University-Assisted Community Schools as Partners in Neighborhood Revitalization Efforts

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Urban policymakers, city officials, and community residents utilize neighborhood revitalization initiatives to establish safe and empowered neighborhoods. In 2016, leaders in Columbus, Ohio, launched a neighborhood revitalization effort designed to improve safety, access to opportunities, and economic development in the historically underserved Linden neighborhood. A priority focus involved strengthening Linden schools through the development of two university-assisted community schools (UACS). Using the community collaboration model as a guide, leaders from the schools, university, nonprofit, and local government sectors partnered to support school improvement processes in two Linden K–6 elementary schools. Annual stakeholder surveys have demonstrated marked improvements in perceptions of neighborhood safety, school climate, and the overall learning support system. The prevalence of behavioral incidences among students has decreased. Further, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UACS model helped sustain student engagement and virtual learning and keep families connected to the schools. This article describes implementation outputs and evaluation outcomes associated with adopting the UACS model in these two Linden elementary schools. Findings contribute to a greater understanding of how UACS can serve as partners in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

KEY WORDS: *community collaboration model; neighborhood revitalization; school improvement; university-assisted community schools*

Neighborhood revitalization efforts traditionally focus on improving housing, healthcare, economic conditions, and public safety, yet to fully address neighborhood change, urban policymakers, community members, city officials, and community leaders also must focus on schools (Horn et al., 2015; Silverman, 2014). Efforts that center schools in their planning processes and allocate funds to support student success can have indirect and direct effects on student performance and community stabilization (Ehlenz, 2016). Moreover, schools as natural "hubs" in neighborhoods can help provide a snapshot of local conditions, elevate the voices of community members, and meet the needs of youth and families (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018; Bronstein & Mason, 2016; Dryfoos, 2005; Maier et al., 2017). When schools work in partnership with broader neighborhood revitalization initiatives and vice versa, youth and families benefit from investments developing from a shared vision and strong foundation centered on community building (Ehlenz, 2016).

In 2017, a resident-driven neighborhood revitalization project was launched in the historically underserved neighborhood of Linden in central Ohio, with efforts primarily focused on improving safety, increasing access to opportunities, and expediting economic development (Neighborhood Design Center [NDC], 2017). This neighborhood revitalization effort aimed to encourage public, private, and nonprofit partners to come together to empower residents and work collaboratively to tackle significant issues, including the improvement of academic, health, and well-being outcomes among children in Linden (NDC, 2017). Through this citywide call for collaboration, City of Columbus officials, Columbus City Schools (CCS) administrators, leaders at United Way of Central Ohio (UWCO), and others joined together to identify additional partners that would allocate time, resources, personnel, and expertise and help to improve conditions in Linden's schools. One key partner leveraged was the local land-grant university, The Ohio State University (OSU). The

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One Linden Schools Initiative (OLSI) was developed as part of these efforts to focus on schools as vibrant, thriving, safe, and welcoming anchors in the Linden neighborhood.

Leaders of the OLSI grounded their work in evidence-based practices related to university-assisted community schools (UACS). UACS serve as neighborhood "hubs" that support collaborative problem solving to improve access to community resources, services, and programs and, most important, connect schools to institutions of higher education (Netter Center for Community Partnerships, 2020). Maier and colleagues (2017) concluded that well-implemented community schools lead to improvements in student and school outcomes and meet the needs of struggling students in high-poverty schools. Other research on community schools, school–family–community partnership models, and UACS demonstrates outcomes related to student behavior and attendance, school climate, strengthened learning support systems, and school success (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018; Blank et al., 2003; Bronstein & Mason, 2016; Moore & Emig, 2014). In this article, we describe the two UACS operating as part of the OSLI and present evaluation outcomes demonstrating initial successes related to the first five years of operation. In particular, the university's role in supporting the schools within broader neighborhood revitalization efforts is highlighted. Implications are drawn in relation to the value of UACS for neighborhood revitalization efforts in urban communities.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION AND EDUCATION

