforts, including working the second shift, the family struggled, and the children were eventually placed in foster care due to attendance issues and the mother's arrest for an outstanding warrant. Therefore, the mother temporarily lost custody of her children. Carolyn, who maintains detailed documentation, realized that the middle-school-aged child was not attending school regularly when the mother later regained custody. After reaching out to the mother, Carolyn discovered barriers to enrolling the older child, including miscommunication and incomplete paperwork. The student successfully re-enrolled after addressing these issues and ensuring proper communication between the family, school, and community. Participants emphasized the importance of consistent engagement in communication to establish relationships with trusted adults identified by students experiencing homelessness. Kimberly mentioned finding trusted adults by stating:

Establishing ties with network partners, who are trustworthy adults selected by kids experiencing homelessness, is key. Warm communication handoffs, in particular, have significance because they strengthen the student's or family's trust in me when I send them to someone else for assistance. I compare this approach with just providing contact information or advising them to seek help elsewhere without having any personal

involvement. Building trust is very important for a better shift to more support services in the community, and I encourage this a lot.

The participants highlighted how this enables schools to tailor practices and community support systems to meet the specific needs of each student. Participants discussed the significance of schools actively building relationships with various stakeholders, including family members, mentors, social workers, and community leaders, to gain valuable insights into students' situations. They noted that by expanding their support network to include trusted adults, schools can ensure that students receive care and assistance both within and outside of school settings. Participants emphasized that students gain a sense of security and stability, particularly during times of transition or crisis, when they know their school actively engages with their support network.

Shared Information

The participants emphasized the importance of sharing information, resources, and strategies among stakeholders to provide comprehensive and coordinated support for students experiencing homelessness. They noted that community agencies have successfully established data entry systems, which serve as centralized points of access for homeless services and involve shared data between various agencies. Brandon emphasized the importance of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a mandatory requirement for any homeless service provider that receives federal funding. This system serves as a comprehensive database capturing information about homeless families and individuals, including demographic details such as age groups and race. It enables organizations to track the number of individuals served and their specific needs, facilitating effective coordination of services across different geographic regions within the continuum of care (CoC). Brandon also mentioned the South Carolina Interagency

Council on Homelessness, which publishes a homeless report based on data collected through HMIS, providing valuable insights for addressing homelessness at a state level. Brandon stated:

That gives you all kinds of data. We also grab from the school district, from the Department of Education and McKinney-Vento stuff. So, in terms of evaluating, we can look at the numbers and see kind of what we're doing that way. Obviously, we believe that if we're pulling a family off the streets or out of their car and into their own apartment, that's considered a win. Obviously, when they have school-age children and they're having difficulty getting them into [enrolled in] school or whatever. We're contacting our McKinney-Vento liaison to make sure that that connection is there.

Data sharing between community agencies and schools can help streamline the process of accessing resources and support for homeless families. Rather than requiring families to navigate multiple systems independently, collaboration between agencies allows for more efficient coordination of services. This can help reduce barriers to accessing assistance and ensure that homeless students and their families receive the support they need in a timely manner.

Community agencies and schools must comply with relevant privacy laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), when sharing data

Kimberley, director of schools and community engagement for a community agency discussed the collaborative nature of her work, situated between the district and the United Way. She highlighted the challenges in data collection from the district, which often receives information in fragments. However, United Way's community-wide efforts garner recognition. While not directly involved in the United Way's work, Kimberley often receives inquiries related to the organization's services, particularly regarding issues like food or housing insecurity

affecting students and families. Kimberley also mentioned a contracted partner, Infinite Possibilities, specializing in assisting families with housing security needs. Theresa highlighted the importance of completing a data-sharing agreement with Spencer Venom in Greenville County. She highlighted the necessity of collaboration, as no single entity can provide all solutions. Theresa discussed the prevalence of homeless survivors who have learned to make do with limited resources, as well as the risk of receiving duplicate assistance from multiple sources. She stressed the importance of sharing information to avoid duplication, maximize support for multiple families, and build upon successful interventions. Theresa also stressed the value of sharing family histories to provide context and avoid starting from scratch when assisting families with complex situations.

Theme 3: Addressing Complex Needs

The participants affirmed that the most challenging aspect is adopting a holistic, all-encompassing approach to support students experiencing homelessness. They emphasized the complex and multifaceted nature of these students and their families. This is in keeping with Sunnybrook's shared decision-making competence, which emphasizes interdisciplinary care plans that put patients' and families' priorities first (McLaney et al., 2022). When formulating interventions and support strategies, the participants agreed on the challenges of integrating the diverse needs, preferences, and priorities of students and/or their families experiencing homelessness. Theresa explained how widespread the variation of needs can be by stating:

Every student and every family needs something different. As I mentioned earlier, we have a lot of resources. We still need a lot more to serve the number of families that are in McKinney-Vento. But it starts with that family and trying to figure out what exactly you need. You might have a family that is good with SNAP, that is good with DSS and Medicaid, but needs something else. So, I think it always starts with what that family

needs. And then from that, making that list and saying, okay, these are the gaps that we have. Let's see what in the community can provide that service so that we can make that referral!

