It Takes a Child to Raise a Village: Using Multi-agency Partnerships to Build Social Capital in Three Ontario Communities

Glenda L. Black, Maria Cantalini-Williams, Susan E. Elliott-Johns, Ron Wideman

Nipissing University

The Learning Partnership (TLP) initiated a Family and Community Engagement Strategy (FACES) initiative in three Ontario communities to foster active and responsive relationships among community partners and enhanced family engagement in transitions to school. A case study research design, grounded in participatory action research, was used to describe the processes and activities undertaken by the three communities. Findings indicate that social capital (Block, 2009) was increased through a unified focus on the needs of children, strong local leadership, collaboration among community partners, and effective strategies embedding FACES into the culture of the community.

Le Partenariat en éducation a initié une stratégie (Family and Community Engagement Strategy – FACES) dans trois communautés en Ontario de sorte à favoriser, d'une part, des relations actives et dynamiques parmi les partenaires de la communauté et, d'autre part, l'implication de la famille dans la transition vers l'école. Suivant le plan de recherche d'une étude de cas reposant sur la participation active, nous avons décrit les démarches et les activités entreprises par les trois communautés. Les résultats indiquent que le capital social (Black, 2009) a augmenté en raison d'une orientation commune concentrée sur les besoins des enfants, un leadership local solide, la collaboration entre les partenaires communautaires et des stratégies efficaces intégrant FACES dans la culture de la communauté.

The purpose of this paper is to present results from a two-year ethnographic study tracking the experiences of three Ontario communities as they developed multi-agency Family and Community Engagement Strategy (FACES) projects to support parents in their children's early learning and readiness for school. The study evaluated the impact of FACES across the three communities based on the perceptions of participating agency representatives and parents. Results are interpreted in light of the literature on multi-agency partnerships (Cheminais, 2009) and social capital (Block, 2009; Putnam, 2000). The Learning Partnership (TLP: http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/), a Canadian organization advancing public education, introduced FACES in 2010. The overall goal was to extend and enrich the *Welcome to Kindergarten™* (WTK) program, which was intended to give parents strategies, resources, and support to prepare their children for a successful first year in school. Parents and children newly registered for school attended a WTK orientation meeting and were provided with a WTK bag of

learning materials for use at home.

TLP introduced the FACES initiative in three Ontario communities—Cornwall, Durham, and Sudbury—with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The goal of the initiative was to foster more active and responsive relationships among community partners, including school boards, and enhance family engagement in children's early learning and transitions to school. Each of the communities worked collaboratively with TLP and independently to develop unique FACES projects that met each community's needs and resources.

Studying the experiences of the three FACES communities is important because multi-agency, integrated services for young children and their families are rapidly becoming part of the new policy landscape in education (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002). Recent emphasis in the United Kingdom on multi-agency partnerships (Cheminais, 2009) contributes to and supports the efficacy of combining community and educational resources for early learning. Cheminais (2009) affirmed the need for increased understanding among educators and community members about multi-agency partnerships, concluding there is an urgent need for research that develops more comprehensive understandings of relationship building in multi-agency collaboration.

The emphasis on multi-agency partnerships and relationship building is critical to the development and use of social capital in communities. Putnam (2000) and Block (2009) argue the well-being of communities depends largely on the level of social capital that exists within them. Both authors describe social capital as the quality of relationships and therefore cohesion that exists among citizens and their ability to identify community goals for collective action.

The research questions used to guide the study were developed in the spring of 2011 in consultation with TLP and the FACES project coordinators and steering committees in each of the three diverse communities. Data collection was conducted by interviewing community partners and parents in two cycles a year apart to assess the processes, activities, and impact of the FACES initiative. Three research questions framed the study:

- What is the perceived impact of the FACES model on early learning and family and community engagement with regard to parents, children, principals, educators, and community partners?

- In what ways have the approaches and processes undertaken in each of the three communities moved toward meeting the FACES goals and deliverables?

- What lessons have the steering committees learned in the implementation of their FACES projects?

Context in the Literature

The study describes the experiences of the three communities as they developed multi-agency FACES partnerships to support family engagement in children's early learning and transitions to school. Anderson, Streelasky, and Anderson (2007) and Wohlwend (2008) demonstrated that the family is a rich resource for supporting children's literacy development across socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Early literacy and numeracy initiatives involving parents and the broader community, have long been recognized as beneficial to young children in their preparation for positive, successful transitions to school (Bouchard, Letain, Bender, & Poulin-Mackey, 2004; Elliott-Johns, 1999; Heath, 1983; Hill, 1989; Mustard & McCain, 1999, 2002; Wideman & Campbell, 2006). Furthermore, Hands (2008) explored the rationale for educators'

cultivation of community involvement in schools and the benefits of collaboration in effective school-community partnerships. These studies attest to the need for further investigation related to multi-agency partnerships in relation to notions of social capital within communities.

Multi-agency partnerships can create and strengthen social networks of parents and professionals. Putnam and Feldstein (2003) maintain that social capital depends on social networks. Block (2009) asserts that social networks operate on norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness. Thus, Block (2009) emphasizes the importance of "bridging social capital," (p. 4) meaning networks that include people from a variety of backgrounds, viewpoints, and priorities to draw communities together in collective, future-oriented action for the common good.

The Ministry of Education in Ontario is currently implementing a *Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program* based largely on the work of Pascal (2009) and Mustard and McCain (1999, 2002). The program promotes the belief that "partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children" (Pascal, 2009, p. 26). To examine how multi-agency services for young children and their families were becoming part of educational policy, Pelletier and Corter (2005) pilot-tested an early childhood integrated services model that sought to meet the needs of diverse families in the Toronto region. Findings underscored the need for teachers to foster and sustain partnerships with families in which the school is the hub of the community. Cheminais (2009) also supported the efficacy of combining community and educational resources in the interests of early learning, stating,

> Multi-agency partnership working is where practitioners from more than one agency work together jointly, sharing aims, information, tasks and responsibilities in order to intervene early to prevent problems arising which may impact on children's learning and achievement. Multi-agency work involves the joint planning and delivery of co-ordinated services that are responsive to children and young people's changing needs (p. 4).

There is evidently an increased call for integrating multi-agency resources in approaches to community-based early learning.

Ways to build greater collaboration and shared leadership through multi-agency partnerships are often reflected in the practices of school leaders and teachers who demonstrate confidence and the collective capacity to make improvements (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Claxton, 2002; Fullan, 2005; Noguera, 2003). George (2003) concluded, "Authentic leaders genuinely desire to serve others through their leadership. They are more … interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference than they are in power, money or prestige for themselves …. They are guided by qualities of the heart, passion and compassion, as they are by qualities of the mind" (p. 12).

