

A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL DECLINE AT A HISTORIC, PREDOMINANTLY  
AFRICAN AMERICAN, URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

by  
Tracy Gynelle Robinson Gatewood

A thesis submitted to the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department,  
College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in Professional Leadership – K-12

Chair of Committee: Dr. Ruth M. López

Committee Member: Dr. April Peters-Hawkins

Committee Member: Dr. Keith Butcher

Committee Member: Dr. Erick Pruitt

University of Houston  
August 2020

Copyright 2020, Tracy Gynelle Robinson Gatewood

## Dedication

My study is dedicated to the following people: Constance, Lulu, Mary, and Connie H.;  
Connie C., Clifford, Kim, Shelly, Leda, Phil, Jan, Joyce, Henry, Dr. Jose Covarrubia, Dr.  
Kenneth Davis, and Mrs. Joyce Beasley; and the rest of my family and friends.

## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge my committee members for collectively helping me with my study through their feedback and support: Dr. Ruth Lopez, my committee chair, for her guidance and patience to help me complete my study; Dr. April-Peters Hawkins, committee member, for pushing me when I did not want to be pushed; Dr. Keith Butcher, committee member for always being so kind; and Dr. Erick Pruitt, committee member for his successful leadership in K-12 urban education.

Additionally, I acknowledge all of my professors and staff in the doctoral program during this educational journey. Finally, I recognize all of the participants in the study for your lived experiences. I appreciate you all and thank you.

## Abstract

**Background:** Researchers have not identified what factors cause schools to decline initially. Public school reform requires school leaders to dig through layers of questions to understand school decline, the process in which a school's demonstrates diminished ability to meet student achievement goals over time. To sort out the complexities of school decline, school leaders must know its root cause. If school leaders are seeking to turnaround a failing school, identifying factors for failure could help stabilize the downturn, create opportunities for early success, and lead to recovery. If school leaders fail to understand contributing factors, the school will continue to decline. **Purpose:** This study examined the factors that contributed to the decline of a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school. **Research Questions:** What in-school and out-of-school factors led to school decline at a predominantly African American, urban high school? How do key stakeholders describe in-school and out-of-school factors that led to school decline? **Methods:** This qualitative case study based was guided by the causal theory to gather in-school and out-of-school decline factors through an analysis of historical data and semistructured interviews. Eight participants were chosen through purposive sampling: two former principals, one former district leader, two alumni and community leaders, two alumni parents, and one parent. Data were recorded through field notes, observations during the participants' visual review of historical data, and semistructured interviews to gain insight into decline factors. Data were coded by hand as themes emerged during the study and by using Dedoose software to identify commonalities and patterns. **Findings:** Four themes emerged from the historical data: An in-school decline factor was the loss of traditional legacy; out-of-school decline factors

were the loss of exceptional culture around the school, the change in attitude about education in the community, and the collapse of African American leadership in the community. Three themes emerged from the interviews: In-school decline factors were fearful leadership and the loss of academic programming. The out-of-school decline factor was the erosion of the community. The participants were concerned that leaders did not have courageous leadership to adapt to the urban challenges at a low-performing school. Additionally, funding formulas are not equal for this campus compared to others in the district, resulting in the loss of educational opportunities to enhance students' upward mobility. The politics of "raiding the feeder pattern" that removed students from the neighborhood school and the changing structures in the community prevented an affordable living for vulnerable families. **Conclusion:** The findings suggested participants' perceptions of school decline were influenced by their lived experience with the study site. This study contributes to the literature regarding how school leaders can prevent in-school and out-of-school factors that contribute to school decline.

## Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I. Introduction .....	1
Historical Background: Andrews High School.....	2
Background to the Study.....	5
School Turnaround.....	7
Statement of the Problem.....	10
The Purpose of the Study.....	14
The Significance of the Study.....	16
Overview of Methodology.....	16
Limitations.....	17
Assumptions.....	18
Organization of the Thesis.....	18
Definition of Terms.....	19
II. Literature Review .....	22
Conceptual Framework.....	23
Urban School Challenges.....	25
Urban School Turnaround Leadership.....	32
Education Debt's Impact on Vulnerable Students.....	36
Understanding School Decline .....	42
Understanding School Turnaround.....	48
Conclusion .....	50
III. Research Design and Methods.....	51
Research Questions.....	51
Research Design.....	52
The Rationale for Methodology.....	53
Site Selection .....	55
Participant Selection Criteria .....	56
Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis.....	57
Evidence of Quality .....	64
Positionality Statement .....	65
Conclusion .....	65
IV. Findings .....	67
District and School Profile.....	67
Demographic Profile of Interview Participants .....	69
Archival Data Findings: In-School and Out-of-School Decline Factors.....	73
Findings From Participant Interviews.....	83
Summary .....	118
V. Discussion .....	119
Archival Data Declarative Memory Strategy .....	119
Interview Findings: In-School Decline Factors .....	123
Interview Findings: Out-of-School Decline Factors.....	130
Revisiting Research Questions .....	135
Summary .....	136

Appendix A	Eleven Indicators of School Decline .....	160
Appendix B	Andrews Eras 1926–2020.....	162
Appendix C	Definitions of Methodologies.....	164
Appendix D	Participant Recruitment E-Mail .....	165
Appendix E	Study Participant Data Tracker.....	166
Appendix F	Informed Consent Form .....	168
Appendix G	Andrews Student Assessment Data 1991–2019.....	168
Appendix H	Historical Data Organizer.....	174
Appendix I	Dedoose Codebook Analysis .....	176
Appendix J	Interview Protocol .....	177
Appendix K	Interview Questions.....	178
Appendix L	Participant Pseudonyms and Descriptors.....	180
Appendix M	List of Academic Programs for Andrews 1969 and 1986 .....	181



## List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Major Constructs Distinguished From School Decline .....	15
2. Summary of Research Questions Linked to the Data Collection Methods .....	55
3. Andrews High School Student Percentage Demographics for 2003–2008 .....	56
4. Historical Data Collection Timeline .....	58
5. Preexisting Codes About School Decline .....	64
6. Andrews High School Accountability Ratings 2003–2008 .....	69
7. Historical Data Sources Used Before Participant Interviews .....	74

## List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Conceptual framework: Research-based factors of school decline. ....	25
2. Cause-and-effect diagram: Archival analysis factors of school decline .....	75
3. Cause-and-effect diagram: Interview findings of school decline factors .....	86

“As in any attempt to resolve complex issues, workable solutions can only be generated by an understanding of underlying causes” (Anyon, 2005, p. 66).

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

School reform in U.S. public schools causes school leaders to dig through layers of questions and develop solutions to begin the restoration process of a failing school. A failing school is defined as a school “characterized as dysfunctional or unstable” (Housman & Martinez, 2001, p. 2). However, Lashway (2004) argued that specific definitions of school decline vary. Duke (2008) argued, “The process by which a school’s ability to accomplish its student achievement goals diminish over time” (p. 49), which is the main definition of school decline. School decline is complex, and determining how a campus could prevent failure is the initial step to sorting out the complexities of school decline. School leaders seeking to turn around a failing school may pinpoint conditions for failure to help stabilize the downturn and create opportunities for early success as well as long-term student success (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to understand the factors that have contributed to the decline of a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, historical background of the school, the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. The chapter then includes an overview of the methodology, the study limitations, assumptions, and key terms.

## **Historical Background: Andrews High School**

Andrews High School, or Andrews (a pseudonym), is in a large urban city in the southern United States. In 1926, Andrews was established as a comprehensive school considered a community-centered school. Andrews was the focus of this study because it had been in decline for the past 20 years and was in the stage of a turnaround school. Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, and Lash (2007) defined turnaround as “a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in achievement within two years and readies the school for the long process of transformation into a high-performance organization” (p. 2). Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, and Tallant (2010) used the Calkin et al. definition and stated school turnaround is a model created by the federal government in response to a significant number of U.S. schools in decline.

During the presegregation era of education, African American families with a higher socioeconomic status preferred to send their children to Andrews (Ouchi & Segal, 2003). Old yearbooks and school newspapers described student achievement in academics and sports. From the school year beginning in 1926 to the school year ending in 1979, over 20,000 students graduated from Andrews. Many graduates have earned spots on professional sports teams, some have been well-known celebrities, and others have held notable employment. Graduating from this historical, traditional high school was an honor. Student achievement and steady enrollment were common at Andrews. Students were recognized for their academic endeavors with opportunities to travel abroad and across the nation. For example, a student won a summer trip to Lebanon for winning an essay contest in 1963. Many other students from Andrews would travel to

other states to perform in academic competitions, and several won awards for their outstanding work in film and video production. Students at Andrews had a choice to participate in a variety of after-school clubs for educational enrichment, such as the student government, agriculture, and Spanish clubs, among many more.