Kimberly addressed the intricate needs associated with complex situations by stating:

Along those lines, I think what happens with me and almost every role that I've been in an experience dealing with women who are experiencing domestic violence and how they're displaced, oftentimes running from their husbands, or whatever the case may be. But they have children, and figuring out the best space for them with their children so that the children can get their needs met. They can get a warm breakfast and dinner, at least dinner after school, and be able to get to school for breakfast and lunch so that they have space to be able to do their homework lights out so that they can get everything done. I think oftentimes we forget all the nuances that go along with being students.

Several participants brought up the difficult realities of systematic racism and its effects on many parts of society, including housing, employment, education, and healthcare. They recognized the connection between students experiencing homelessness and these structural issues, and how they intensify the challenges faced by marginalized individuals. Participants highlighted systemic barriers such as language barriers, immigration status, and distrust of institutions that hinder access to housing and support services for communities.

Carolyn addressed the perspective of students and/or their families by stating:

And then on top of that, people have their personal views, like the number of individuals who are coming from second-world countries right now and are not having proper paperwork. And so, then schools are kind of annoyed or upset because there's a language barrier and they can't communicate with these individuals. And so, I spend a lot of time

just kind of taking that emotion out. At the end of the day, we have a 17-year-old kid. He's not been to school. He needs to be in school.

Carson, on the other hand, addressed the intersectionality issue by stating:

“We support students from underserved communities, which involve Native Americans, Blacks, and Latinx. Homelessness overlaps with other facets like identity, race, ethnicity, and even disability, posing particular issues for different groups of students”.

Therese provided a strong illustration of intersectionality by linking a case from around 15 years ago with a black, special needs, wheelchair-bound student at a high school. Despite the school's no-hat rules, the student regularly wore a hat to school. When questioned by the counselor, he replied that his father had died and that the hat belonged to him. Due to financial issues, the student and his family were facing eviction from their hotel room. Therese provided transportation, attended meetings with the Housing Authority, and helped the students secure housing and other essentials. Through coordinated efforts involving the school counselor, community resources, and support services, the student was eventually able to get his own house and receive continued support.

Definition Differences

The participants discussed how differing definitions of homelessness have been challenging and have led to inconsistencies in identifying and supporting students and/or their families experiencing it. For instance, while the United States Board of Education defines homeless children and youths broadly to include those lacking fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has more specific criteria, focusing on individuals residing in emergency shelters or unfit housing. This discrepancy in definitions can lead to the omission or exclusion of certain students and families

from essential services and support, underscoring the necessity for increased coherence and precision in the definition of homelessness across various agencies and systems. Theresa stated:

“I would just add a definition, a clear definition of homelessness as well as being present, being willing to serve, being willing to feel uncomfortable about the fact that you don't know everything”.

Meanwhile, Brandon highlighted the discrepancy between the definitions of homelessness used by the federal government, particularly the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and those used by school districts. He acknowledged that while the federal government's definition focuses on literal homelessness (i.e., residing in shelters, on the streets, or in transitional housing), the definition used by school districts, which includes doubled-up living situations, reflects a broader understanding of homelessness that encompasses unstable housing situations, that create opportunity gaps for educational access. Brandon expressed frustration with the limitations imposed by HUD's definition, which restricts access to housing resources for individuals who do not meet the criteria for literal homelessness. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing the realities of unstable housing situations, such as doubled-up living arrangements, and suggests that individuals in these situations should be considered homeless and eligible for support services. Brandon added to his perspective by stating:

Individuals must be “literally homeless” to receive housing assistance from HUD, which I find unreasonable. I acknowledge that HUD is unlikely to change its criteria anytime soon. Therefore, I suggest that the community needs to find alternative funding sources to assist families experiencing housing instability. The McKinney-Vento liaisons have a valuable role in connecting children to schools and assisting homeless families. I understand when liaisons identify families who meet HUD's definition of literal

homelessness, they can undergo an assessment and be placed on a housing assistance list in hopes of securing housing placement.

Outlook on Students Experiencing Homelessness

Participants made an important point about the need to dispel myths surrounding students experiencing homelessness and their families. Negative preconceptions and assumptions, the participants said, may degrade people and pave the way for prejudice and stigma. Confronting these preconceived notions is necessary to humanize those suffering from homelessness and acknowledge their fundamental worth and value.

Carolyn stated:

There's also another side of that where there's a lot of emotion for some people associated with homelessness, and there's a lot of thought about why people are homeless. And there's often not quite as much knowledge about trauma and life events, poverty level, and all the things that contribute to displacement. And so sometimes I do a lot with working with people to take that emotion out. It's possible to serve people without feeling upset or annoyed by their behavior. We can come to people, we can meet them where they're at, and we can serve them. And I think, unfortunately, a lot of the people who are the first points of contact within the school have not had that training. They are told by a principal to do something they take as a black-and-white thing, which 90% of the time it is. And then here I am with McKinney Vento. That's this little gray cloud that's there and so, then, there's this kind of constant push and pull where they're trying to figure it out.

To address the disproportionate representation of Native American, Black, and Latinx students experiencing homelessness, participants emphasized the need for comprehensive, culturally responsive approaches like engaging schools and the community in a poverty line stimulation.