Begley (2001) included the capacity for inclusive, creative, and visionary responsiveness to social circumstances in authentic leadership, while Furman (2004) presented a strong argument for an ethic of community as a vehicle for synthesis for much of the current work on valuing the development of local autonomy and conceptualizing processes of community. Furman indicated strategies for system and provincial leadership practices that inspire commitment to community processes are increasingly relevant to 21st century schools. Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan (2002) argued that school improvement results from the interaction of multiple institutions and individuals, rather than the mere replication of reforms developed elsewhere (Snyder, Bolin, &

Zumwalt, 1992). Interaction between institutions and individuals is required because "there is inevitable variation in how complex change initiatives are taken up in different communities" (Corter, Patel, Pelletier, & Bertrand, 2008, p. 792). Johnston and Kirschner (1996) recognized that although general factors may be identified influencing success in partnerships, each partnership is unique and no magic formula for success exists. They recommended studying individual examples of partnership models as a means to identify such general factors.

Relational trust appears to be a significant factor in the success of community-based partnerships (Bryk & Schnieder, 1996a). Writing of their experience leading a multi-agency partnership project, Couture, Delong, and Wideman (1999) reported that trust influenced four factors that affected success. First, there was a "clear and compelling cause and a history of collaboration that pre-dated the partnership" (p. 1). Second, the relationship of the project leaders "was based on shared values, purposes, and collaborative skills that enabled [them] to resolve issues of power and voice" (Couture et al., 1999, p. 1). Third, the leaders "were able to influence decision making in [their] organizations" (Couture et al., 1999, p. 1). Finally, the organizations "were able to cut through red tape to translate their commitment into effective action" Couture et al., 1999, p. 1). In summary, collaborative approaches to facilitating early learning and transitions to school coalesce with literature on multi-agency partnerships and building social capital. These approaches seem dependent on the development and impact of social networks grounded in relational trust and working collectively for the common good.

Theoretical Framework

Social capital theory serves as a lens for examining the findings of the study. Bryk and Schneider (1996a; 1996b) built on conceptualizations of trust under the broader concept of social capital (Fukuyama, 1995; Granovetter, 1985; Loury, 1987; Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993). Coleman (1988, 1990) is also credited with major theoretical work in this regard. Like Putnam and Block (2009), Coleman (1988) identified social capital as a property of relationships within a social system. In essence, the FACES projects involved relationship building among agencies (including schools), parents, and children. Block (2009) cites work by a number of theorists (Alexander, 1979; Bornstein, 2004; Erhard, Jensen, & Zaffron, 2007; Koestenbaum, 1991; McKnight & Kretzmann, 1994; Putnan, 2000) on the development or restoration of community in North American life——a process of possibility—focused conversation involving members of the community to develop vision, purpose, and action. Block (2009) writes, "Social capital is about acting on and valuing our interdependence and sense of belonging. It is the extent to which we extend hospitality and affection to one another" (p. 5).

Relational trust, an important aspect of social capital developed and sustained through positive interactions, is particularly relevant to analyzing the nature of relationships among the participants in this study. Many of the teachers, principals, parents, and other community partners involved contributed in a voluntary capacity. From Bryk and Schneider's (1996a) perspective, relational trust develops and is sustained when individuals are engaged in reciprocal obligations—obligations that are often regarded as being founded on voluntary commitments—held among various members of the collective:

> We have seen in our field studies numerous examples of principals facilitating the engagement of a broad base of community members in a change process. Teachers, parents, and community representatives have freely given much of their time and efforts, and in the course of these activities

have nurtured a relational trust among themselves. (Bryk and Schneider, 1996a, p. 31)

Bryk and Schneider (1996a) frequently observed the work of individuals toward the common good (or shared goals) overriding self-interests, and resulting in environments where "individuals share moral commitment to act in the interests of the collectivity" (p. 31). In more recent work, Bryk and Schneider (2002) also identified relational trust as the "glue" that allows various stakeholders to work together to advance optimal education and welfare of students. Block (2009) argued that the development of relational trust needs to be evident at all stages of a project in order to move participants from individual to collective perspectives. Odem and Wolery (2003) underscored the importance of recognizing, "the critical role adults play as mediators of children's learning" (p. 164). In summary, consistent with the implications of social capital theory, the development of relational trust and effective relationships are critical to the growth of multi-agency partnerships. A central objective of the study was to examine the partnerships and processes involved in promoting early learning and successful transitions to school, resulting from the work of the FACES participants such as families, educators, and the many diverse community partners.

Methods

The two-year research study used a qualitative case study design (Coles, 1993; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The approach was ethnographic, building up a picture of an emerging culture in each case and across cases. Each of the three communities—Cornwall, Durham, and Sudbury—were treated as distinct cases. Participatory action research was used to support the steering committee in each community in its quest to enhance current practices and effectiveness toward FACES goals. Data were collected and analyzed in two cycles: fall 2011 and fall 2012. Informal feedback was provided to the communities after each cycle. Two sources of data were utilized. The largest source of data was the collection of participants' perceptions through individual and focus group interviews. The second-largest source of data was documentation and resources provided by TLP and each of the three communities related to the development of their FACES projects.

The Learning Partnership identified the three communities to the researchers as the only participating communities in the FACES initiative. The number of participants varied among communities and between data collection cycles. Nevertheless, research participants in the three communities included project coordinators, steering committee co-chairs and members, community agency representatives, principals, vice principals, teachers, early childhood educators, and parents who were involved in FACES activities.

Each of the three communities designed its FACES project to meet the unique needs of its locale. By necessity, these differences affected the ways in which data were collected and analyzed. For example, Sudbury organized plans for local action around six neighborhoods. For participants' convenience, interview sessions were conducted at a conference center for the first cycle of interviews and at the coordinator's work site for the second cycle of interviews. The research team scheduled multiple focus group interviews within each neighborhood to maximize accessibility. Cornwall and Durham, on the other hand, organized their plans for FACES around individual schools. Thus, most interviews were conducted at schools selected from the total number participating in FACES. In Durham, five schools were selected for the research. In Cornwall, four were selected to ensure equal representation from both of the participating

district school boards. Schools were selected for the research based on their diversity from one another and their cross-representation of various demographic factors such as location and size of school.

Participants were either interviewed individually (Seidman, 2006, 2012; Kvale, 1996) or in focus groups (Seidman, 2006, 2012), with a semi-structured approach (Jones, 1985; Fontana & Frey, 2000) and a set of guiding questions, which differed slightly for each group. There were a total of 93 individual and group interview sessions, each approximately 45-60 minutes in length, conducted by members of the research team. Across the three communities, 32 individual interviews and 61 focus groups were held with three to six participants in each group. At the conclusion of each individual or focus group interview, participants were invited to contact the researchers by telephone or email with further comments. All individual and focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In general, qualitative researchers are encouraged to design their own methodologies based on general guidelines rather than fixed rules to suit the nature of the study and the resources available (Glesne, 1999; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Since the FACES evaluation was exploratory and inductive (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and in accordance with the concept of emerging design (Glaser, 1992), the methods and questions used in the evaluation varied and evolved due to differences in the three communities and because of the ongoing development of the FACES projects.

Methods of data analysis included the three streams of activity identified by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction (review data, develop codes, code data to summarize, sort, and organize); data display (organize and compress data into matrix); and conclusion drawing/verification (make meaning of the data by noting patterns, interpretations, triangulation of sources). Using interview transcripts and documentation from the various sites and sources, constant comparative analysis of data, which involves breaking the data into discrete components (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Handsfield, 2006) was conducted to derive categories and themes in the data. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn from results in various data displays and verification involved triangulation of data from the multiple sources across all three sites.