At the core of safe cities and vibrant neighborhoods is access to quality education for youth in schools. However, access to quality education is highly dependent on neighborhood and city-level factors. Schools operate at the nexus of neighborhood homeownership, and property taxes that fund schools are contingent on the economic stability, employment opportunities, and sense of public safety in communities (Patterson & Silverman, 2014). Moreover, schools are influenced by demographic and economic shifts in neighborhoods tied to structural, historical, and political forms of oppression. Redlining, suburban subsidies, and the development of highways are just a few examples of neighborhood factors that have historically shaped schools, along with limited employment opportunities, downturns in economic investments, and the prevalence of crime in urban communities (Rothstein, 2013). In many urban areas, structural forms of oppression have influenced homeownership rates and economic stability, leading to generations of youth and families experiencing disparate rates of poverty and ultimately feeder patterns to highly underresourced schools (Lukes & Cleveland, 2021).

To improve conditions in historically underserved neighborhoods, school leaders need access to additional personnel and collaborative interventions across multiple sectors to address systemic and intergenerational challenges (Swanstrom et al., 2013). Neighborhood revitalization projects are one approach to improving health, education, and economic stability in historically underserved neighborhoods. Additionally, community planning efforts within revitalization projects present opportunities for residents to create visions and goals and provide platforms to cultivate partnerships to address systemic problems (Shier & Handy, 2016). Schools and the students they serve ultimately benefit. As Nguyen-Hoang and Yinger (2011) found, improvements in test scores are associated with a 3 percent to 5 percent increase in housing values, and causal relationships exist among increased school funding, improved test scores, and elevated school district housing prices (and in turn, property taxes).

The OLSI

OLSI is one such neighborhood revitalization effort designed to transform schools into "hubs" in Linden, a historically underserved neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio. Like many urban neighborhoods, Linden has experienced the effects of structural oppression that has, in turn, influenced rates of employment, property values, school enrollment and performance, and neighborhood safety (NDC, 2017). The median household income in Linden is $23,934, and the average unemployment rate is 12.8 percent (as compared with the city's rate of 4.8 percent). Homeownership rates have declined by nearly half from 1980 to 2015, from 63 percent to 37 percent (NDC, 2017). These conditions prompted city leaders and community members to initiate neighborhood revitalization efforts in 2016 (NDC, 2017). Early planning outputs resulted in the completion of a communitywide needs assessment that identified

five areas for improvement: (1) health and safety, (2) transportation, (3) housing, (4) retail and business, and (5) education and workforce preparation.

As education emerged as a priority in Linden, the OLSI Advisory Council, consisting of leaders from the city, UWCO, OSU, and Linden schools, was established. In 2016 leaders of the OLSI Advisory Council designated Hamilton STEM Academy as a priority school in need of comprehensive intervention given high levels of behavioral incidences and small yet promising academic achievement gains among students. In 2018 efforts were expanded to Windsor STEM Academy, another Linden school demonstrating high levels of need. These two schools are located within a 15-mile radius of OSU and serve a highly vulnerable student population. At the onset of OLSI efforts, 100 percent of students in both schools were living in poverty, 70 percent identified as youth of color, and only 20 percent to 30 percent of students were proficient in literacy by fourth grade.

Evolution to UACS

To transform the schools into "hubs" and evolving UACS, efforts focused on implementing the community collaboration model (CCM; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008, 2018). Developed by leaders in the Community and Youth Collaborative Institute at OSU (CAYCI-OSU), the CCM is an evidence-based school improvement framework that mobilizes school and community resources to support academic achievement, healthy development, and overall school success. Through strategic school–family–community partnerships, nonacademic barriers to learning are addressed, and protective factors and developmental assets are strengthened. Past CCM research demonstrates outcomes related to improved attendance, student behaviors, school climate, parent/caregiver and community engagement, and academic success (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010, 2016, 2018, 2020). Other studies demonstrate learning support system improvements, ensuring students are identified early and interventions put in place to support success (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2020; Mendenhall et al., 2013).

As the two Linden schools evolved into UACS, faculty and staff at CAYCI-OSU assisted Hamilton and Windsor with the early adoption and implementation of the CCM. The implementation process followed CCM milestones, including fostering buy-in across the school community; collecting schoolwide data to identify needs, conditions, and gaps; developing partnerships and aligning resources to address gaps and needs; cultivating collaborative leadership and strengthening infrastructure; and evaluating outcomes to guide continuous school improvement (see Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008). Specific steps taken by CAYCI-OSU leaders to support and assist the two schools are described in the following sections.