By the 1985-1986 school year, 2,416 students were enrolled; this overcrowding inspired new construction to accommodate the increasing student population. The new additions to the facility would lead to Andrews being hailed as a model campus in the district. However, in 1995, the culture of Andrews started to shift from a large, historic school of acclaim to a school with declining student achievement. School decline was beginning to emerge in the 1990s, as made evident through mandatory increases in higher academic standards on state assessments, which required higher rigor in instruction.

However, students were still being honored for their success in the early 2000s. For example, in 2002, a student was honored to travel to Italy for 3 weeks to learn cultural studies, and in 2004 a student competed with over 500 other students nationwide to attend a journalism camp in the nation's capital, hosted by the Asian-American Journalist Association. By this point, Andrews was gaining attention from a few students from other countries. In 2004, Andrews would host a few foreign exchange students from France and Germany. Not only were students being honored for their high achievements, but teachers at Andrews also held high expectations for instruction. High-quality teaching was rewarded—for example, a few teachers received grants and fellowships for their teaching capabilities in 2004.

By the end of the 2004 school year, Andrews's student enrollment would drop to 1,379 students and continue to drop each school year after that. Student achievement

continued to decline. The after-school clubs prevalent for many years, such as the student council, archery, the male mentoring club, the National Honor Society, the Christian Student Union, and the Mu Alpha Theta math honors club, were discontinued. An analysis of the 2003–2005 state passing rates in Grade 10 English language arts and mathematics for economically vulnerable students indicated a significant decline.

As of the 2015-2016 school year, Andrews had fewer than 1,000 students. Unfilled teaching positions resulted in long-term substitutes filling critical roles teaching English language arts and mathematics. As a former administrator at the campus, I experienced difficulty filling critical roles in core content areas with highly qualified teachers, as well as administrator positions. Andrews has experienced a steady drop in student enrollment due to the increase in the number of students transferring out, a leadership turnover, decreased quality of instruction, and teacher turnover. These changes uphold the perception that the school is failing.

After reviewing historical data on student achievement, student enrollment, and personnel records, I observed that Andrews has been on a decline over the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> The campus continued to have low school accountability ratings and a reduction of funding, which resulted in the loss of staff and teaching positions. Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand the factors that contributed to the decline of a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school. Findings could address ways to produce long-term improvement in Andrews and similar schools.

---

<sup>1</sup> Citations to the data source are not provided to protect the identity of the school and community.

## Background to the Study

Federal educational reform has been chronicled for five decades with concerns of a decline in education, school improvement, and the future of education in America (Hochbein, 2012b; Simanek, 2000). Duke (2016) provided a lens on policymaker actions to combat concerns with low-performing schools by, first, looking at how states and public school leaders responded to the influx of federal policies and funding incentives to help the improvement of low-performing schools and, second, examining the concerns expressed by state and local leaders. Educational scholars had concerns with not only the decline in education or school improvement but also inequalities that continued in public schools in America. McGuinn (2006) echoed concerns about the U.S. educational system by stating several politically savvy citizens, such as liberal Democrats and teacher unions, were confident that states and localities avoided conversations on the downturn of education and its inequalities. Given the concerns of inequalities in America's educational system, Duke (2016) argued that federal government involvement was necessary for all students to have a solid education if states were not able to provide one.

In 1983, a critical report, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), stunned educational and political leaders in the United States with its findings on the academic performance of the nation's high schools and their student performance. The report confirmed the educational concerns of many politicians and school leaders. One alarming indicator from *A Nation at Risk* informed the public that as many as "13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States could be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 8). *A Nation at Risk*

informed the public that schools in America were declining, and Americans needed to figure out how to fix schools. According to Kamenetz (2018), “The report’s narrative of failing schools—students being out-competed internationally and declining educational standards—persists, and has become an entrenched part of the debate over education in the U.S.” (para. 4). Duke (2016) noted America responded “to the challenges issued by the commission, [as] state after the state increased graduation requirements, required more testing and more rigorous tests and lengthened the school year” (p. 6). The alarming results of the report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) spurred states to take extra measures to improve educational outcomes in America. Kamenetz argued that the government report was a “pivotal moment in education policy, ... a moment of angst about the state of the nation’s schools” (para. 5).