Results

Results from the study include a description of each community and an overview of the findings from a cross-case analysis. Since TLP encouraged each of the sites to develop an individual approach to FACES, the section begins with a general description of each FACES project. The three areas identified earlier in this paper as research questions—positive impact on children, families and community partnerships; mobilization of communities to achieve FACES goals; and lessons learned for sustainability of FACES projects—provided the groundwork used to determine the themes found in the cross-case analysis.

Describing Three Approaches to FACES

The data collected from the three communities contributed to rich case studies (Merriam, 1998) reflecting decisions and activities undertaken in each community over a two-year period. The sites were diverse and each was somewhat unique in its approach to the attainment of the FACES goals. Thus, each site description provides a brief overview of the particular community

and how its FACES project was organized.

Cornwall. Cornwall is a small city serving an agricultural area located on the St. Lawrence River in eastern Ontario. Community leaders saw FACES as an opportunity to create closer collaboration among community agencies and district school boards. They perceived FACES as a vehicle for all publicly funded community partners, including the English language public and Roman Catholic school boards, to work collaboratively on a multi-agency project.

Figure 1 describes the organizational structure of the Cornwall FACES project. The project coordinator was an independent consultant who was a long-term resident of the area with substantial experience in project development. The coordinator was not an employee of any of the agencies including the school boards. The two co-chairs of the steering committee were chosen from the two district school boards since it was recognized schools and school personnel would play critical roles in the project. All thirteen elementary schools in the Cornwall area were involved in FACES and numerous community agencies were represented on the steering committee.

Energy and enthusiasm were notable features of FACES activities in Cornwall since the project developed a commitment among diverse community partners from different academic and professional backgrounds. The steering committee maintained an intense meeting schedule with a priority on consensus decision making to ensure every participating agency felt included. Participants grew in their understanding and appreciation of each other's roles and
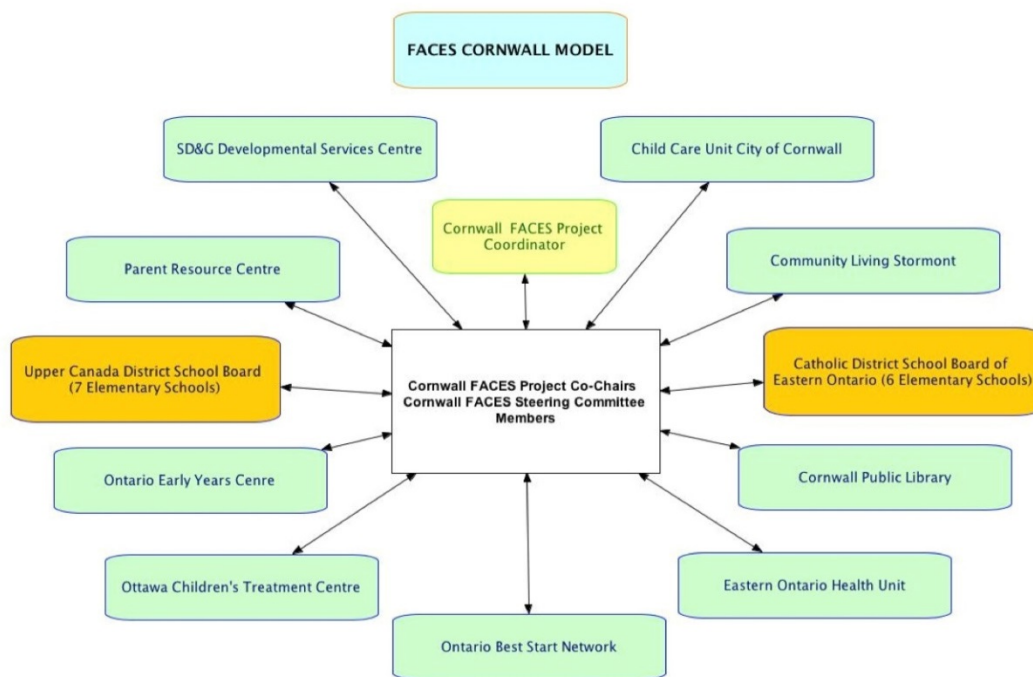

Figure 1. Structure and Organization of FACES in Cornwall

responsibilities. In the first year, community-wide orientation meetings, administrative processes, and resources including planning templates, checklists, and exemplars were developed and fine-tuned by the steering committee. These central events, policies, and procedures supported development of at least two annual local FACES sessions in each of the thirteen schools – sessions that were in addition to the existing *Welcome to Kindergarten™* orientation session.

Each school developed its local FACES sessions based on steering committee requirements. Each session was on a defined topic (e.g., literacy, numeracy, music, healthy eating), and included at least one community partner and activities in which parents worked with their children. During the second year, local FACES sessions continued in the thirteen schools and family kits were developed with resources to empower parents to assist their children in early learning. Work on sustaining FACES intensified in the second year with the intention of embedding FACES in the normal operations of the partner groups.

Durham. Durham is a growing, increasingly urbanized region located in southern Ontario, east of Toronto. In this region, the FACES project was a partnership between the English language public school board and various community agencies. There were twenty-eight schools involved in the FACES initiative. The steering committee represented both school board and community agency perspectives.

Figure 2 describes the organizational structure of the Durham FACES project. The project coordinator in Durham was a retired school administrator from the participating school board with significant experience in the area of early learning. He was contracted to lead the FACES project, supported by two co-chairs of the steering committee – one from the school board and the other from a community partner organization. The steering committee included representatives from various agencies such as the Region of Durham Children's Services, Oshawa Community Health Services, OEYC-YMCA, and school board representatives such as principals and teachers. The data display in Figure 2 depicts the structure and interrelatedness of the community partnerships that contributed both personnel and resources to the FACES project in Durham

Steering committee activities in Durham included the development of terms of reference, objectives, decision-making processes, planning templates, and a plan for sustainability. The steering committee used a consensus process for decision-making, building capacity and shared understanding among its members. Professional development and orientation sessions were planned for all twenty-eight schools and community agencies to orient them to the FACES goals, expectations, and value of partnerships. The local FACES sessions in Durham assumed a variety of formats and time frames in the spring and fall terms. All schools partnered with community agencies offered at least three sessions to families including one *Welcome to Kindergarten™* session. Strategies such as interactive workshops, information booths, and activity centers were provided and focused on topics related to literacy, numeracy, school readiness skills, and healthy eating. Stakeholder groups provided ongoing feedback on the appropriateness of FACES strategies to facilitate school transitions through community partnerships. Sustainability issues were addressed in the second year with joint planning of future initiatives and the introduction of measures to assess long-term success.

Sudbury. The city of Sudbury serves a large and diverse geographical area in northern Ontario and has a historic and economic legacy in mining. The population of Sudbury reflects a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural factors. The city is regionally organized into several neighborhoods. Prior to FACES, Sudbury community agency leaders were already using an

Figure 2. Structure and Organization of FACES in Durham

organizational structure based on the six neighborhoods, or "hubs." Data had been collected by a local community agency showing evidence of a need for an increased emphasis on engagement by marginalized families. Thus, the FACES model in Sudbury was a continuation of established community partnerships and focused on support for marginalized families.