Fostering Buy-In and Commitment. One critical first step involved fostering buy-in and commitment from the various partners involved in OLSI. To begin, leaders at CAYCI-OSU incubated the OLSI Advisory Council and leveraged financial investments from the city, UWCO, and OSU to support the hiring of two full-time school–family–community coordinators (SFCCs) and provide project oversight and management. Specifically, SFCCs were hired through the university system to coordinate services in each building and lead collaborative efforts across the broader neighborhood revitalization initiative, the two elementary schools, and the university. The university also committed personnel to support the overall project and oversee the SFCCs and provide program oversight, systems-reengineering assistance, and consultation related to the CCM and broader neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Creating a Shared Vision. Once hired and colocated in each school, SFCCs and university personnel gathered partners together to organize and map existing supports, programs, and services in each school across the five CCM school improvement pathways: (1) academic learning, (2) youth development/school climate, (3) parent/family engagement and support, (4) health and social services, and (5) community partnerships. This initial mapping of school- and community-based resources was instrumental in showcasing key assets in the schools, demonstrating duplication in services, and identifying resource gaps.

Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis. Another central step involved leveraging the university's research infrastructure to conduct extensive needs assessments in both schools. To support this process, university partners collected data from students, parents/caregivers, and teachers/school staff in both schools. The CAYCI School Experience Surveys (SES; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2020) were used to examine the stakeholder perspectives

across academic and nonacademic domains (e.g., school climate, parent/family engagement, barriers to learning). CAYCI-SES data, combined with academic data, school discipline data, and other key indicators collected by the NDC (a local nonprofit committed to revitalization efforts), helped determine gaps and needs in both schools. Using data to drive decisions, SFCCs, university personnel, school leaders, and partners identified key priorities to guide the OLSI. Emergent priorities included (a) improving student behavior, academic motivation, and neighborhood and school safety; (b) increasing parent and family engagement; and (c) strengthening supports for teachers and school staff. During the COVID-19 pandemic, priorities also shifted toward increasing student engagement, improving virtual learning through access to computers and Wi-Fi, and enriching academic instruction.

Developing Partnerships and Aligning Resources. Once needs and priorities were identified in each school, SFCCs worked to leverage university resources, partner with community organizations, engage other stakeholders (including parents/caregivers), and align school needs to broader neighborhood revitalization efforts. Existing partners collaborated with school teams and OLSI to align programs and school goals and improve service delivery. Programs/services were maximized such as mentoring programs (Big Brothers Big Sisters), aftercare and enrichment programs (St. Stephen's Community House, Linden Life Fellowship), and prevention and behavior support programs (PAX Good Behavior Game, Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program of Franklin County, Nationwide Children's Hospital). Partners also stepped up to provide additional programming and supports to the schools. For instance, The Marcus Project, a local nonprofit organization, now sponsors an annual family coat drive for families at both schools. The Driven Foundation and Engage Central Ohio host virtual leadership programs for students. Numerous organizations provide in-kind and cash donations to stock school resource centers with household and clothing items for families.

Along with school- and other community-based resources and programs, CAYCI-OSU also leveraged university assets to support the two schools. For instance, student social work interns were placed in each building to provide additional student supports and help strengthen the positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS) system. The university also facilitated several professional development opportunities for teachers and school staff in both schools. Other programs offered by OSU were tapped to strengthen academic enrichment and positive youth development programming in the school community. Hamilton's SFCC also helped bring back the school's Parent Teacher Organization after an eight-year hiatus. Collectively this work has led to the expansion of programs, services, and supports.

