Leadership for Collaboration: Exploring How Community School Coordinators Advance the Goals of Full-Service Community Schools

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This article examines the leadership roles and practices of community school coordinators (CSCs) in three full-service community schools (FSCSs). FSCSs are designed to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of historically underserved students through expanded learning opportunities, integrated service provision, family engagement, and community development. Drawing on the concepts of cross-boundary and relational leadership, and data from a qualitative multiple case study, the article describes how the CSCs, licensed social workers, intentionally used communication as a tool to build trusting relationships with and among principals, teachers, families, and community partners. These cross-boundary relationships, in turn, facilitated the identification, maintenance, and distribution of resources and services that advanced the case schools' goals for student success and community development. The study thus underscores the importance of CSCs' cross-boundary and relational leadership for creating the partnerships essential for effective FSCSs.

KEY WORDS: *community school coordinator; cross-boundary leadership; full-service community schools; relational leadership; relational trust*

First conceptualized and practiced in the 19th century (Benson, Harkavy, Johanek, & Puckett, 2009; Richardson, 2009), full-service community schools (FSCSs)—also referred to as community schools, full-service extended schools, and school-based integrated services centers (see, for example, Cummings, Dyson, & Todd, 2011)—have reemerged as a holistic reform to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of historically underserved students (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005; Galindo & Sanders, 2019; Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). Numbering about 5,000 in the United States (Blank & Villarreal, 2015), FSCSs are structured to remove barriers to learning by optimizing the resources of their surroundings (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Galindo, Sanders, & Abel, 2017). While no two FSCSs are exactly alike, organizational strategies to achieve this goal reflect established theories of child development and school success (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

First, recognizing that different dimensions of students' well-being affect their learning, FSCSs coordinate the delivery of vital health, mental health, extended learning, and other social services (Cummings et al., 2011; Sanders & Hembrick-Roberts, 2013). Services are provided at or near FSCS sites during school and nonschool hours, and are determined by student, family, and community needs, available resources, and years of reform implementation (Blank & Villarreal, 2015). In addition, because students learn and develop within "overlapping spheres of influence" (Epstein, 2018), FSCSs seek to build strong connections with their families and communities (Dryfoos, 2002). Central to the effectiveness of FSCSs, therefore, is their commitment to overcoming traditional school norms of isolation (Smrekar & Mawhinney, 1999) and creating, expanding, and capitalizing on networks of families, educators, and community partners (Sanders, 2016). Accordingly, FSCSs need leaders who can facilitate cross-boundary relationships.

CROSS-BOUNDARY AND RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Cross-boundary leaders are those with the capacity to develop trusting relationships with individuals and groups across diverse identities and professional boundaries (Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006). Cross-boundary leadership is closely aligned with *relational leadership*, defined as a social process through which

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individuals accomplish mutually valued organizational goals (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Murrell, 1997). At the core of both types of leadership is the need to manage complex human interactions (Cranston, 2011; Dyer, 2001; Uhl-Bien, 2006); however, cross-boundary leadership emphasizes the importance of managing these interactions among individuals inside and outside the organization (Blank & Villarreal, 2015; Ernst & Yip, 2009). To be successful, cross-boundary and relational leaders must be reflexive practitioners (conscious of their own role, position, and identity within an organization); encourage open dialogue; and establish organizational processes that acknowledge and respect different perspectives (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Through such practices, cross-boundary and relational leaders are able to forge trusting relationships with and among diverse organizational actors and those external to the organization but critical to the realization of its goals and objectives. An increasing number of studies have explored the role of principals as relational leaders within FSCSs (see, for example, Jean-Marie, Ruffin, Burr, & Horsford, 2010; Sanders, 2018; Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2014). However, fewer studies have examined the relational practices of community school coordinators (CSCs).