Figure 3 describes the organizational structure of the Sudbury FACES project. The executive director of the Social Planning Council was contracted as project coordinator and took a leading role in shaping the FACES project. The coordinator was supported by a steering committee comprised of representatives of the partnering community agencies including the English public and Catholic district school boards. The committee's two co-chairs were representatives of the public school board and Sudbury and District Public Health. Steering committee members worked with agencies in the six hubs, each of which included a number of schools and there was an emphasis on collaborative problem solving

The Sudbury project demonstrated a community-wide and multi-faceted approach to engaging marginalized families. This work required energy, shared expertise, ongoing commitment, available funding, and effective leadership across diverse neighborhoods. Notable features of Sudbury's ongoing work with FACES included strong local leadership and the sharing of extensive experience in developing community partnerships with shared goals. The steering committee evolved with a clear focus on engaging marginalized families; creative
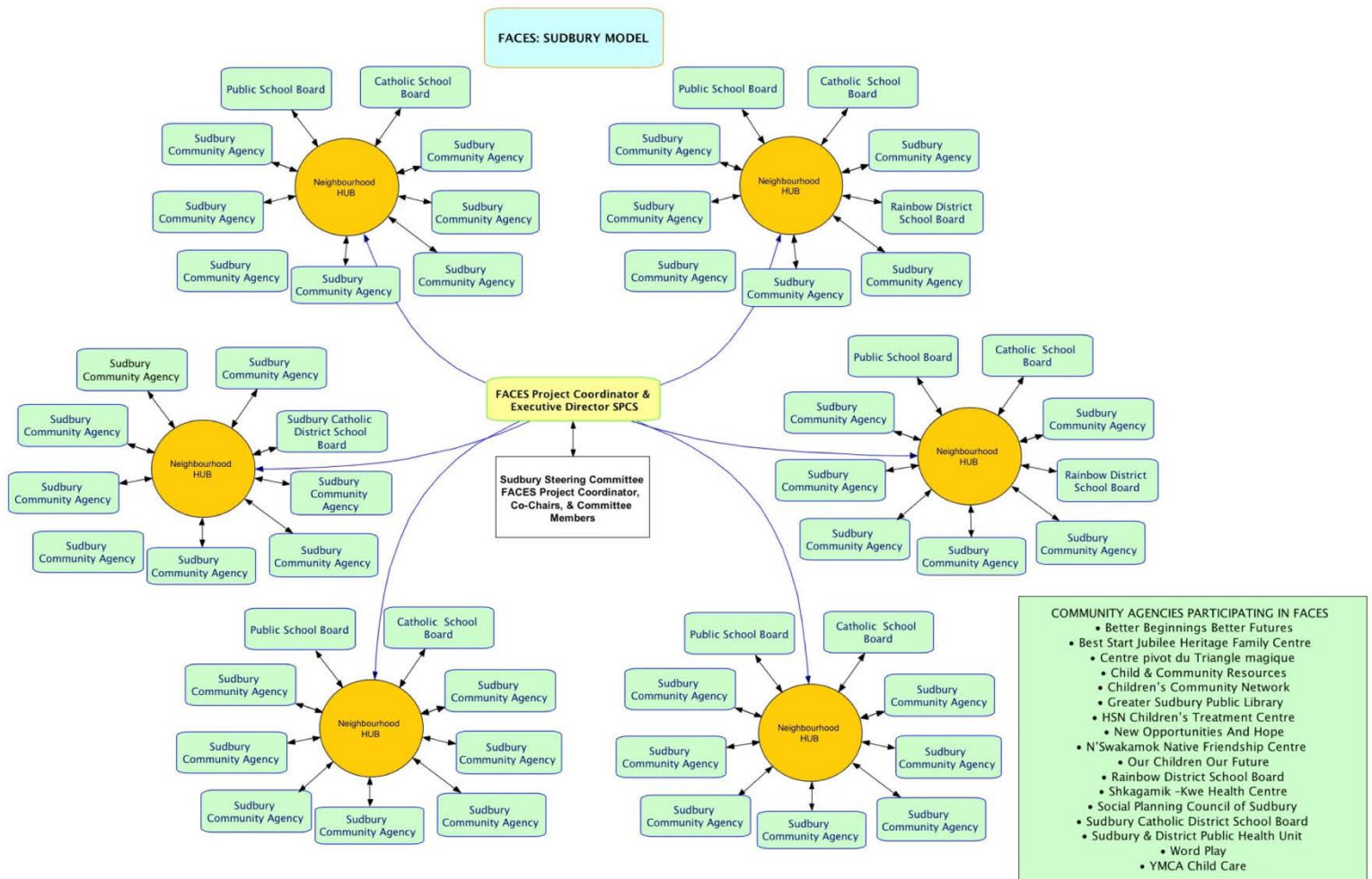
Figure 3. Structure and Organization of FACES in Sudbury April to October 2012

solutions were developed to address ongoing challenges and to nurture sustainable action. This work was further informed and enhanced by the work of the local neighborhood hubs, as led by representatives of the Best Start Network. Three FACES sessions were held in large group format, and included the participation of multiple community agencies from across all six neighborhoods. The sessions focused on developing sensitivity to the issues of marginalized families and strategies with which to support and engage them.

The descriptions of the Cornwall, Durham, and Sudbury communities and their approaches to FACES, demonstrate that all three Ontario communities were geographically and economically diverse. Each FACES project was grounded in multi-agency partnerships comprised of independent community agencies making a choice to work together with a common cause. Each project was designed locally in consultation with TLP to harness community resources and meet community needs, resulting in differences among projects that made each somewhat unique. All three communities developed social capital through local leadership, decision-making processes, and collective action that appeared to work for that community.

Themes from the Cross-Case Analysis

Results are presented and discussed in relation to themes emanating from the three research questions and pertaining to the development of multi-agency partnerships and social capital. Resulting themes reflect the perceived impact of FACES; approaches and processes used to achieve the FACES goals; and lessons learned for the sustainability of FACES.

Impact on Children, Families, and Community Partnerships. Results from the data demonstrated that FACES was perceived to have a positive impact on early learning and community engagement for participating stakeholders: families, school personnel, and community agency partners. The most powerful impact of the FACES initiative appeared to be the development of social capital in terms of relationships and connections among the community partners involved in providing care, social services, and education for young children. One participant said, "No other hands-on project but FACES has ever built such a bridge between the schools and the agencies in our community." Comments in the interview data consistently indicated that participation in FACES supported collective planning and action to transcend the various organizational silos and increase awareness of, and appreciation for, the range of agencies that worked together as community partners. As one participant explained,

> There has been a breaking down of islands that began to happen a few years ago and is continuing with FACES. The community partners can act like islands and so can the teachers. But there is more of a school team now than there used to be.

Most participants spoke passionately about the trusting, professional relationships developed or enhanced during the FACES project among community agency representatives and school staff.