Building Collaborative Leadership. Another crucial step was building formalized school–family–community partnerships in unison with Linden's neighborhood revitalization efforts. As neighborhood revitalization efforts evolved, SFCCs and university leaders identified opportunities to align neighborhood initiatives with priorities in each school but worked to connect and educate external partners about available in-school services and supports (i.e., school-based therapists, emergency resources, etc.). In response, SFCCs developed and led the One Linden Community Table, a coalition of over 20 different organizations that meets every other month to discuss how organizations can work collaboratively to support students and families in the neighborhood. By convening this coalition, the two UACS had representation within broader neighborhood revitalization efforts, and community-building efforts were linked back to the schools. Additionally, SFCCs created and distributed the monthly *One Linden Community Resource Guide* to the families. Community partners submit information on youth and family activities, health and wellness resources, employment and financial supports, and basic needs assistance. Newsletters reach over 2,000 students and their families across the schools in Linden.

Further, leaders of citywide and Linden neighborhood revitalization efforts were aware of growing needs among the community because of their regular communications with school and community leaders engaged in the UACS. Built into the revitalization planning process were regular meetings among the SFCCs and city and local leaders (such as a local pastor) to strategize broader efforts related to safety (e.g., police presence at certain events; lighting on certain streets), positive youth development needs (e.g., bringing more afterschool and summer programming to the neighborhoods),

and resource acquisition needs (both in-kind and financial). In addition, a One Linden Schools Advisory Council (comprising school, city, university, and community leaders) met regularly to discuss action plans, barriers and challenges, emergent needs and opportunities, and resource development needs. True collaboration emerged as each entity shared resources (including fiscal), ownership of the UACS and One Linden plan, and accountability for outcomes generated for youth, families, the schools, and the community.

Strengthening School and Community Infrastructure and Data Management Systems. University personnel and SFCCs also focused on reducing service duplication, increasing interprofessional collaboration, and improving data management systems in both schools. Hamilton STEM Academy created a school discipline team, consisting of the counselor, school social worker, teachers, instructional assistants, the SFCC, and an administrator. This team examines student behaviors daily, determines individualized interventions, and explores alternative solutions to suspensions. Similarly, an interprofessional team of teachers and school staff at Windsor STEM Academy began to review behavioral data routinely in biweekly PBIS team meetings in 2019. The schoolwide focus on PBIS increased utilization of a data-tracking platform, led to the creation of a PBIS school store, improved implementation fidelity of the PAX Good Behavior Game, and formalized a system of celebrations/awards to reinforce positive behaviors and academic success.

Additionally, leaders at the university supported CAYCI-SES data collection efforts and provided annual reports and data syntheses to the schools and the community. This annual data collection system supported school- and community-level planning efforts and allowed the broader collaborative system to explore year-to-year trends related to key outcomes such as school climate, perceived safety, academic motivations, the learning support system, and parent/caregiver and community engagement. These processes strengthened the school's data management system and promoted better collaborative planning and infrastructure across broader revitalization efforts in the neighborhood.

Responsiveness to the COVID-19 Pandemic. In March 2020, partners in the OLSI were tasked with supporting both schools as they switched to remote learning. The most salient challenge was helping students and families access academic resources and instruction. To ameliorate this challenge, leaders of the UACS applied for and received a grant to buy Chromebooks, internet hotspots, and program materials for approximately 20 students. Ten rising third-grade students from each school were targeted due to the importance placed on the "3rd Grade Reading Guarantee," which focused on promoting students to fourth grade based on performance on standardized tests for reading proficiency. Upon delivery of the Chromebooks and hotspots, SFCCs and community partners implemented a six-week virtual summer enrichment program for students during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Academic enrichment sessions offered as part of this program focused on improving grade-level standards in math and literacy and provided optional extension activities using literacy lessons as a foundation for staying active and engaged while learning from home.

Students also participated in a university-led virtual sport-based positive youth development program, LiFE*sports*, designed to support social skill development through sport, recreation, and play (https://www.lifesports.osu.edu). One partner nonprofit even provided sports equipment to all participating youth. Last, SFCCs, together with community partners, hosted virtual sessions once a week during which parents/caregivers could share concerns, celebrate their children's progress, learn more about community resources, and build community. On Fridays, SFCCs conducted home visits to check in with families, distributed incentives, and connected families to additional supports as needed. Further, as the work of the UACS continued, a formal Parent Coalition was created to connect parents/caregivers from all Linden schools, school support staff, community providers, and local leaders. Community resources were shared in this monthly forum, but also parents/caregivers regularly suggested topics for subsequent sessions so as to drive their own personal learning but also guide the school and communitywide improvement efforts. As such, local efforts to revitalize the neighborhood were more responsive to localized needs and informed by the community's voice.