CSC LEADERSHIP IN FSCSS

Although limited, recent research has identified CSCs as important leaders within FSCSs. For example, in a mixed-methods case study of four community schools, Anderson-Butcher, Paluta, Sterling, and Anderson (2018) found that by being "positive," "persistent," and "patient," CSCs helped to facilitate reform implementation in the face of turf and ownership challenges. Other qualitative case studies of effective FSCSs have also found that CSCs, working closely with principals, perform a variety of leadership roles, including identifying community partners, vetting partners to ensure alignment with school goals and needs, terminating partnerships deemed ineffective, and actively pursuing grants and in-kind donations to sustain partnership activities (Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, 2016). In its standards for the infrastructure of FSCSs, the Coalition for Community Schools outlines additional leadership roles for CSCs. These include serving as representatives on site-based leadership teams; facilitating alignment of school, family, and community resources; supporting school and partnership data collection, sharing, and analysis; and promoting close communication among key stakeholders (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017). Yet, while the literature has begun to document *what* CSCs do as leaders within FSCSs, less has been written about *how* they carry out such leadership. This article fills the existing gap by elevating the voices and experiences of three CSCs. Specifically, drawing on the interrelated concepts of cross-boundary and relational leadership, the article describes how the CSCs helped to realize the purpose and promise of FSCSs in an urban district in the mid-Atlantic United States.

METHOD

Research Design and School Selection

This article draws on data collected from the three schools (School A, School B, and School C) participating in a qualitative multiple case study on the implementation and leadership of FSCSs. Consistent with a constructivist approach (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), the study was designed to understand conditions influencing the effectiveness of FSCSs from the perspectives of those involved in their implementation. The three FSC case schools were purposefully selected to provide both a range and depth of insights (for an in-depth discussion of the use of purposeful selection in qualitative case studies, see Merriam, 1988). School A was recommended for the study by local community school leaders and practitioners. Because of the breadth, quality, and duration of its integrated services program, the school was selected for intense, extended data collection. Schools B and C were recommended by the CSC at School A based on her intimate knowledge of their programs and the study's objectives. After meetings with their CSCs, these schools were also asked to participate in the study because they clearly operated within a FSCS framework and had made noticeable progress on key goals for students and families.

Setting

School A is an elementary school serving approximately 200 students in grades K–5, and has been a community school since 2006. Data collection at School A began in July 2011 and continued through December 2012. School B is a high school serving approximately 300 low-income, racially

and ethnically diverse students. Formerly a junior high school, School B was at risk of closure because of low performance. Instead, the school, which had recently begun to establish strong connections with community-based service providers, was converted to a "turnaround" full-service community high school in 2010. Data collection at School B began in April 2012 and continued through December, providing the researchers with opportunities to compare and contrast findings across the two schools. School C is a specialized high school focused on the visual arts and serves about 500 students. Since 2010, School C has been a citywide turnaround FSCS. Targeted data collection consisted of limited observations and semistructured interviews with a reduced number of school administrators, faculty, staff, and community partners during May and June 2012. This site provided the researchers with a final opportunity to confirm and disconfirm themes emerging from the study (see Table 1 for student demographic data for each school).

Although serving students in different low-income communities and at different grade levels, the schools shared a common coordinating agency, had principals who were considered highly effective within the school district, and served ethnically and racially diverse students. They also had collaborative leadership structures (for example, school–family councils, which are leadership teams comprising administrators, teachers, parents, and community members who work together to develop and oversee the implementation of schoolwide plans to improve students' academic performance); had dedicated FSCS staff (for example, CSCs and out-of-school time learning coordinators); and offered a variety of programs and services to meet some of the identified needs of their students, families, and surrounding communities (see Table 1 for a brief description of major services provided at each school). Although none of the case schools had fully realized their goals for students' learning at the close of the study, they had seen improvements in a variety of outcomes, including student attendance, behavior, and academic achievement, and also higher levels of family engagement in school activities (see Table 2 for a comparison of student and family engagement data between the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 school years). The case schools' similarities and differences provided a basis for comparative analysis, but also introduced limitations to the study's findings, as discussed later in the article.

Data Collection

After obtaining institutional review board approval and principals' consent, data collection first took place at School A, then at Schools B and C. Data collection included interviews, school observations, and document review. Protocols were developed to guide the semistructured interviews and to ensure that comparable data were collected for similar respondents across schools. Interview data included one student focus group and 52 individual semistructured interviews with school principals ($n = 4$) and an assistant principal ($n = 1$), community partners and service providers ($n = 9$), teachers ($n = 9$), parents ($n = 17$), school staff ($n = 5$), and CSCs ($n = 7$). (The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of interviews conducted with each category of participant. CSCs at Schools B and C and the principal at School A were interviewed twice. The CSC at School A was interviewed three times. All other participants were interviewed once.) The three CSCs were licensed social workers; two were women and one was a man; two were of color and one was white. Although the specific selection process for CSCs differed across the case schools, general job requirements included experience in cross-sector leadership, community outreach, and service coordination, and a master's degree in education, social work, or human services. The CSC at School A had been in the position for five years, the CSC at School B for two years, and the CSC at School C for a year. The first two authors, one of whom is fluent in English and Spanish, conducted interviews at the school sites. Multiple school visits and interviews with key participants provided opportunities for informal member checking throughout the data collection period.