From the interview data, two related accomplishments are highlighted. The first is a growing recognition and articulation of a continuum of care for children and their families, and the collective pursuit of viable approaches to engaging multi-agency partners in meaningful and authentic collective action. There was an increased understanding and greater awareness of shared responsibilities among community partners (including school personnel), as they sought to integrate services for children and their families. One community agency participant explained,

> We can't expect the schools to solve it all; we can't expect healthcare to solve it all. But, together, we can certainly take on a huge chunk of it. In other words, how can we build on those skills that exist among all of us to better serve the families in our community?

During their FACES projects, partnerships moved well beyond individual action toward sharing of high quality services, resources, and curriculum common to both the school and the community agencies.

The second accomplishment highlighted in terms of social capital is that during the FACES projects, a sense of efficacy and involvement had begun to extend beyond the steering committees into the wider community. For example, in communities where local FACES sessions were planned and implemented in participating schools, there was a strong perception that sessions had an efficacious impact on children, parents, and educators in relation to early

learning and transitions to school.

As proposed in the initial FACES goals, and as a result of analysis and synthesis of interview data, participating children seemed to benefit from FACES sessions. Parents, principals, and teachers reported that FACES sessions enabled children attending kindergarten programs to get to know teachers and early childhood educators, to begin to make new friends, and become acquainted with classroom learning activities. Evidence suggested that children who participated in FACES sessions seemed to "hit the ground running" and had smooth transitions to school. In addition, activities experienced in local FACES sessions seemed to have a lasting impact on children. One parent participant said, "Then they wanted to do [the activities again] once they got home and even after school …. She wants to do some of the things they sent home—like the patterning and measuring with beans." Another parent whose child had participated in a nutrition and health-focused FACES session also commented on their child's enthusiasm:

> We buy a lot more strawberries and grapes and so on because … He'll make his own little man and then he'll eat the man so he gets his vegetables and fruits. He just shows me and he's like, "Look Dad. Look. I'm brushing my teeth." It's gone on for two months since the FACES session.

Parents' responses during focus groups indicated they had also benefitted from FACES sessions. Parents provided examples of the positive impact of the FACES sessions on their increased knowledge and skills and awareness of school programs, learning activities, and available community and school resources. They reported benefits such as getting to know the school, teachers, administrators, and service agencies to facilitate their child's early learning and transition to school. They felt more welcome in the school and appreciated connections made with educators and agencies. One parent commented,

> I got to meet people from the community agencies. I knew of and I learned about community agencies I was not already aware of. It was nice to meet the teachers… because the teachers had the stations and we got to see how they were interacting with the kids. The principal participated in the FACES program too. She even did yoga in the gym with us.

Additionally, there seemed to be benefits for educators and school administrators. Educators and principals spoke highly of the FACES sessions as a vehicle for parental engagement and for community collaboration. Educators were enthusiastic about the opportunity to meet and prepare for children who would be in their classes. For example, one educator reinforced the prevalence of parent-child interactions in FACES sessions by exclaiming, "I'm coming in and [seeing] ENGAGEMENT! The parent is sitting down with their child… is actually interacting physically with their child."

Educators were also thankful for the partnership with community agencies and believed that participating families benefitted from the experience of school-based sessions. One educator reported, "The community partners are … happy to be in the schools. The teachers and the administrators are happy to be more involved with the community agencies because they often don't have time to go to the actual physical places."

In summary, responses from participants strongly indicated that FACES projects in each community had a strong impact on children, families, educators, and community agency representatives involved in the sessions. With an initial focus on easing the transitions of

children entering school, through FACES, participants gained a greater awareness of each other's viewpoints and enhanced their familiarity and understanding of early learning programs.

Approaches and Processes to Achieve FACES Goals. Approaches and processes undertaken in each of the three communities showed similarities and differences that contributed to the development of multi-agency partnerships and social capital in that community. In all three cases, there was evidence that communities were mobilized by a collective concern for strengthening early learning and transitions to school; a belief that FACES would contribute to collective action; strong local leadership and collaboration with TLP; shared trust and decision-making; tailored professional development activities; and the desire to meet contextual demands. Differences among the three communities included leadership styles of the participants, the interpretations of the expectations and timelines to be addressed within the FACES initiative, and the use of a school-based versus a hub-based approach to local action. The overall goal of FACES was to foster a more active and responsive relationship among community partners including school boards to enhance family engagement in children's early learning and transitions to school. The FACES goals were achieved, in that there were concerted commitments in all three communities to approaches such as shared leadership, creative partnerships, targeted professional development activities, and contextual adaptations to address outcomes. As one steering committee member shared, "It's definitely been a reflective process. It's been collaborative; there's been a lot of collaborative talk and people asking respectfully, 'I don't understand what you mean?'" Approaches and processes for the long term success of FACES included the examination and enhancement of sustainable resources, a review of time and funding requirements, and increased co-planning and co-delivery of community-wide and local FACES sessions.

The development of strong local leadership for FACES projects was undertaken at each site. The nature of local leadership in all three communities demonstrated a desire to respond to specific community needs and included the need to identify collaborative goals for collective action among partners (e.g., schools and independent agencies). Leadership took different forms in each site, depending on each community's perceived needs, but the project coordinator's role was critical to the success of projects in all three sites. Each of the coordinators exemplified the qualities of a visionary leader with varying knowledge, skills, and experience relevant to the community context. For example, one participant credited the coordinator's skill in working to identify how FACES fit the community, "It's been kind of a muddy road to figure out …. but once we figured out where we were going things got a lot clearer." In short, project coordinators were instrumental in galvanizing and/or supporting operationalization of steering committee relationship building and decision-making.

The ongoing development of trust-based partnerships, and shared decision-making within steering committees was also critical in working toward FACES goals. In each community, steering committee members reported on their dedication to the project and enthusiasm for the goals of the FACES model as interpreted in their respective communities. One steering committee member explained, "I think it's been built based on people's common goals and an openness to listen." Another said, "I think we all feel comfortable speaking up." Purposeful selection of steering committee members and co-chairs, and the development of terms of reference for their work, consistently reflected the intent to integrate the efforts of various school board representatives and social service agencies. Effective communications and responsive meeting processes contributed to enhanced mutual respect and productivity. Steering committee meetings included collaborative dialogue and opportunities for sharing

multiple perspectives. During various stages of the projects, sub-committees continued to establish and address specific tasks and projects.

The provision of focused professional learning sessions for various individuals also yielded positive results. The nature of these opportunities varied in each of the three communities, but the common element was the intent to develop professional learning, mutual understandings, and shared knowledge among participants. Participants reported community-wide sessions were very useful when they targeted specific topics, were held in local sites, provided tangible examples, and allowed substantial time for interaction and co-planning among attendees. The collaborative efforts of various partners in developing and delivering sessions contributed to mutual appreciation and shared understandings across agencies. As one participant said,

> We've been used to working in silos but it feels like we're coming to a place as a community, as agencies, and even ministries, of seeing the 'bigger picture,' which I think is going to help us … It's not about who we are and whom we represent, as much as how we may be responsive? How do we best use the resources that we currently have?