*A Nation at Risk* continues to be relevant today. According to Mehta (2015), many of the recommendations from the report, such as course content, content standards, high school graduation requirements, rigor, and accountability methods, are requirements in most states. Whereas some scholars have positive feedback on *A Nation at Risk* (Bracey, 2009; Guthrie & Springer, 2004; Mehta, 2015), others have criticized the document. Many critics have stated the language in *A Nation at Risk* caused an increase in the federal government’s involvement in educational policy. Critics also argued that the use of standardized tests to determine student achievement dissolves students’ creativity and creative thinking in public schools (Olivant, 2015). *A Nation at Risk* further suggested that the American public school system cannot be repaired with only school reform strategies and that social reform must be included. The report is relevant to this



study because it influenced the current educational mandates and changing procedures that impact urban education (K. K. Wong, Guthrie, & Harris, 2014).

### **School Turnaround**

For a few decades, many initiatives were implemented to improve low-performing public schools, with much criticism due to mixed results. The most recent strategy to aid the educational system is school turnaround. School turnaround may have multiple definitions, but for this study is defined as “a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in achievement within two years and readies the school for the long process of transformation into a high-performance organization” (Calkins et al., 2007, p. 2). School turnaround has been described by some as a “movement to positively transform the performance of chronically failing school systems and schools” (Kutash et al., 2010, p. 13). School turnaround is a more recent reform effort that has been a popular choice for many districts and school leaders since 2009 (Meyers, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2014), requiring some schools to use the turnaround model to make modifications on campus. The changes would include leadership and staff to improve instructional practices and build community partnerships.

The turnaround model is an intervention to stop something that has already occurred, making it essential for school leaders to assess why schools are in a state of decline (Kutash et al., 2010). The question of how to improve low-performing schools has not been answered sufficiently, according to school reform scholar Trujillo (2015), despite numerous turnaround strategies. Trujillo reviewed 12 textual sources for their contribution to school turnaround and found that 11 were non-peer-reviewed studies with

deceptive results, bringing into question the integrity of some of the research on school turnaround. The sole remaining textual source was peer reviewed and reported positive findings for school turnaround by using real data from the district to improve student achievement. Trujillo reminded school reformers and policymakers to make decisions on scholarly peer-reviewed evidence and real evidence on school turnaround.

Several significant studies used rigorous methods to highlight low-performing schools. For example, according to Duke (2008), between 1999 and 2004, five critical investigations on improving low-performing schools were published (Barth et al., 1999; Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002; Manset et al., 2000; Johnson & Asera, 1999; and Puicci & McGee, 2004, all as cited in Duke, 2008). The schools in these fundamental investigations were low performing but improved their student performance (Duke, 2008). Further, the investigation of low-performing campuses was done after the schools were already in decline, using data to inform the best strategy to turn around the school.

According to Aladjem (2016), School Improvement Grants were an insignificant federal grant that blossomed into a leading source of funding for low-performing schools, using more than \$3 billion between 2009 and 2012. School Improvement Grants were created to address failing schools. However, Dragoset et al. (2017) reported school improvement models under the School Improvement Grant program have been expensive and inefficient, with no impact on student outcomes in reading or math test scores, high school graduation, or college enrollment. Schools were still declining after the implementation of the grant program.

On the federal level, the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) made it a requirement for states to implement accountability measures, set goals

for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and publicly classify schools with low academic performance and improve them (NCLB, 2002). The primary focus of NCLB was to improve low-performing schools. However, research has suggested that many low-performing schools are in distressed areas affected by crime, violence, and high poverty as well as housing students of color (Baker & Gulley, 2004). Many schools classified as low performing are under pressure from the stigma, potential reduction of resources, and the threat that students can unenroll from these schools and enroll in a higher performing school (Saw et al., 2017).

Many scholars have criticized NCLB because lawmakers assumed that all students can learn using high-stakes testing and that all schools received an equal amount of resources. For example, Balfanz, Legters, West, and Weber (2007) found that almost half of students who drop out come from 12% of all regular and vocational high schools, and over 600 of these high schools educate only students of color. For many schools in dwindling neighborhoods with the many challenges of violence, lack of employment, and family distress, NCLB regulations have not been equal to all students or had a similar impact as in neighborhoods without these social challenges.