After receiving a grant in November 2019, Theresa announced her intention to conduct a poverty simulation. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the simulation from proceeding as planned, which was a great disappointment for the school district. The average number of staff members needed to run the simulation is 23. She brought up the fact that the district has run the simulation before, describing it as a great chance for learning, for school and community personnel. In addition, Theresa related a touching story of her interaction with a nurse who had taken part in the exercise. The nurse spoke up about her own experiences as a homeless child, saying that the simulation let her put herself in her mother's shoes. Despite her present career success as an RN, she was thankful for the understanding she had of her mother's hardships and the sacrifices she had to make to provide for her family. Theresa told the nurse's story in further detail and said:

Following the poverty simulation, a school nurse approached me, very distressed and teary-eyed. She explained that she had grown up homeless, and the simulation helped her understand her mother's struggles to find housing for her and her brother. Despite her success as a licensed nurse and her brother's success as a businessman, she confessed she didn't completely understand her mother's struggles until the simulation. It was very moving to hear her reflection.

Participants said the simulation had a profound effect on attendees. Daniel addressed discomfort and frustration the simulation can cause by stating:

People get mad during that thing the first time. As someone who has worked in this field forever, I was stressed out when I participated in one for the first time. And I was like, this is for someone who already, I pretend like I understand every day, but walking through it was very frustrating.

Participants indicated the necessity of knowing the experiences of homeless students and their families to promote empathy, understanding, and connection between schools and the community. When someone takes part in a poverty line simulation, they consciously try to see the scenario from another person's point of view, understanding their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

The participants asserted the need for increased education to bring about a better perspective concerning homelessness and understand the challenges faced by those who experience it. They argued that our society can do a better job of supporting and understanding students experiencing homelessness if both the school and community try to empathize with them. In addition, the participants stressed the need to teach educational and community agency personnel about the inequalities and poverty that contribute to homelessness.

Conclusion

The researcher's findings pointed out the significance of the early establishment of relationships in the collaborative process to develop a strong basis for future projects focused on supporting students experiencing homelessness. Participants emphasized the importance of agencies actively encouraging collaborations and meaningful discussions to enhance understanding and take effective action. This directive is useful for schools, districts, and local organizations looking to establish or strengthen relationships in this area. This is consistent with the notion of prioritizing education and promoting transparent communication as essential strategies for providing support to students experiencing homelessness (Dhaliwal & Gregori, 2022). The key focal points for fostering partnerships included providing education to partners, cultivating rapport, and establishing common objectives. These methodologies exemplify a dedication to ethical ideals and cooperative strategies for addressing the needs of students who are facing homelessness. Nevertheless, participants acknowledged the difficulty of prioritizing

the resolution of social problems like homelessness within an organization, especially when there are leaders who are not completely committed to resolving these concerns. Leadership is critical in setting organizational standards for cooperation and helping teams find development opportunities.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged the importance of adopting a comprehensive and inclusive strategy for supporting homeless students, recognizing the complex and multifaceted nature of their needs and their families' needs. This statement agrees with the Sunnybrook shared decision-making competency, which emphasizes the development of multidisciplinary care plans that prioritize the needs and preferences of patients and their families. Finally, the participants reached a consensus about the difficulties associated with considering the varied needs, preferences, and priorities of students and/or their families who are facing homelessness in the development of interventions and support measures. These factors emphasize the importance of working together, including leaders, and adopting a comprehensive approach to effectively meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The objective of this qualitative case study was to investigate the strategies employed by district and school officials when collaborating with local community agencies to effectively navigate and overcome obstacles in establishing, sustaining, and expanding interagency collaboration initiatives. Particularly investigating their experiences in achieving success and overcoming obstacles associated with generating efficient collaboration between agencies aimed at supporting students facing homelessness. The research examined interagency collaboration strategies that are consistent with existing collaborative practices as described in the literature from Sunnybrook's six core competencies for improving the efficiency of interprofessional teams (McLaney et al., 2022). This case study sought a more thorough understanding of the strategies that district and school personnel, along with local community agencies, use in the process of building successful partnerships while simultaneously identifying perceived challenges to collaboration. The researcher used the following research questions to guide this study:

RQ1: How do district and school personnel, along with local community agencies describe their experiences developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships that reflect effective interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness?

RQ2: In what ways have district and school personnel, along with local community agencies, achieved successes and managed challenges when establishing interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness?

Discussion of Significant Findings

The data revealed three main themes and seven sub-themes that reflect effective interagency collaboration in developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships between district and school personnel, along with local community agencies. These findings also provided insight into the factors that contribute to success and the approaches used to overcome collaboration challenges. Three main themes identified were partnership development, enhanced support systems, and addressing complex needs. Within these themes, the following sub-themes emerged: educating partners, building rapport, establishing common goals, communication, shared information, different definitions, and outlook on students experiencing homelessness.

The study's findings showed the importance of making early relationships and encouraging teamwork to support students experiencing homelessness. Prioritizing McKinney-Vento Act education, maintaining open communication about available support resources, and involving leaders to advocate for the support of students experiencing homelessness are essential for developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships that reflect effective interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness. The complicated demands placed on students experiencing homelessness and their families necessitate that school and community organizations adopt a holistic support plan when developing, sustaining, and expanding partnerships. However, obstacles remain to incorporating these diverse plans due to the various definitions of homelessness under Federal Acts, societal myths, and a lack of empathy toward students and their families' lived experiences. Overall, the study emphasizes the significance of a holistic and collaborative strategy to effectively support students experiencing homelessness.