Finally, a positive approach taken in each site was to customize the FACES project to meet perceived contextual needs of each community. As a result, the three sites interpreted FACES goals in similar, but also different ways, and proceeded accordingly in consultation with TLP. One participant explained, "We discussed how we're going to engage marginalized families, and realized we needed a framework." The direction from TLP was empowering in this regard and encouraged local diversification. For example, TLP provided broad parameters for FACES that accommodated both school-based and community hub-based models. In this way, the contextual knowledge and perceived needs of each community were respected and different approaches were appreciated.

Local FACES sessions held in schools varied in content and timing, and participation was designed to meet perceived needs of families within each school community. There was considerable diversity in the level and nature of community partner participation and in the degree of family involvement in each FACES session. In most cases, the schools hosted sessions, but there were examples of local FACES sessions being held in community-agency locations such as the public library. Innovative, responsive approaches to the achievement of FACES goals were perceived to have a positive impact on social capital in the community. For example, as one community partner suggested, "It started to have us really seeing ourselves (in schools) as part of the community groups … We've talked about this for a long time, but it's been hard to actualize."

It was evident that the goals of FACES projects were met in substantial measure by approaches taken in all three sites. In summary, the development of multi-agency collaboration, with a focus on effective family and community engagement strategies to meet the needs of the respective communities, created social capital as demonstrated by shared leadership, common goals, and collective action. The sustainability of FACES remains critical. One steering committee member stated,

> Right now FACES is new and bright and shiny. The first years of a project are usually like that. But later, we're going to need to sustain engagement and you have to fit well into the big puzzle of what the community is interested in and focused upon.

At the completion of the study, each of the FACES communities was considering plans for sustainability. Given sufficient funding, time, and resources, FACES projects will most likely continue in all three communities with increasing success and positive results over time.

Lessons Learned for Sustainability of FACES Projects. Learning among steering committee members focused on processes of multi-agency projects and social capital development including the importance of shared vision, collaborative inquiry, and consensus-based decision-making processes; responsive and respected local leadership; clear project parameters and success criteria; sufficient human and material resources; relevant catalysts for capacity building; and a growing appreciation of the complexities of outreach to children and families. An overall lesson learned was that common vision, shared inquiry, and consensus decision-making was fundamental to collaborative work in multi-agency partnerships and essential to collective action. One committee member said,

> The decision-making process takes a bit more time. But at the same time, it's…going to make sure that this project is sustainable and will be here in five years' time. Without universal "buy-in" to the ongoing decision-making, the danger is that agencies will begin to fall away.

The task of developing shared vision was complex because representatives of various agencies had differing academic and professional backgrounds, roles, and responsibilities that "everyone needs to understand, respect, and view in perspective." It was judged that some elements of "being on the same page" predated the FACES initiative and that communities adopted FACES as a means to translate that shared vision into collaborative inquiry and collective action. For example, in one community, agency representatives said they came together to participate in FACES, because they believed that "family and community engagement are integral to effective transitions to school" and that "more needed to be done to support family and community engagement in early learning." As FACES progressed, it was observed that collaborative multi-agency vision, planning, and action was beginning to thrive not only in the steering committees, but also in participating local school areas/hubs. One steering committee member said, "One thing that I've learned is that even though our organizations had similar wants and needs for the community and our children—we needed something like FACES to get together for that to actually happen …."

A second important learning was that responsive and respected local leadership was pivotal to the success of each FACES project. FACES coordinators and steering committee members were highly respected within the various agencies as well-organized, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable leaders. Success was consistently attributed to skills and knowledge of the project coordinators, for example, as shared by a steering committee member in their ability to "pull it all together" and to motivate the involvement of others. Shared and supportive local leadership collectively empowered members to assume responsibility for the development of their projects. As one participant noted, "We're all volunteering our time so I think we're pretty committed to why we're here. And when we're here, we're pretty committed to getting the things done we need to get done."

A third learning was related to the breadth of boundaries for FACES projects and the emergence of project parameters and success criteria. The Learning Partnership left the term FACES open to broad local interpretation. This openness enabled local leaders to develop a range of FACES initiatives in the various communities. While the provision of broad boundaries was helpful during the developmental stage of the FACES concept, some groups indicated a

desire for clearer criteria to determine the success of their work. A steering committee member said,

> One of the foundations that we spent a lot of time on right at the beginning was our terms of reference and narrowing down the wording to make sure, as much as possible, that it reflected the philosophies of each group represented.

Efforts aimed at clarifying FACES at each site included developing project parameters, success criteria, and frameworks or tools for evaluating progress. Participants wanted to be allowed the scope to meet local needs, but also often wished for one or more "exemplars" that would describe ideal approaches to local FACES sessions.

There was a cluster of learnings pertaining to the contributions of human and material resources toward sustainability. Human resources included the project coordinator, co-chairs, and steering committee members, as well as educators and community agency partners planning and facilitating local FACES sessions. Material resources included funds for local and community-wide FACES sessions, communication tools, and appropriate materials to distribute to families. One perceived challenge for the three sites was lack of sufficient professional time and structures for co-planning and co-facilitating local FACES sessions. School staff members felt stretched because of their many other professional commitments despite some provision for supply teacher coverage. Community partners were also heavily booked because of the number of local sessions they were asked to co-plan and co-lead. In short, those individuals working on FACES "had their own responsibilities in their own organizations, and the FACES work tended to be an "add-on to their regular duties" as employees. A second challenge was the provision of sufficient, ongoing professional learning opportunities. This was considered necessary to ensure continued "buy-in and clarity of purpose" among participants, counteracting periodic staffing changes in schools and other community agencies.

Catalysts for capacity building were identified related to social capital. The capacity for inter-agency collaboration was enhanced through the rich working relationships that developed within steering committees. One participant went so far as to say, "Everything we've accomplished has been the result of the relationships we've developed with each other." Enhanced relationships enabled members to grow beyond their usual silos of association toward a more interactive, interdependent stance by sharing and appreciating each other's contributions, exploring one another's assumptions and challenging one another's thinking in a collegial climate. One commented, "We're challenging one another and our assumptions. A lot of assumptions are put on the table and there's a sense of comfort now in the steering committee that we can challenge assumptions and also ask questions." Another said, "It's been so important for us to step out of our own shoes and consider the perspectives of others and to recognize that maybe I don't know it all." In addition, participants' dedication to benefitting the children and families they served, promoted both the "family" and "community" components of engagement. In all three sites, participants indicated they learned a great deal about their own communities as a result of the forum FACES created.

Despite powerful positive feedback from participating parents, one very important lesson learned, or relearned, in all three sites was that engaging parents and young children is a complex and challenging endeavor given the busy lives led by today's families. In local FACES sessions, authentic, accessible, and meaningful experiences were found to be essential for involving families. Many parents did not see FACES sessions to have the same immediacy as the

Welcome to Kindergarten™ program; thus, attendance tended to be lower in subsequent sessions. Given time, attendance at FACES sessions is likely to increase as parents become more familiar with FACES goals and importance in terms of children's early learning and transitions to school. One principal concluded,

> We want to get to a place where parents are coming to the school asking for FACES sessions and how to support their children's learning. We're building toward that point but we're a long way from it yet in many places. We're still having to go out and lure parents into the meetings.