Evaluation of OLSI Outcomes. Ongoing assistance from personnel at CAYCI-OSU also helped strengthen evaluation and progress monitoring in

both schools. Annually, SFCCs are supported by personnel at CAYCI-OSU and leaders at UWCO in tracking progress and outcomes. Specific indicators of critical importance are measures of success at the building level in relation to school climate and student behavioral incidences, as well as ones at the program level, such as the third grade virtual enrichment program.

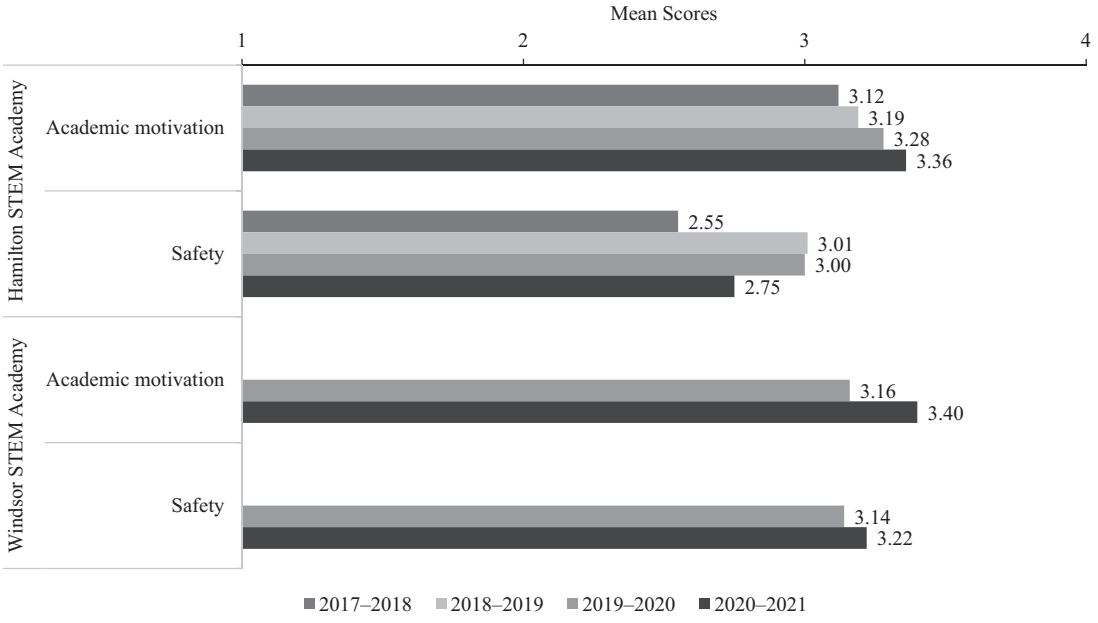
School Climate. To evaluate progress on school-level priorities, stakeholder perceptions of school climate (e.g., safety, support for learning, academic motivation) were tracked using CAYCI-SES data (see Anderson-Butcher et al., 2020). Student indicators included annual examination of the safety (three items) and academic motivation (four items) subscales. Both subscales are measured on a four-point Likert scale (1 = NO!; 2 = no; 3 = yes; 4 = YES!). Parent/caregiver and teacher/school staff indicators also were assessed using the teacher/staff perceived learning support system subscale and the parent/caregiver school support for engagement subscale, respectively. Parent/caregiver and teacher/staff subscales are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always. Figures 1 and 2 detail changes in mean scores on each of the four subscales on the CAYCI-SES since implementation efforts began. Changes in mean scores demonstrate improvements in student perceptions of academic motivation in both schools, and improved perceptions of safety at Windsor. Safety remains a priority in Hamilton given scores improved initially then regressed. Among teachers/school staff, perceptions of learning supports improved in both schools prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (and remain a priority). Last, parents/caregiver perceptions of school support for engagement have improved at Windsor and have remained steady at Hamilton.