Theme 1: Partnership Development

The district and school officials, working together with local community agencies, establish partnerships by educating stakeholders about the McKinney-Vento Act early in the

interagency collaboration process. The participants spoke about the McKinney-Vento Act being promoted through a proactive strategy of educating the community about its purpose, functions, and support offered for students experiencing homelessness. The data revealed prioritizing McKinney-Vento Act education for all stakeholders as important to participants in this study, which is consistent with the efficient development of partnerships (Bryan et al., 2020).

Educational institutions, districts, and community groups have successfully adopted measures such as McKinney-Vento resource hubs on school grounds, school food pantries, and bookbag buddy programs (Levin et al., 2022). Carolyn, a McKinney-Vento social worker, discussed going out to the schools and community agencies to educate partners on the act and how it should be used to best support students experiencing homelessness.

Building Rapport

District and school personnel, along with local community agencies, sustain partnerships by building rapport with one another, students, and their families. During the community alliance meetings, the researcher observed both the school and community personnel exemplifying dynamic structures of rapport by showing active listening skills, asking engaging questions, and being aware of their body language. Building relationships early in the collaborative process provides a solid platform for future endeavors. Schools can build ties with stakeholders by actively participating in the community (Bryan et al., 2020). Palencia and Siegel-Hawley (2023) found that treating the community as an equal member increases their involvement in the sustainability process. During the homeless alliance meeting, community agencies from various non-profits expressed their eagerness to partner with schools. In return, the school personnel expressed how those community agencies in attendance were valued partners that have helped the school increase school attendance, graduation rates, and test scores on achievement tests. When school officials effectively communicate to all stakeholders that they are equally involved

in the student's development, a solid school-community relationship emerges. Both may build sustainable relationships with stakeholders by actively interacting with each other in a positive manner and supporting warm client transfers (Bryan et al., 2020).

Establishing Common Goals

District and school personnel, along with local community agencies expand alliances by working together toward the common mission of providing support to students experiencing homelessness. This expansion of collaborative efforts takes place by embracing similar goals, such as ensuring that every student experiencing homelessness graduates. For example, at the homeless alliance meeting, a high school social worker from the district addressed common goals. She cited a recent collaboration between the administration, homeless liaison, and community engagement worker to support a student. They all worked together to assist the student in balancing a job to meet their family's financial needs while still obtaining their high school diploma. Based on the findings, district, and school personnel, in collaboration with local community agencies, are actively exploring ways to broaden their partnership. Through shared objectives, they have created an environment in which students who are experiencing homelessness feel secure and supported, knowing that there are trusted adults who care about their well-being. For relationships to expand, Hands (2023) said that interagency must be ready to accept each other's goals and objectives and be open to changing the things they do together over time to better meet those goals. These collaborative goals expand collaboration by combining resources, and expertise, and working as a team to find solutions to the various challenges that students and their families experiencing homelessness confront.

Theme 2: Enhanced Support Systems

There is an importance of engaging and having proactive leadership in prioritizing and promoting interagency collaboration efforts to support homeless students. The researcher

observed at the homeless alliance conference that there was a substantial conversation focused on the essential role of leaders in driving collaboration efforts. Representatives from various community groups and schools underscored how effective leadership advocacy is crucial for fostering partnerships and initiating collaborative initiatives. Research participants expressed having strong leadership is essential for successfully aligning resources, policies, and goals across organizations. Based on the literature, a good leader can drive collaborative activities and ensure the development of unified strategies to address the diverse needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Communication

The district and school personnel, collaborating with local community agencies, have achieved success by actively communicating and exchanging information among themselves. They stressed the need for open and transparent communication, which aligned with the Sunnybrook framework's communication competency (McLaney et al., 2022). This skill describes systematic and timely communication strategies, highlighting the necessity of using straightforward language, avoiding technical terms, and ensuring comprehension across multiple roles. While reviewing the email exchanges, the researcher recognized positive interactions between district and school personnel, who collaborated well with local community organizations. These successful encounters were marked by open communication, mutual respect, and the verbalization of common goals. Researchers have suggested school districts should create strong interagency partnerships to meet the individual needs of students, ensure access to community resources, develop close relationships with students and families, and give students opportunities to form relationships with kind and reliable adult figures (Hallett & Skrla, 2017; Pavlakis et al., 2020). Findings from this case study emphasized that active communication exchange and the use of communication tools like flyers and emails promote

effective collaboration. Furthermore, the findings emphasized the necessity of regular communication in developing connections with trusted persons identified by students experiencing homelessness, allowing schools to personalize support services to each student's particular needs.

Shared Information

Participants pointed out the success of sharing information, resources, and strategies across stakeholders to offer comprehensive and coordinated support to students experiencing homelessness. They highlighted excellent data entry systems developed by community agencies that provide schools with information about homeless students and their families, enabling more effective identification and referral for assistance. As a result, clearly defining boundaries and responsibilities for information sharing is an important aspect of securing partnerships (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The findings concluded successful outcomes when utilizing the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the South Carolina Interagency Council on Homelessness in terms of data exchange and service coordination. They discussed how their successful collaborative nature within the districts, community agencies, and contracted partners has allowed them to have data-sharing agreements and minimize duplication of services to enhance support for students experiencing homelessness. Pavlakis (2018) suggested that school districts, in partnership with community stakeholders, should foster collaboration among agencies by developing a comprehensive framework of shared information, resources, and funding to assist students who are experiencing homelessness, ensuring that efforts are thorough and responsive.