The first two authors also conducted school observations of classroom and out-of-school time activities and school–family council meetings to supplement the interviews and to gain a better sense of how students, teachers, families, and community partners interacted. Notes were taken during these formal observations to (a) capture general impressions of stakeholder exchanges and interactions and (b) document specific examples that reflected these impressions. Formal observations were supplemented with informal observations during regular visits to the schools. Documents, including school mission and policy statements, communications to families and

Table 1: Student Demographics and Community Partnerships at the Case Schools, 2011–2012 School Year

School (*n* Community Partners)	Student Demographics	Partnership and Services	Participants Served (*n*)
School A: FSCS since 2006 (23)	Students: *n* = 191	Mental health/counseling services	50
	African American = 11%	Summer learning program	90
	Hispanic/Latino = 71%	After-school program	85
	White = 13%	Site-based dental services/referrals	160
	Native American = 3%	Recreational program, "Playworks"	95
	Asian = 2%	String instrument program	35
	Receiving free and reduced-price meals = 90%	Adult literacy classes (Spanish and English)	30
		Christmas gift giveaway sponsored by community organization	130 (including families)
	English learners = 52%	Food pantry	150 (including families)
	Special education = 15%		
School B: FSCS since 2010 (60)	Students: *n* = 298	Mental health/counseling services	125
	African American = 57%	Extended learning opportunities in animation, environmental science, and financial literacy	250
	Hispanic/Latino = 10%		35 students
	White = 33%	After-school program	250
	Native American < 1%	Job shadowing, internships, service-learning projects	15 (parents and community members)
	Asian < 1%	Neighborhood health advocacy group	120 (including families)
	Receiving free and reduced-price meals = 81%	Food pantry	250
		Christmas gift giveaway sponsored by local church	
	English learners < 1%		
	Special education = 30%		
School C: FSCS since 2010 (12)	Students: *n* = 517	Mental health/counseling services	40–50 (per month)
	African American = 96%	On-site health clinic with lab	55–70 (per month)
	Hispanic/Latino < 1%	After-school programs	120
	White = 4%	Wraparound intervention for juvenile offenders	30 students
	Native American < 1%	Food pantry	60 (families per month)
	Asian < 1%	Thanksgiving baskets	80 (families)
	Receiving free and reduced-price meals = 76%	Katherine's Kloset, clothing thrift store/ household supplies	20–40 (including volunteers, per month)
		After-school supper program	45–60 (per week)
	English learners < 1%	Neighborhood advocacy group	Successfully campaigned for street lights and park patrols
	Special education = 20%		

Notes: One or multiple community partner(s) may be involved in providing one or multiple service(s). FSCS = full-service community school.

community members, Web site postings, and handouts from school meetings and activities, were also collected and analyzed. Multiple data sources and methods were used to increase the study's descriptive and interpretative validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process that began with data collection. After each interview or observation, the first two authors recorded and discussed initial thoughts and impressions, and identified areas for further inquiry. With the help of graduate assistants, these recordings were typed into Word files and imported as memos into Ethnograph 6.0, a qualitative data analysis software package. All interviews were similarly recorded and, along with observation notes, transcribed into Word files and imported for analysis. Once imported into Ethnograph 6.0, the first author conducted initial data analysis. She read through the transcribed interviews, typed observations and memos, and documents collected for review and used deductive and inductive strategies for data coding. Deductive codes (for example, CSC background and principal leadership) were derived from the existing literature and research focus. Inductive codes (for example, school communication and teacher professional development) emerged from reading the transcribed data for repeated terms and ideas (see Hatch, 2002). This initial stage of data analysis generated a total of 64 codes (11 primary and 53 secondary). Due to page limitations, secondary codes cannot be listed;

Table 2: Student Attendance, Behavior, Achievement, and Family Participation Data (2010–2012)