Some of the strategies used by FACES organizers to promote attendance at school-based sessions included multiple and personalized invitations, flexible scheduling, the provision of child care, and gradual, session-by-session distribution of learning materials for use at home. Evidently, there is not one best approach engage parents; instead, schools and neighbourhood hubs assessed their community needs and used a range of strategies to reach out to families.

Discussion

The three FACES communities involved in the study were able to develop and sustain multi-agency partnerships involving a wide variety of independent organizations including schools. Agency representatives were able to move beyond their individual silos to identify common goals and engage in collective action for the common good. These cases provided evidence of the efficacy of combining community and educational resources in the interests of early learning (Cheminais, 2009; Datnow et al., 2002). They also exemplified the potential power of bridging social capital (Block, 2009) to create networks of professionals and parents (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Strong local initiative and leadership were evidenced to develop projects that not only met TLP's goals for FACES, but also addressed individual needs and resources in each community. The participants in the FACES communities provided evidence that the essence of multi-agency partnerships must indeed be local, if provincial or national education initiatives are to be effective and sustainable.

A key accomplishment in the communities was the development of relational trust among representatives of various agencies and extending increased trust into the broader community. The experience of developing relational trust within the steering committees supports Block's (2009) conclusion that relational trust is critical to the development of social capital. Block (2009) indicates that the development of relational trust needs to be evident at all stages of a project to move participants from individual to collective perspectives. Bryk and Schneider (2002) also argued that relational trust is the "glue" that allows various stakeholders to work together to advance optimal education and welfare of students. The development of mutual trust and respect appeared foundational to shared decision-making, the establishment of common goals, and collective action within the steering committees and all of the community partners involved in FACES.

Putnam and Feldstein (2003) regard social capital as "social networks, norms or reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness" and go on to underscore the value of social networks for those directly involved "as well as for bystanders" (as cited in Block, 2009, p. 17). The relevance of social capital theory to the FACES research became clear as each of the three projects incorporated processes of community building among agencies that included schools and families. Furthermore, consistent with the implications of social capital theory (Bryk &

Schneider, 1996a, 2002) and, specifically, the development of relational trust, the most significant impact during the first two years of the FACES initiative was the development of effective relationships and innovative connections among community agencies. The partners worked toward the common goal of providing care, social services, and mediating education (Odem & Wolery, 2003) for young children and their families. Social capital was enhanced by the successful development of relational trust within each project. In addition, the latitude given by TLP in the development of each of the three sites' projects promoted collaborative inquiry, shared understanding, and collective action (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009) in working toward the common goals of the FACES initiatives. Community agencies began moving toward increased interdependency as partners (Cheminais, 2009).

The results of this study are highly congruent with previous research regarding the potential power of multi-agency partnerships to support early learning and transitions to school (Barclay & Boone, 1995; Christenson, 2003; Datnow et al., 2002; Glickman, et al., 2009; Yau, 2009). Across the many examples of success related to FACES, there was strong evidence that newly-formed or enhanced relationships enabled community partners to learn from the experience of co-planning and co-delivering sessions for children and their families (Murphy & Pushor, 2004).

While there was evidence that parents and children who participated in FACES benefitted from the experience, similar to Christenson (2003), there was also a persistent concern among educators and community agency representatives about the proportion of parents who did not participate in the FACES sessions. This suggests rich potential for ongoing activity in each project to invite more and more parents into the partnership. As Block (2009) explains, "Social fabric is created one room at a time. It is formed from small steps that ask, 'Who do we want in the room?' and 'What is the new conversation that we want to occur?'" (p. 11).

Similarities and differences among the three communities were notable in their interpretations of the expectations and timelines to be addressed. In all three cases, there was evidence strategies developed by each of the three communities were mobilized by a collective concern for strengthening early learning and transitions to school for all children. Overall, valuable learning resulted from FACES-related initiatives in three communities. Lessons learned ranged from an overriding need to develop a shared vision to the practical aspects of the delivery of FACES sessions. This result is consistent with Cheminais' (2009) research that showed multi-agency partnerships need skillfully designed tools to assist in their work as they develop shared vision, common goals, and undertake collective action for a continuum of care (Glickman et al., 2009). In all three sites, there was a process in place that enabled the development of a shared vision among participants.

Specific results from the research reported here cannot be generalized to other community groups or specific sites. The results of this study are specific to the purposes of the research, the participants, their social contexts, and the periods of time during which the interviews took place, because of the diversity of the three communities and the range of interviewees (Taylor & Bogden, 1984). However, it is possible that patterns and themes that emerged in the analysis of data regarding multi-agency partnerships in these three communities may be applicable to other settings.

Patterns and themes in the data from this study may also reappear in similar studies. Further research could replicate this study over a longer period of time, with a greater number of participants and communities to determine persistent effects of the FACES initiative. Additionally, further studies may use other measures, which are intended to directly assess

school success/achievement to determine the impact of FACES. Such research could explore whether perceived results of participation in FACES were sustained by children, families, schools, and community partners.

Implications

While the FACES initiative was considered widely beneficial to participating parents and children, community partners acknowledged that there was still more to be accomplished together. Long-term sustainability will depend on maintaining multi-agency relationships essential to ongoing efforts toward accomplishing the FACES goals. Knowledge mobilization strategies are essential to capitalize on and share new understandings gained from these three initial FACES projects. As Johnston and Kirschner (1996) found, studying individual examples of community partnerships is a means of identifying more general principles governing success.

The research demonstrated what can be accomplished and suggests the concept of FACES merits further support and development. Promoting increased parent engagement is complex. Therefore, policymakers, community agencies, and other education stakeholders are encouraged to continue to promote and support the concept of FACES over the long term to foster understandings of the importance of family and community engagement for healthy child development and school success. Initiating and supporting FACES projects may well be a catalyst for community building in other diverse communities (Block, 2009).

The FACES concept is sufficiently powerful that it should not be limited to the early years, but could be expanded throughout the elementary panel of school systems to support community partnerships across an entire school and build a norm of engagement in accepted educational practice. Community collaboration is widely accepted as an essential feature of social capital (Block, 2009) and family engagement for school success (Cheminais, 2009; Datnow et al., 2002). Congruent with the recent emphasis in the United Kingdom on multi-agency partnerships, the FACES research provides evidence that schools and community agencies can work together to facilitate transitions in the educational system. However, engaging multi-agency partnerships and social capital to support change in approaches to education that benefit young children and their families will require recognition of differences that reflect *local* needs, resources, program planning, and integrated services.

The emphasis on children's early learning and transitions to school in FACES projects brought together multi-agency partners in community building processes that clearly increased social capital. There was an emphasis on increased relational trust in which participants moved beyond their silos to more inclusive views of goals, methods, and community responsibility in nurturing the development of children and their families. The results suggest that the proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," may have a corollary: "It takes a child to raise a village."

Acknowledgements

References

Alexander, C. (1979). *The timeless way of building.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Anderson, J., Streelasky, J., & Anderson, T. (2007). Representing and promoting family literacy on the

World Wide Web: A critical analysis. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 53*(2), 143–156.