Interestingly, school-specific findings are not surprising given localized improvement efforts at each of the schools. Specifically, Windsor's implementation efforts focused primarily on parent and community engagement, an area identified as a top priority during the needs/resource assessment process. Compared with Hamilton, Windsor hosted many more events and programs at the building and in the community (ones such as drive-by for supplies, Zoom events for parents/caregivers, holiday activities, and read-aloud activities). Hamilton focused more inward on ensuring academic strategies, and core teacher–student relationships were prioritized. Hamilton did not host many external events that might have engaged parents/caregivers and the community in school efforts (especially during COVID-19). As such, findings demonstrating how Windsor data improved on school support and safety are not particularly surprising, especially given the level of activity focused in these areas. Other research on the CCM demonstrates variability in outcomes based on individualized strategies designed to target top priority needs and gaps (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2018).

Student Behavioral Incidences. Office of discipline referrals (ODRs) at the building level were tracked to capture whether efforts were addressing the priority of improving student behaviors. Annually, SFCCs track four levels of behaviors: (1) level 1: minor offenses; (2) level 2: repeated level 1 offenses or serious misconduct; (3) level 3: repeated level 1 and level 2 offenses, illegal and/or serious misconduct, or life or health-threatening offenses; and (4) positive efforts for adjustment and knowledge (P.E.A.K.); P.E.A.K. interventions are driven by the PBIS activities in the schools and provide students with individualized support to help them redirect and learn skills before major behavioral consequences. At the start of implementation efforts in 2016, Hamilton had the third-highest rates of ODRs in the district, just behind two large high schools. Table 1 details changes in ODRs since implementation efforts began in each school up until the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Since 2016, ODRs in Hamilton STEM Academy have decreased by over 40 percent. Windsor also had over 2,000 ODRs at baseline in 2018–2019. In the second year of implementation at Windsor, level 2 and level 3 event numbers steadily decreased while the uptake of P.E.A.K. supports that began in 2018–2019 remain steady as stakeholders in the schools understood these activities to be positive for students and preventative activities designed to curb and prevent behaviors.

Student Engagement in Virtual Learning. To gauge the effectiveness of the virtual summer enrichment program, chronic absenteeism rates among third-grade students participating in the summer program were compared with those of a matched comparison group of third-graders and all students in both UACS. The matched comparison group was selected by identifying students who attended the same schools in second and third grade and students with similar academic indicators when starting both second and third grade. Figure 3

Figure 1: Student Perceptions of Safety and Academic Motivation



Note: Items range from 1 = NO! to 4 = YES!

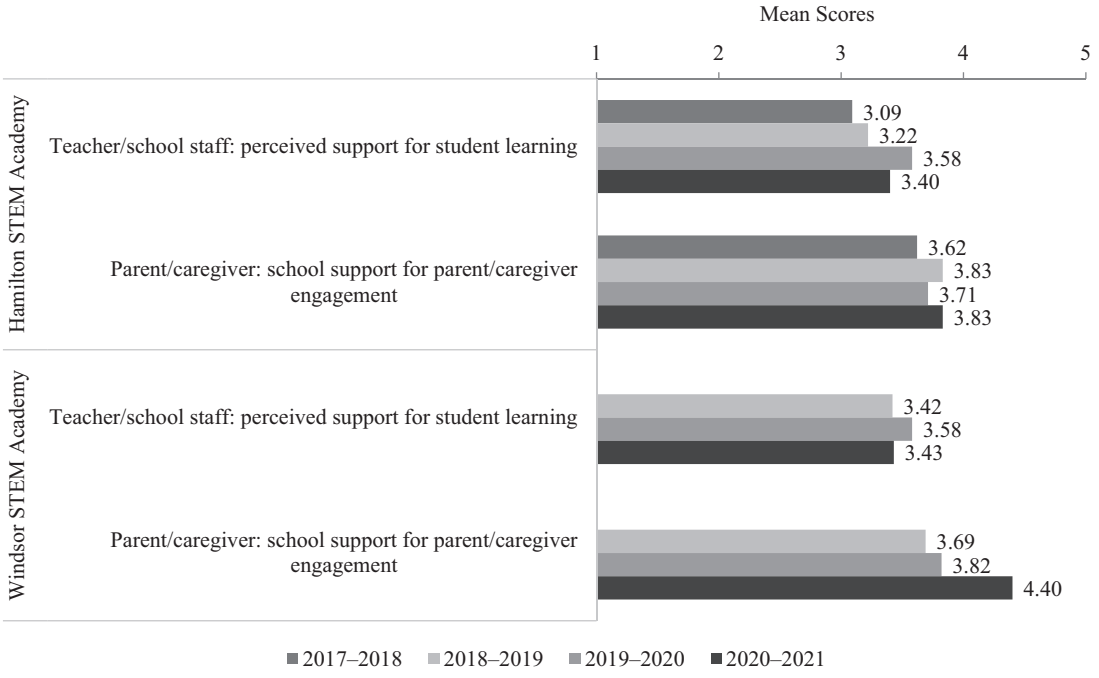
highlights lower rates of chronic absenteeism among students (12 percent) that participated in the virtual enrichment program as compared with the matched comparison group (33 percent) and all students at the two schools (23 percent).