School	Selected Data	2010–2011	2011–2012
School A			
	Student attendance (%)	>95	>95
	Students absent 5 days or fewer (%)	48	53
	State assessment reading/math (% proficient or advanced)		
	Grade 3	67/88	83/75
	Grade 4	91/87	81/86
	Grade 5	81/63	>95/91
	Parents in PTO/PTA (*n*)	45	45
	Parents at school activities focused on student learning (*n*)	35	70
	Parents on leadership committees (*n*)	6	7
School B			
	Student attendance (%)	—	75
	Students absent 5 days or fewer (%)	—	13
	Suspensions (*n*)	—	24
	State assessment (% proficient and advanced)		
	Algebra	—	71
	English		59
	Parents in PTO/PTA (*n*)	—	N/A
	Parents at school activities focused on student learning (*n*)	—	16
	Parents on leadership committees (*n*)	—	17
School C			
	Student attendance (%)	75	78
	Students absent 5 days or fewer (%)	15	15
	Suspensions (*n*)	71	59
	State assessment (% proficient and advanced)		
	Algebra	44	44
	English	48	42
	Parents in PTO/PTA (*n*)	15	30
	Parents at school activities focused on student learning (*n*)	4	10
	Parents on leadership committees (*n*)	3	5

Notes: Suspension rates are available for high schools only. Data collection ended in December 2012. Updated achievement data are not available because the state assessment changed in 2013. However, 2016 student attendance, a key measure of school effectiveness, suggests sustained improvement: School A, >95%; School B, 80%; and School C, 82%. PTO = Parent–Teacher Organization; PTA = Parent–Teacher Association; a long dash indicates that no comparative data were available, 2011–2012 is the baseline year. N/A = no reliable data available.

the 11 primary codes were (1) community characteristics, (2) CSC characteristics, (3) district organizational context, (4) FSCS characteristics, (5) FSCS services, (6) parent/family characteristics, (7) principal characteristics, (8) school characteristics, (9) social capital, (10) student characteristics, and (11) teacher characteristics. CSC characteristics emerged as a primary code with six related secondary codes (rewards, challenges, beliefs, skills, background, and responsibilities).

For this article, we read all the transcribed data with a particular focus on excerpts coded under CSC characteristics and its six secondary codes. The question driving this advanced stage of data analysis was: How do CSCs carry out their responsibilities in effective FSCSs? After reading the data, we discussed our impressions and summarized them in the form of figures and narrative text (Hatch, 2002). Drawing on our diverse research and practical experiences (we are researchers with backgrounds in education reform, education policy, and social work, with experience working with FSCSs in different capacities) and the literature on the implementation of FSCSs, we collaboratively identified concepts that provided an organizing narrative for the data. We then compared these concepts—cross-boundary and relational leadership—across cases to clarify their operation and selected representative excerpts and quotes from the data. Results from this collaborative and iterative process are reported in the next section. Specifically, we describe how cross-boundary leadership was manifested in the case schools and the role of communication as a relational leadership strategy.

RESULTS

Each case school had several community partners that provided a variety of services for students and families. CSCs worked closely with principals to develop and optimize these partnerships to achieve progress on key school goals. The important role the CSCs played at the FSCSs was recognized by a variety of stakeholders. For example, when describing the CSC at School A, a community partner stated, "Really, it's amazing all the programs she has started, particularly for the parents. She is just an incredible person and a huge asset for this school." Similarly, a staff member at School B shared, "Basically the CSC is like our community schools guru. He's trying to create the whole community schools package here." A parent at the school commented, "He gives his life to this school. He really does." A community partner

at School C described the CSC as a critical nexus between individuals and groups who "introduced us to everyone so that we knew who people were and to whom we could go to get what we needed." The resulting partnerships, resources, and services were points of pride among the CSCs. The CSC from School C noted, "What I'm most proud about is all the partnerships we have right now, and the good thing is that they're based on the needs assessment." Cross-boundary leadership helped the CSCs to build and sustain partnerships at the case schools.

Cross-Boundary Leadership

CSCs' cross-boundary leadership was evident at all three case schools. In particular, CSCs played a key role in building and sustaining relationships with service providers (current and potential), families, teachers, and the local community. These leadership tasks were performed through managing linkages, serving as cultural brokers, and managing inter-stakeholder conflicts that threatened collaboration.