The participants noted the challenges associated with establishing interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness, particularly in the absence of committed leaders such as administrators and executive directors. The quality of relationships

between schools and communities depends on the leadership of both entities (Miller et al., 2015). An administrator who adopts and practices the principles of transformational leadership theory is best positioned to cultivate a positive collaboration between a school and its neighboring community. Transformational leadership prioritizes collaborative endeavors aimed at improving schools through teamwork (Northouse, 2010). In this case study, Carson, a high school principal, observed that the structure of schools frequently restricts the level of collaboration feasible in a school year, creating a barrier unless bold leaders push the agenda. Carson shared this perspective on the importance of school leadership, stating that while there are solutions to overcome obstacles, few leaders are ready to take on the challenge. By emphasizing collective efforts and engaging stakeholders, transformational leaders can effectively enhance school-community partnerships, leading to mutual benefits and an overall improvement in educational outcomes.

At the Homeless Alliance conference, talks emphasized the need for leaders to build interagency collaboration to assist homeless students. Representatives from community organizations and schools emphasized the importance of leadership taking initiative and an advocacy role in facilitating collaborations and projects. They stressed that successful leadership is required to coordinate resources, policies, and goals across organizations, resulting in complete support systems. The talk highlighted the importance of leadership support for effective collaborative endeavors, as desired objectives may be difficult to attain without it. The Four Frames, as outlined by Bolman and Deal (2017), consist of structural, human resource, political, and symbolic perspectives. Skilled leaders can blend and utilize multiple frames simultaneously, or they may opt to employ one frame for a period before transitioning to another. This flexibility allows leaders to approach various situations from different angles, leveraging

the strengths of each frame to effectively address challenges and achieve organizational goals. This common commitment to using leadership for collaborative activities demonstrates a shared desire to improve outcomes for homeless students by creating a more cohesive and supportive community environment.

Theme 3: Addressing Complex Needs

The participants emphasized the complexity of managing challenges in supporting students experiencing homelessness, acknowledging the diverse needs faced by these students and their families. District, school personnel, and local community organizations can overcome obstacles in creating interagency collaboration for homeless student assistance by emphasizing student and family well-being and adhering to shared decision-making and interdisciplinary care principles (Pavlakis, 2018). Various participants highlighted the nuanced needs of homeless students, such as access to stable housing, food security, and educational support, particularly for marginalized communities. This was due to the different knowledge and skills that the district, school personnel, and local community organizations bring, allowing for a thorough and holistic approach. Collaboration allows educational professionals and community personnel to gain the essential skills and confidence to properly serve this group (Hall, 2007). Additionally, the participants addressed systemic issues like racism and structural barriers that exacerbate homelessness among certain demographic groups. Students facing homelessness are not a homogeneous population; they come from a variety of racial and ethnic origins, ages, and geographic places. Participants recognized that due to unequal access to housing and historical challenges to economic success, students of color are more likely to become homeless (Levin et al., 2022).

Definition Differences

Participants highlighted the significance of leadership advocacy and culturally responsive approaches in managing challenges when establishing interagency collaboration. The dialogue also touched on the importance of clarifying definitions of homelessness across different agencies due to limitations. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act lacked a defined definition of a “homeless student” until its reauthorization in 2001 as part of the No Child Left Behind Act (Lee, 2023). Currently, McKinney-Vento considers living in automobiles, shelters, streets, or double-up quarters as a form of homelessness (Lee, 2023). However, according to the guidelines set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), students who are experiencing homelessness while living with others or staying in hotels that they pay for are classified as “unstably housed” instead of being considered homeless. As a result, they are not eligible for federal homelessness assistance. This strikes the opposite of public schools’ McKinney-Vento duty to identify, enroll, and assist young people who are homeless. Participants expressed frustration with discrepancies in definitions, particularly between federal agencies and school districts, and stressed the need for a more inclusive approach that recognizes various forms of housing instability.

Outlook on Students Experiencing Homelessness

Participants highlighted the challenge of dispelling myths and confronting negative stereotypes surrounding homelessness by fostering empathy and understanding within schools and communities. They emphasized the value of education and training to promote awareness and sensitivity towards students and their families experiencing homelessness, advocating for a more compassionate and supportive approach when addressing homelessness in educational settings. The literature, particularly the Harvard Family Research Project (2010), has looked at a variety of educational and community collaboration changes. These projects seek to strengthen

schools and community agencies' efforts by promoting education, awareness, and sensitivity to students and their families suffering from homelessness, resulting in more favorable outcomes.