DISCUSSION

The OLSI has driven systems-level changes in two UACS in the Linden neighborhood. Our findings, coupled with implementation insights, contribute to a greater understanding of how universities can support schools and, in turn, help schools serve as "hubs" within broader neighborhood revitalization initiatives. School improvement processes guided by the CCM, annual collection of CAYCI-SES data, and coordination efforts on behalf of SFCCs have reduced behavioral incidences and improved perceptions of school climate among socially vulnerable students and families in Linden. Importantly, P.E.A.K. interventions were instituted in the schools in 2017–2018 as part of broader school-wide PBIS implementation efforts to address behavioral incidences. Utilization of P.E.A.K. as a first response for students was an important component that contributed to changes in behavioral outcomes in these two buildings. Guided by these findings, leaders of the UACS have committed to continuing these one-on-one relational interventions to address behavior rather than engaging in more punitive approaches. SFCCs continued to track data and utilize findings to advocate for these types of early interventions focused on relationships that simultaneously demonstrate to students, parents/caregivers, and teachers that additional supports for academic learning are accessible in their schools and buildings.

Moreover, beyond improving student outcomes, the implementation of the CCM and UACS facilitated partnerships that contributed to improved perceptions of academic learning among teachers and school staff, likely associated with the development of intentional community partnerships, allocation of additional resources and personnel to the schools, and implementation of evidence-based interventions in the two buildings. Furthermore, comparable with other studies on school–community partnerships, the school infrastructure was strengthened by creating interprofessional teams that intervene early and connect students to resources (Bates et al., 2019). Our

Figure 2: Parent/Caregiver and Teacher/School Staff Perceptions of Support



Note: Items range from 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always.

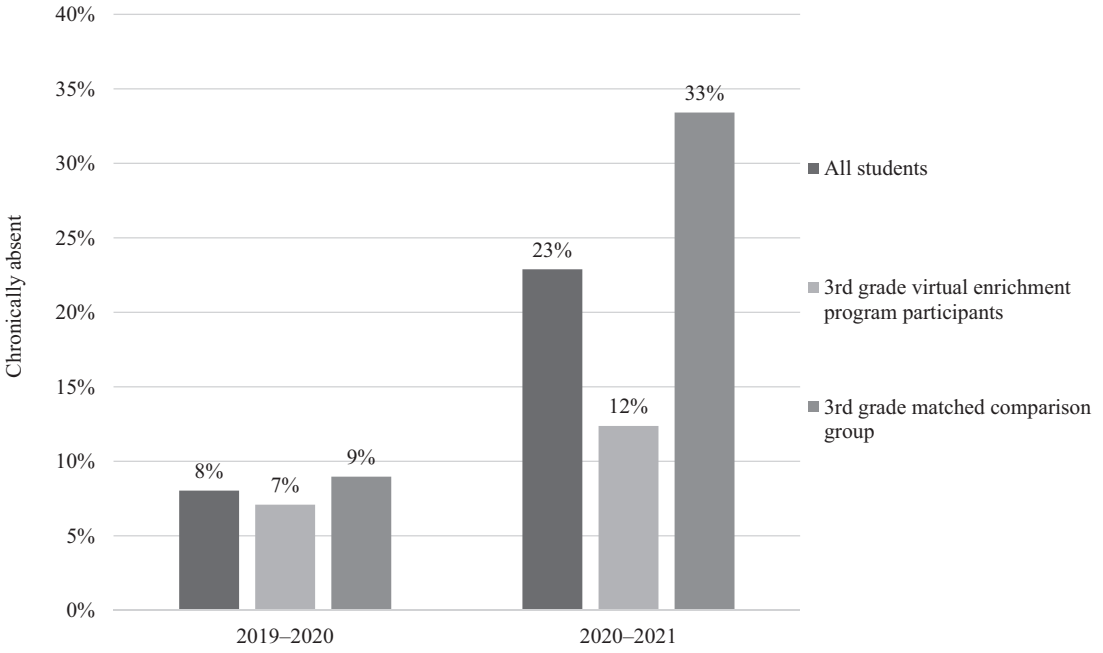
Table 1: Office Discipline Referral Data