Managing Linkages. CSCs were responsible for developing and maintaining meaningful linkages between multiple school, family, and community stakeholders. At School C, for example, the CSC and the leadership team had regular meetings to discuss resources to improve student achievement and behavior. The CSC explained,

> So they [leadership team members] will say, "You need to find a program which can address this and this and this." And then, I will go out and look for the program, have a meeting with them and if it looks good, go forward.

For CSCs, to "go forward" was

> a matter of coordinating the resources and making it work on the ground. Because there is a big difference between wanting to volunteer and wanting to bring a program and making it work with the staff, with the kids . . . so there needs to be someone on the ground to do the detail work and to smooth out the difficulties. (CSC, School A)

As described by the CSC at School B, managing linkages also meant that coordinators played a "gatekeeper role to make sure that the partners . . . [were] the right ones." The principal at School B expressed his appreciation for the CSC's role as "principal of all that is not the school." He explained, "I am not being pulled in too many directions because of my [CSC]. If I don't have him, then I'm doing a half job over here, and another half job over here, which means that I am not maximizing myself."

Serving as Cultural Brokers. CSCs were also cultural brokers, building bridges between families and schools. This leadership role was particularly salient at School A. The CSC was bilingual, which facilitated communication with the school's mostly Latino immigrant families. The families deeply appreciated her ability to provide support and needed resources through the school's multiple partnerships. When describing the CSC, a Latina mother at School A stated, "If someone asks her a question, she always has time for everything. She's very patient . . . and with whatever problem, she's there to solve it." Another parent commented, "She helps us a lot with everything, with . . . translations, with whatever we need. She helps the people here a lot." Teachers also commented on the School A CSC's effectiveness in bridging home and school stakeholders. One teacher noted, "Families are free to come in and because she speaks English and Spanish, you know they feel comfortable when they speak to her." Teachers felt that as a cultural broker, this CSC helped to build trust with families that facilitated home–school connections to support students' learning. One observed,

> She has made a difference in the connectivity of the school and parents. I think that parents are a lot more accessible. It is very helpful as a teacher to have other people there who know this parent so I can say, "I'm having a problem with this kid."

Managing Inter-Stakeholder Conflicts. CSCs were instrumental in helping to resolve conflicts between key stakeholders before they reached the principals. At School C, the CSC explained that when conflicts developed, her role was to get others to "calm down." Her instructions to stakeholders were,

> If there's an issue, you come to me. I'll try to solve it. We'll sit down and I'll be the bridge, the connector. If that connection doesn't work, then we'll take it to the assistant principals and then we'll take it to the principal.

Each CSC was able to recount an instance of inter-stakeholder conflict, which they helped to address. At School B, for instance, teachers and social work interns experienced conflicts over the removal of students from the classroom for counseling services. The CSC tried to address the conflict in a way that respected all parties. He explained,

> We get complaints saying, "Why is so-and-so being taken out of class?" So last year, we were able to tweak the process so, as much as possible, we try not to take them out of class. But, it's on a case-by-case basis, depending on the student.

Teachers at School A valued the CSC's role in ensuring that multi-stakeholder activities "went smoothly" because of the need to keep things "low maintenance" given their other professional duties (teacher, School A). The success of CSCs' cross-boundary leadership relied on the relationships they forged through a variety of strategies.

CSCs' Relational Leadership Strategies

As cross-boundary leaders, the CSCs actively worked to build trusting relationships with and among the schools' diverse stakeholders. Noting the importance of the CSC's role as a relational leader, the coordinator at School A stated, "The ability to engage and work with others is really, honestly the first requirement" of the job. She added, "That is the main skill set that is needed—being willing and able to work with a variety of people from a variety of different backgrounds. In terms of the true community school model, that is the main thing that you need to know, and also how to help people work collaboratively." Effective communication was at the center of CSCs' relational leadership strategies. Specifically, CSCs openly communicated with school principals, actively listened to stakeholders to identify common areas of interest and potential collaboration, and created spaces for stakeholder interaction and reflection.

Openly Communicating with School Principals. The coordinator at School B explained his relationship with the principal in the following way:

> Basically, in terms of my understanding of the agreement with the principal, he is the principal in the school and I am the principal of the community . . . It's my responsibility to really give him the best picture possible from the community side so that he can make the best decisions.