Barclay, K., & Boone, E. (1995). *Building a three way partnership: The leader's role in linking school, families and community.* Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic.

Begley, P. T. (2001). In pursuit of authentic school leadership practices. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 4*(4), 353–366.

Block, P. (2009). *Community: The structure of belonging.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koeler.

Bornstein, D. (2004). *How to change the world: Social entrepreneurs and the power of new ideas.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bouchard, D., Letain, A., Bender, S., & Poulin-Mackey, L. (2004). *For the love of reading: Books to build lifelong readers.* Victoria, BC: Orca.

Bryk, A. S. & Schneider, B. (1996). *Social trust: A moral resource for school improvement.* (Draft Paper). Chicago, IL: Centre for School Improvement. Retrieved from http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/socialtrust_amoralresourceforschoolimpro vement.pdf

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (1996). *Social trust: A moral resource for school improvement.* Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Educational Research.

Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Cheminais, R. (2009). Effective multi-agency partnerships: Putting every child matters into practice. London, England: Sage.

Christenson, S. L. (2003). The family-school partnership: An opportunity to promote the learning competence of all students. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*(4), 454–482.

Claxton, G. (2002). *Building learning power.* Bristol, England: Henleaze House.

Coles, R. (1993). *The call of service.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology 94*(Spec. Ed.), S94–120.

Coleman, J. (1990). *Foundations of social theory.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Corter, C., Patel, S., Pelletier, J., & Bertrand, J. (2008). The Early Development Instrument as an evaluation tool for school-based, integrated services for young children and parents: The Toronto First Duty Project. *Early Education and Development, 19*(5), 773–794.

Couture, M., Delong, J., & Wideman, R. (1999). What we have learned by building a collaborative partnership. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership, 3*. Retrieved from http://www.ucalgary.ca/iejll/couture_delong_wideman

Datnow, A., Hubbard, L., & Mehan, H. (2002). *Extending educational reform: From one school to many.* London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Elliott-Johns, S. E. (1999). *The home handbook: Home & school literacy partnerships.* Toronto, ON: Prentice Hall Ginn.

Erhard, W., Jensen, M., & Zaffron, S. (2007). *Integrity: Where leadership begins – A new model of integrity* (PDF File of PowerPoint Slides). Barbados Group Working paper No. 07-03. Retrieved from http://ssrn.com/abstract=983401

Fontana, A. & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd. Ed). pp. 649-656. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: Social virtues and the creation of prosperity.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Furman, G. (2004). The ethic of community. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(2), 215–235.

George, W. W. (2003). *Authentic leadership: Rediscovering the secrets to creating lasting value.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Glaser, B. G. (Ed.). (1992) *Basics of grounded theory analysis: Emergence versus forcing.* Mill Valley,

CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* (2nd. ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2009). *The basic guide to supervision and instructional leadership.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action, social structure and embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology, 91*(3), 481– 510.

Hands, C. M. (2008). Circles of influence: The role of school-community partnerships in the character formation and citizenship of secondary school students. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 54*(1), 50–64.

Handsfield, L. (2006). Being and becoming American: Triangulating habitus, field, and literacy instruction in a multilingual classroom. *Language & Literacy, 8*(2), 1–26.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Hill, M. W. (1989). *Home: Where reading and writing begin.* New York: Scholastic.

Johnston, M., & Kirschner, B. (Eds.). (1996). The challenges of school university collaboration (Special Issue). *Theory into Practice, 35*(3), 146–148.

Jones, S. (1985). Depth interviewing. In R. Walker (Ed.), *Applied qualitative research* (pp. 45–55). Aldershot, UK: Gower.

Koestenbaum, P. (1991). *Leadership: The inner side of greatness.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kvale (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Loury, G. C. (1987). Why should we care about group inequality? *Social Philosophy and Policy, 5*(1), 249– 271.

McKnight, J., & Kretzmann, J. (1994). *Building communities from the inside out.* Centre for Urban Affairs, Evanston, IL. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Murphy, B., & Pushor, D. (2004). Parent marginalization, marginalized parents: Creating a place for parents on the school landscape. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 50*(3), 221–235.

Mustard, J. F., & McCain, M.N. (1999). *Early years study: Reversing the real brain drain.* Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario

Mustard, J. F., & McCain, M. N. (2002). *The early years study, Three years later.* Toronto, ON: Publications Ontario.

Noguera, P. (2003). *City schools and the American dream.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Odom, S., & Wolery, M. (2003). A unified theory of practice in early intervention /early childhood special education. *The Journal of Special Education, 37*(3), 164–173.

Pascal, C. (2009). With our best future in mind: Implementing early learning in Ontario—A report to the Premier by the special advisor on early learning. Ontario Ministry of Education. Retrieved from http://www.oeyc.ca/pdf%20files/Charles%20Pascal%20Report.pdf

Pelletier, J., & Corter, C. (2005). Toronto first duty: Integrating kindergarten, childcare, and parenting support to help diverse families connect to schools. *Multicultural Education, 13*(2), 30–37.

Putnan, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revisal of American community.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Putnam, R., & Feldstein, L. (2003). *Better together: Restoring the American community.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Putnam, R., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. Y. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Savin-Baden, M. & Howell Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Snyder, J., Bolin, F., & Zumwalt, K. (1992). Curriculum implementation. In P. W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum: a project of the American Educational Research Association.* New York, NY: Macmillan.

Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings.* New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum: A project of the American Educational Research Association* (pp. 402–435). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Wideman, R., & Campbell, T. (2006). *The Welcome to Kindergarten Program in the North Bay area: An initial evaluation.* Research report for The Learning Partnership. Retrieved from www.thelearningpartnership.ca

Wohlwend, K. (2008). Kindergarten as nexus of practice: A mediated discourse analysis of reading, writing, play, and design in an early literacy apprenticeship. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(4), 332–334.

Yau, M. (2009). *Parenting and family literacy centres: Making a difference beyond early school readiness.* Etobicoke, ON: Toronto District School Board.

Yin, K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glenda L. Black is currently an Assistant Professor at Nipissing University where she teaches courses in the pre-service and graduate programs in Education.
http://www.nipissingu.ca/about-us/people/Pages/Glenda-Black.aspx

Maria Cantalini-Williams is an Associate Professor in the Schulich School of Education, Nipissing University, Brantford campus. Maria has taught pre-service consecutive and concurrent education courses and at the graduate level. Her research areas of focus are early childhood education and teacher development.

Susan E. Elliott-Johns is currently an Associate Professor at Nipissing University where she teaches courses in the pre-service and graduate programs in Education.
http://www.nipissingu.ca/about-us/people/Pages/Susan-Elliott-Johns.aspx

Ron Wideman is currently Professor of Education at Nipissing University where he teaches courses at the graduate level. Ron is Director of the Nipissing University Centre for the Study of Leadership and Ethics (http://csle.nipissingu.ca/) and Co-editor in Chief of the peer reviewed Journal of Authentic Leadership in Education (http://csle.nipissingu.ca/jale.htm).