Implications for Interagency Collaboration

Interagency collaboration has far-reaching and profound consequences for helping homeless adolescents. The study's findings indicate three primary themes and seven sub-themes, emphasizing the significance of collaboration among district and school officials, as well as local community agencies. To begin, effective relationship development is essential for forming, sustaining, and extending collaborations. Early education of partners about important legislation, such as the McKinney-Vento Act, provides the framework for long-term collaboration. Building rapport and developing shared goals strengthens these relationships, laying a solid platform for future expansion. Furthermore, having a common objective of supporting students experiencing homelessness improves teamwork and fosters long-term partnerships. Secondly, strengthening support systems is key to effectively managing the diverse needs of these students and their families. Open and transparent communication among stakeholders allows for the exchange of information, resources, and strategies, resulting in complete and coordinated support. Using systems such as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) promotes data sharing and service coordination, reducing duplication of effort and increasing assistance for students experiencing homelessness. Thirdly, addressing the complex needs of homeless students requires a holistic approach and a commitment to prioritizing their well-being. This entails recognizing and attending to the different needs of homeless students, such as access to secure housing, food security, and educational opportunities. Leadership involvement and culturally relevant techniques play a significant role in managing challenges and building effective collaboration. Clarifying definitions of homelessness across organizations and systems ensures the removal of federal policy barriers while dispelling myths and tackling negative stereotypes fosters empathy

and understanding in schools and communities. Interagency collaboration has enormous promise for supporting students experiencing homelessness by building successful partnerships, improving support systems, and addressing complicated needs. By taking a holistic approach and prioritizing the well-being of homeless students and their families, schools and community groups may provide a more supportive and inclusive atmosphere, eventually improving results for this vulnerable demographic.

Implications for Future Research

In future implications, researchers may use my results to help school and community agencies address the needs of students experiencing homelessness by pulling together financing from donations, grants, and government funds to have a greater impact on supporting students and families experiencing homelessness. Researchers may also utilize my results to create an intervention checklist that will reliably identify students who are homeless not just when they enroll but also during their time within the school system. The intervention checklist can be issued to various school personnel, including teachers, nurses, cafeteria workers, and others. This checklist would assist these professionals in identifying students who need McKinney Vento services and additional community assistance.

Future researchers can also investigate various facets of why students and families experiencing homelessness struggle to identify and receive services. First, researchers could look at the hurdles that hinder students and their families experiencing homelessness from properly advocating for themselves. This might include things like a lack of knowledge about the available services, a fear of stigma or discrimination, language hurdles, or restricted access to resources and support networks. Second, researchers could examine ways to help students and their families experiencing homelessness advocate for themselves more successfully. This might include establishing and evaluating empowerment programs that provide knowledge, skill

training, and assistance to assist persons in navigating systems, asserting their rights, and obtaining critical resources. Finally, ongoing research might be done to track the long-term effects of self-advocacy activities among high school homeless students. Researchers might investigate how self-advocacy affects housing stability, school performance, job opportunities, physical health, and overall well-being over time.

Limitations

The study has limitations due to potential biases and constraints in the research process. The overrepresentation of school personnel compared to community agencies may skew the findings. The qualitative nature of data analysis introduces subjectivity, allowing different researchers to interpret the data differently. The dynamic nature of collaborative efforts among agencies may cause the findings to lose accuracy and relevance over time. Therefore, caution is needed in interpreting and applying the findings, and ongoing monitoring and adjustment is crucial to maintain relevance and accuracy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study provided insights into effective interagency collaboration for students experiencing homelessness. Three primary themes and seven sub-themes evolved, emphasizing the necessity of building partnerships, enhancing support systems, and addressing complicated needs. The findings demonstrated the importance of establishing early relationships, emphasizing McKinney-Vento education, maintaining open communication, and using shared information to retain and expand partnerships. However, problems persist, including disparities in definitions and misconceptions about homelessness, demanding a more inclusive and compassionate approach. Leadership advocacy and culturally responsive techniques are critical for managing challenges and creating effective collaboration. School and community groups may better support the diverse needs of students experiencing homelessness and seek to create a more supportive and inclusive environment by taking a holistic approach and stressing student and family well-being. Overall, the study demonstrates the significance of collaborative efforts and a long-term commitment to assisting students facing homelessness in school and community settings.

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APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**Human Subjects Committee (HSC)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Dear Iantheya K Brown,

Proposal Title: Strong Partnerships Require Collaboration: The Investigation of Collaborative Efforts Between Schools and Community Organizations to Address the Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness.

Submission date: Friday, January 5, 2024, 2:23 PM

The Human Subjects Committee (HSC) has received and reviewed the above-titled research proposal. I am happy to inform you that AU's IRB has voted to **APPROVE** your above-mentioned proposal. Your approval number is **AU202402IRB**. Please, whenever you contact us about this proposal, use your IRB approval number.

Also, be reminded that if at any point during the research, the risk level to any human subjects involved changes, either physical harm or loss of anonymity, or should you find it necessary to make any adjustments to the study as approved, please contact the HSC/IRB Chair in advance of implementing such changes. This may require that you submit an IRB Modification form.

We wish you well in your research.

If you need clarification regarding the committee's decision, please contact [REDACTED], IRB Chair, at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
1/18/2024

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

APPENDIX B. LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS EXPLAINING STUDY

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education: Leadership and Learning in School and Community Leadership (SCL) at Anderson University in Anderson, South Carolina. I am pursuing my dissertation topic in investigating collaborative efforts between schools and community-based organizations in supporting the needs of students experiencing homelessness. This research project will be overseen by my dissertation chair Tanya E. Cordoba, any additional questions or concerns can be emailed to her at tcordoba@andersonuniversity.edu. This study seeks to examine the efficacy of interagency collaboration strategies and the obstacles that impede such efforts in supporting the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Your participation in this study is requested. Participation in the study will require approximately two hours collectively. The focus groups will be held virtually and broken down into two interview sessions, with your permission, taped and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will not be identified by name on the tape. I will use Zoom video platform to help transcribe the tapes. An outside reader will read the transcription of the tape; however, they will be able to identify participants as Participant A, or Participant B, etc. The audio files will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Once the focus group interviews are transcribed from a copy of the audio file, the audio file will be returned to me and erased. The master audio file will remain in my possession and will be destroyed two years after the publication of the dissertation. In addition, you may be asked to share relevant artifacts and documents. Your name and the name of the school/ district/ agency and any other information gathered in this study will remain confidential and will only be used for educational purposes. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. I look forward to your participation in the study.