To provide the "best picture," the CSCs regularly communicated with principals about school and community needs, potential community partners, best practices, and potential and active conflicts among stakeholders. CSCs understood that to maintain open communication with the principals, they had to prove themselves trustworthy and committed to the schools' goals. Accordingly, the CSC at School B engaged in conversations that were honest, immediate, informed, and respectful. He explained,

> Whether the news is good or bad, the principal ought to know immediately, especially anything that really can blow up in our faces . . . The other part of my principle [of engagement] is "No attacks." You know, rather than attacking your leader or criticizing your leader, you need to work as closely as possible with that leader . . . Even if we don't agree on things, we discuss that. But, we don't discuss that in public. And he knows these fair principles, and so he reciprocates.

Principals also commented on the importance of trusting relationships and open communication with CSCs. At School A, for example, the principal noted that "having the [CSC] here as a nonevaluative person and just as a friend" was a critical ingredient in his ability to balance the multiple responsibilities he faced. The effective implementation of FSCSs, then, relies on a model of leadership in which the principal and the CSC work in tandem to build relationships with the schools' multiple stakeholders.

Actively Listening to Stakeholders. In addition to openly communicating with principals, CSCs also described the importance of listening to other stakeholders inside and outside the school building to identify areas for and challenges to collaboration. To demonstrate their desire to understand diverse perspectives, needs, concerns, and interests, the CSCs actively sought out the voices of multiple stakeholders. The coordinator at School C explained,

> It's just listening to the teachers, listening to the administrators, you know, making yourself known, making yourself present. Like, I would walk around in the hallways some days just . . .

> saying "hi" to teachers, asking them if they need anything, just making myself available and more visible, so they know why I'm here, what the purpose of my job is, and to ask them how I can assist them.

CSCs at Schools A and B also described listening as a key communication strategy that facilitated their effectiveness. In the following interview excerpt, the CSC at School B noted that listening allowed him to build connections that helped to realize the school's goals.

> It's really a "we" in this work. It's not me, it's not one person. So one of the key things is really to listen to what people are passionate about, and then connecting that to whatever the school's need is.

Commenting on the accessibility and openness of the CSC at School A, a teacher noted, "[She] is very supportive, I can go to her and say, 'I need this,' and she works with others to make it happen. So that's really nice." A parent at the school confirmed, "She is one you can talk to whenever you need her, and she always understands."

Creating Spaces for Stakeholder Interactions and Reflection. CSCs also noted the importance of creating spaces for key stakeholders to meet, discuss critical issues, and brainstorm ideas to achieve their schools' goals. The CSC at School B described these as "spaces where people can breathe and reflect," noting the importance of both "to help shepherd the change" the school was striving to achieve. He also noted that collaborative spaces were required for building "relationships in the community and also challenging these relationships so that they don't get too complacent."

The spaces created in the schools varied and were both physical and nonphysical opportunities for stakeholder interactions. Physical spaces included the suite of offices and meeting rooms at School B that the CSC managed. These spaces were used for counseling, community meetings, adult GED classes, Parent–Teacher Association meetings, and other activities that facilitated stakeholder interactions. At School C, the CSC oversaw the creation of several interactive spaces, renovating unused classrooms for a variety of family and after-school activities. She explained that this work was often invisible to visitors, who "have not seen the empty rooms and the rooms filled with junk," but instead "see an after-school program running in there."

The CSC at School A emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for collaboration among the schools' multiple stakeholders, who represented "a variety of backgrounds." In this light, she felt that one of her key relational leadership strategies was to maintain organizational structures, such as the school–family council, that allowed family, teacher, and community leaders to develop shared identities and goals. The school–family council at School C played a similar role. It also actively engaged in community development activities, leading a successful campaign for more street lights in the neighborhood and more police patrols at a local park. At School B, the CSC was instrumental in establishing the school–family council and a community-based stakeholder group to promote system-level change around "structural issues of employment, air quality, and safety."

DISCUSSION

As described in the emerging literature, cross-boundary leaders forge trusting relationships with and among diverse organizational actors and with actors external to the organization but critical to the realization of its goals and objectives (Blank et al., 2006). Such leadership is inherently suitable for the administration of FSCSs and other school reform models that rely on the development and expansion of cross-boundary networks to provide equitable educational opportunities for historically underserved students (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Sanders, 2018). This study highlights the role of CSCs as cross-boundary leaders in FSCSs. In this role, they managed linkages, served as cultural brokers, and managed conflicts between key stakeholders.