School	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020
Hamilton STEM Academy				
P.E.A.K.	—	—	235	140
Level 1	882	735	193	118
Level 2	2,043	1,699	1,162	134
Level 3	466	482	406	736
Total	3,391	2,916	1,996	1,300
Windsor STEM Academy				
P.E.A.K.	—	—	97	71
Level 1	—	—	304	187
Level 2	—	—	1,580	570
Level 3	—	—	400	171
Total	—	—	2,381	999

Notes: P.E.A.K. = Positive Efforts for Adjustment and Knowledge Interventions. Also, 2019–2020 data are reflective of office of discipline referrals prior to remote learning in response to the pandemic.

CAYCI-SES data also demonstrated improved perceptions of safety, academic motivation, and the overall learning support system in alignment with broader neighborhood revitalization priorities focused on improving education in the Linden community. Our work indicates that UACS can provide a common, localized public space where a variety of resources and information can be housed and

Figure 3: School Engagement during the COVID-19 Pandemic



distributed to students, families, and community members. Additionally, our findings suggest school–family–university partnerships within schools can facilitate the identification of community needs and goals.

We advocate for university assistance, community partnerships, and investments in schools, which are essential to improving economic and social conditions in historically underserved neighborhoods. University personnel, including leaders from the CAYCI-OSU and the two SFCCs, were integral to the success and continued improvement of the OLSI and helped align resources, programs, and services to meet student needs. Efforts also brought partners together to create innovative interventions in response to COVID-19. Notably, these targeted interventions decreased chronic absenteeism rates and attendance at school during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, an outcome not previously explored within the CCM or UACS model parameters. However, the outputs and outcomes described here only begin to articulate the need to build and sustain relationships among schools and universities. We have more work to do to elevate the voices of stakeholders in the Linden community. Leaders working for the city, UWCO, CCS, OSU, and the multiple local partners are committed to listening to community-driven goals and supporting broader social change efforts.

To conclude, we found that the voices of students and families are essential in guiding school improvement efforts and linking school reform efforts to broader neighborhood revitalization initiatives. Data collected by the schools as part of the UACS were aggregated and used to inform broader neighborhoodwide revitalization efforts and city investments in positive youth development programming. Data have also informed future efforts to collect needs assessment data in all the schools in Linden, thereby improving and expanding communitywide planning efforts. We believe the more responsive and supportive the schools became through the collaboration with university, community partners, and city leaders, the more invested youth, families, and community members became in ensuring their neighborhood continued to thrive. After all, relationships form the bedrock of strong schools, and schools contribute to the creation of safe and vibrant neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

Strong connections between schools, families, and neighborhoods are long recognized as crucial to children's success. UACS are well positioned to support neighborhood revitalization initiatives, partner with organizations to address community needs, and respond resourcefully to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The OLSI is a model of how neighborhood revitalization efforts can work in partnership with UACS and vice versa to improve community conditions and strengthen neighborhoods. The collective impact work of OLSI and the school, family, university, and community partners that support this work have all contributed to progress at the student-, family-, school-, and community-level in Linden. CS

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