Sincerely,

Iantheya K. Brown

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

- **TITLE OF THE STUDY:** Strong Partnerships Require Collaboration:

The Investigation of Interagency Collaboration Efforts Between Schools and Community-based Organizations in Supporting the Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Iantheya Brown, a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education: Leadership and Learning in School and Community Leadership (SCL) at Anderson University in Anderson, South Carolina. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study seeks to investigate the perspectives and experiences of school district personnel and community agencies regarding the development, maintenance, and expansion of partnerships through interagency collaboration to support students experiencing homelessness.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked questions about your experiences supporting students who experience homelessness and your perspective on interagency collaboration in supporting these student's needs. Your specific answers will not be shared with anyone else outside of the focus group. Your responses will remain anonymous, and no information will be shared in reports or presentations that would allow anyone to personally identify your responses. The focus group will take place via Zoom virtual platform. The focus group will be held twice and should take approximately one hour to complete.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

During your participation in this study, you will be interviewed about your experiences with supporting students who are homeless and discuss interagency collaboration needs, perspectives, and stance. As the researcher, I can't ensure that other people in the focus group won't repeat what they hear to others. You may experience mild anxiety and slight discomfort when recalling struggles or decisions made concerning these students.

- ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

There are no direct benefits to you; however, by participating in this research, you will help develop understanding of the experiences of school staff working alongside community agencies to support students experiencing homelessness. This information could help other educators, administrators, community leaders and policy makers develop a framework by which schools and the community can collaborate effectively.

- PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no monetary payment for you participating in the study.

- CONFIDENTIALITY

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity without your permission.

The interview process and your responses will be audio-recorded for later analysis, and your identity will be disguised and protected. Your name will not be revealed in any document resulting from this research. Your data will be recorded anonymously. A pseudonym will be recorded with your data; your name or other identification will not be recorded with the data. When the research thesis is completed, the audio-recordings will be destroyed.

- PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, that will not affect your relationship with Anderson University or other services to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice or penalty. The researcher may also terminate your participation in this research if she feels this to be in your best interest.

- IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCHER

If you experience any kind of discomfort as a result of your participation in this study, or if you have questions about the research, contact Iantheya Brown (primary researcher) at

(803) 767-6735 or ibrown100@andersonuniversity.edu.

• IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Iantheya Brown, primary researcher and graduate candidate at ibrown100@andersonuniversity.edu or Tanya Cordoba, Ph.D., Thesis Chair and Assistant Professor of Education with Anderson University at 864-231-2000 or tcordoba@andersonuniversity.edu

• RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Anderson University Human Subjects Committee at HSC@andersonuniversity.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form. In signing this form, I certify that I am at least eighteen years of age.

Name of Participant (please print) _____

Address _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

My signature as witness certifies that the participant signed this consent form in my presence.

Name of Witness (please print) _____

Signature of Witness

_____ Date _____

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an EdD Doctoral Candidate at Anderson University with a concentration in School and Community Leadership. My research is centered around "Investigating Collaborative Efforts Between Schools and Community-Based Organizations in Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness". This research project will be overseen by my dissertation chair Tanya E. Cordoba, any additional questions or concerns can be emailed to her at tcordoba@andersonuniversity.edu.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”- Helen Keller



1. Name:
2. Email:
3. Briefly describe your job role as it relates to supporting students and/or their families experiencing homelessness.
4. How long have you been in your current position?

Please Fill Out the Following Availability for Focus Group Session #1: Check all that apply.

- Tuesday- February 13, 2024 @ 10:30 am- 11:30 am
- Thursday- February 15, 2024 @10:30 am- 11:30am
- Friday- February 16, 2024 @ 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm
- No days & times above

Please Fill Out the Following Availability for Focus Group Session #2: Check all that apply.

■ Tuesday- February 20, 2024 - 10 am to 11 am

■ Wednesday- February 21, 2024- 9:30 am to 10:30 am

■ Thursday- February 22nd- 1:00pm to 2:00pm

■ No days & times above

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Before this focus group interview, you received an introductory letter and one consent form before today's discussion. The two documents primarily affirm the following: (1) strict confidentiality will be maintained for all information, (2) your involvement is entirely voluntary, and you have the freedom to withdraw at any point if you experience discomfort, and (3) our goal is not to cause any harm. To enhance my notetaking, I would like to capture our conversations today on Zoom by means of screen recording. Only the researchers involved in the initiative will have access to the recording, which will be subsequently eradicated once it has been transcribed. I have scheduled this focus group with the intention of not exceeding a duration of one hour. Throughout this period, I will have multiple inquiries that I would like to address. If there is a limited amount of time available, it may become necessary to interrupt you to proceed and conclude this line of questions. Are there any questions from anyone?