The study further describes how CSCs at the case schools used communication as a leadership strategy to build trusting relationships with and among principals, teachers, families, and community partners. Specifically, by openly communicating with school principals, listening to diverse voices, and creating spaces for stakeholders to forge shared identities and goals, the CSCs created the conditions necessary for collaboration. Multi-stakeholder collaboration, in turn, facilitated the identification, maintenance, and distribution of a

variety of resources and services that moved the schools closer to their goals for student success and community development. The study, thus, illustrates the interconnectedness between cross-boundary and relational leadership and underscores the importance of both for CSCs, who work along with principals to help create the cultures and opportunities for collaboration that are essential for effective FSCSs (see also Coalition for Community Schools, 2017; Ruffin, 2013; Sanders, 2018).

Implications for Social Work Practice

Of note, the CSCs participating in the study were all social workers with extensive experience collaborating with and providing services to individuals from diverse backgrounds. However, beyond these traditional school social work practices (see Johnson, 2012), they were also able to focus on community development and system-level change. These dual capacities aided them in effectively carrying out their leadership roles, a finding that has implications for the field of social work and the implementation of FSCSs. Specifically, this finding highlights the need for more social workers with experience in micro (individual level) and macro (systems level) practices (see also Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). As the number of FSCSs and other models that rely on extensive community partnerships to improve educational opportunities for vulnerable students grows, the need for social workers with these complementary skills will also grow. In a study preceding our own, Anderson-Butcher and colleagues (2008) observed that within such schools, the role of the social worker creates "fresh opportunities for the profession's leadership" (p. 170). However, only a small percentage of social work students are reported to be concentrating in macro practice (McBeath, 2016). This is a significant area for attention within the field.

Implications for CSC Leadership

Furthermore, although a degree in social work is not a requirement for effective CSCs, this study and others (see, for example, Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008) suggest that the ability to work across professional, social, system, and individual boundaries should be. Without this skill set, CSCs will not be able to act as reflexive practitioners, encourage open dialogue, and establish processes that respect and address the perspectives of multiple stakeholders—critical relational leadership strategies as described by Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011). It is also important to note that the CSCs were empowered to carry out their roles as cross-boundary and relational leaders by their principals, who viewed them as coleaders or "principals of the community." Previous research has shown that principals can create "high-trust" environments by first developing strong interpersonal relationships with faculty and staff (Cranston, 2011). Within high-trust environments, key stakeholders are more likely to invest time and energy in the often-challenging work of bringing reform strategies to scale. Given the important role of CSCs in the effective implementation of FSCSs, attention to the relationship forged with principals should be of interest to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Strong CSC–principal relationships may both foster and reflect the health of FSCSs and their potential to transform the educational experiences and outcomes of historically underserved students.

Limitations

Although this study provides new knowledge on how CSCs carry out their leadership roles in effective FSCSs, it is not without limitations. In particular, the research design was not conducive to discerning if and how the role of CSCs evolved over time, or similarities and differences in CSCs' leadership practices in less effective FSCSs. Moreover, while the study strongly suggests that principals influence how CSCs carry out their leadership roles within FSCSs, other influential factors were not identified. Thus, additional longitudinal research, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, is needed to identify the personal and professional characteristics of CSCs at FSCSs that range in effectiveness; school, community, and district factors such as funding and professional development that influence CSCs' effectiveness; and how CSCs' effectiveness evolves as the needs of their schools and communities change. Such studies will help to advance the successful implementation of this promising education reform.

CONCLUSION

Because of a complex interplay of social, institutional, and structural factors, equal educational opportunity for poor students and students of color continues to be an elusive goal in U.S. public

schools. FSCSs have reemerged as a reform that recognizes and strives to address these factors to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of historically underserved students. However, the success of FSCSs relies on the breadth and depth of their social networks, which include school personnel, students, parents, and community partners. Findings from this study suggest that CSCs can help build and maintain these networks through cross-boundary and relational leadership, undergirded by effective communication with the schools' diverse stakeholders. The findings further suggest that social workers, with specific training in micro- and macro-system practices, may be uniquely qualified to carry out such leadership in the current iteration of FSCSs. CS

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