B. Case Study Perspective-Focus Group (1st Discussion w/ Participants)

1. In your experience how have interagency collaborations addressed the unique needs and challenges faced by students experiencing homelessness?
2. Tell me about your personal or organization's approach to developing partnerships across agencies to support students experiencing homelessness? What does the process look like?
3. What specific strategies or initiatives has your organization implemented to sustain and maintain these partnerships over time?
4. What challenges or obstacles have you encountered in developing and sustaining partnerships, and how have you addressed these issues?
5. Can you share specific examples of how you've worked within and/or outside your organization to serve students experiencing homelessness?

C. Case Study Perspective-Focus Group (2nd Discussion w/ Participants)

1. How can schools and community partners evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their collaborative efforts? Is this something you do?
2. Explain the importance of data sharing and information exchange among different agencies/departments to improve outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.
3. How have you engaged or involved students experiencing homelessness and their families in collaborative efforts to support their educational and personal needs?
4. How can schools and community partners work together to support the academic and social-emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness?
5. What advice or recommendations would you give to other school districts or community agencies looking to establish or enhance partnerships to support students experiencing homelessness?

APPENDIX F: OBSERVATION FIELD MEETING NOTES

Meeting Summary:

Welcome and Purpose

- Acknowledgement of Elected Officials, Board Members, and [REDACTED] staff.
- Welcome [REDACTED] as CEO of United Housing Connections.

Alignment and Collaboration

- Recognition of the 2024 Point in Time Count and HUD's 2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity.

GHA Working Group Goals for 2024

- Alignment with the [REDACTED] Affordable Housing Coalition and GOAL Justice.
- **2024 TOP GOALS:** Lead pilot to connect chronic homelessness to housing, support eviction education and advocacy, convene micro home pilot, and support existing GHA strategic efforts.

Advocate

- Update GHA Policy Agenda and continue Advocacy Training Academy.
- Develop Education and Advocacy Strategy for Eviction in [REDACTED].

Collaborate

- Host Housing Provider Recruitment Event with Community Partners.
- Participate on April 25th Fair Housing Event.
- Explore quarterly or twice a year networking/learning for Housing Providers.

Educate

- Create an Eviction Brief and Infographic.
- Develop a promotional plan for the Mural Art Exhibit and Stories of Hope banners.

Innovate

- Develop Proof of Concept for Housing for Chronic Homelessness pilot.
- Host Field Trip for Shared Housing.
- Develop list of Diverse Housing Options benefits.

Homeless Response Unit

- Discuss intersection between law enforcement and community responsibilities to mitigate criminalization of homelessness.

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project

- Add Clinical Social worker to the project.

Affordable Housing Update

- Centralized list- Pilot.
- Survey with [REDACTED] Real Estate Investment Association.

Homeless Court

- Starting on March 4 at 2 PM.

GOAL Justice – [REDACTED]

- Reminder for next joint stakeholder meeting on April 15th at [REDACTED].

APPENDIX G: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY FLYER



 If your family lives in any of the following situations:



A Homeless Shelter



Doubled-up with other people



Car, park, empty building, bus or train station



Motel or campground



Your eligible children have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending their school of origin if that is your preference.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to your children's needs.

IF YOU BELIEVE...

your children may be eligible, contact the local liaison listed below to find out what services and supports may be available. There also may be supports available for your preschool-age children.

IF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BELIEVES...

that the school you selected is not in the best interest of your children, the district must provide you with a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal its decision.



Help for the Homeless **HYGIENE DRIVE**

February 11 - March 3

*Most urgent
needs*

- Soaps: laundry, dish, soft, shower gel, 2-in-1 shampoo
- Trash bags
- Diapers (sizes 3-6, Pull-Ups)
- Deodorant (unscented)
- Wet wipes
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Disposable razors
- Tampons and maxi pads



 **Helping Local Crisis Programs**

APPENDIX H: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 11:30 AM
To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: 18 year needing housing assistance

Good morning,
I am working with an 18-year-old female who as of April 1st will not have anywhere to stay. The student is a senior at [REDACTED]. Her mother has pretty much told her she has to fend for herself. The student does not have a car but is working at Harbor Inn. She has no family members or friends to offer support. The mother suffers from mental health problems and has negative relationships with family members.

I am trying my best to help this student graduate. Can anyone provide some support for this student? She has been put on the waiting list for [REDACTED], but at this time she is number 17 on the list.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 1:40 PM
To: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: 18 year needing housing assistance

Hi [REDACTED],
So, I put our collective heads together in Housing and we'd recommend you contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED].
You might give [REDACTED] a call also in case there is a roommate situation available that I am not aware of through their Program(s). [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] are my contacts at FPH.
I've also forwarded this email to [REDACTED] our Intake Guru to see if she may have some suggestions. Wish I could be of more help.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 3:07 PM
To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL Email] RE: 18 year needing housing assistance

██████████ would definitely be the first choice. If she were to get placement at ██████████
or ██████████, would she still be able to get to ██████████? Could be a short-term
plan until ██████████ has an opening.

The Center for Community Services is in ██████████ – they don't have a shelter, but would
they have funds for a hotel stay or other resources for her?

There's also ██████████ Transitional Services in ██████████ – ██████████ – website says
they help homeless women and children so could be another option.