In 2009, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, concerned with school reform, identified his “education goal of turning around the nation’s lowest-performing 5% of schools” (Rhim & Redding, 2014, p. 19), to stop low student performance. In research on turning around low-performing schools, Mead (2012) reported 843 schools nationwide, representing 594,000 students, were identified as the lowest performing 5% of chronically low-performing schools. Further, 6,000 schools were identified as needing

restructuring, representing school failure, and another 1,750 U.S. high schools were described as dropout factories (Mead, 2012).

Schools that continue to fail typically have low-income students and students of color. According to Dee and Jacob (2011), the new liability system for school performance directed clear and progressively severe sanctions for low-performing schools. NCLB (2002) also initiated reforms to increase student learning, graduation rates, and decrease dropout rates. According to Aragon and Workman (2015), NCLB emphasized injustices in education systems and encouraged state plans to improve student progress. However, according to the American Institutes for Research (2011), after a span of NCLB regulations, a group of schools still had persistently low school performance. The impact of NCLB raised concerns with educational reformists, according to Baker and Gulley (2004), because the new law required increased accountability without enough resources. According to Calkins et al. (2007), data suggested school improvement had not been enough to improve poor-performing schools consistently.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Researchers have not identified what factors cause schools to decline initially, despite recommendations noted in school improvement literature to increase the study of declining schools (Duke, 2008). Duke (2008) and Hochbein (2011) referred to literature on organizational decline to understand school decline. Although *organizational decline* is a term that has not been used in the social service sector as in the private sector, it has helped social scientists develop a school decline model to shape an understanding of why schools decline. Organizational decline results from a decrease in the organization's

resources over a span of time (Cameron, Kim, & Whetten, 1987; Cameron, Sutton, & Whetten, 1988; D'Aveni, 1989). Decline was further described by Weitzel and Jonsson (1989) as an organization's inability to adjust to its environment.

With limited research on the causes of declining school-level academic performance, it is difficult for school and district leaders to understand why so many schools are not meeting federal and state regulations to improve academic performance. Duke and Hochbein (2008) found in their research on school decline that failing schools could be prevented from spending millions of dollars on turnaround strategies that are not delivering respectable student performances. They further revealed several benefits to understanding school decline while improving chronically low-performing schools. For example, they found when school leaders and school reformers were aware of school decline, they could begin to identify predictors that led to school decline and be in a better position to improve school performance before a school failed. Hochbein (2011) stated that educational reformers in the past would

rely upon their beliefs, judgments, and casual stories on implementing change.

Although most educational reforms and turnaround strategies are logically defensible, their foundations rely heavily upon deduction and conjecture to explain both the pathologies and remedies of school failure. (p. 282)

If school leaders fail to uncover why the school is at its lowest achievement, the school will continue to be at risk of poor performance. Leaders must understand the systemic causes of school failure. Assumptions about why schools decline are inadequate; leaders need accurate information to provide the best remedy for school reform.

The passage of NCLB (2002) mandated states to implement accountability measures, set academic goals for schools to meet AYP, and publicly identify schools with low academic performance. Before NCLB, educators did not want to give researchers a glimpse of why schools were performing poorly and would not answer questions concerning their schools' performance out of fear of public stigma and decline in student enrollment. With little research on school decline, it has been difficult for researchers to determine a "conceptual understanding and framework of the phenomenon" (Hochbein, 2012a, p. 68). To find a resolution to school decline, school improvement researchers were forced to look at organizational decline as a step toward a collaborative definition and conceptual framework.

Elements of private sector organizational decline such as cutbacks or closures (Hochbein, 2012b) can be applied to the educational sector. With evidence of less funding for some schools, due to the lack of student enrollment, governmental mandates, or continued low student achievement that prompts school closures, there is an assumption that a lack of preventative action or monitoring by school leaders is a cause of school decline. However, school decline is not related to one source but to multiple sources, which include lack of school resources (Leithwood et al., 2010). When school leaders do not accurately spot warning signs that their campuses are struggling with student achievement, their schools will begin to decline, leaving some schools with limited resources and slim chances of a full recovery, whereas schools with more resources have the ability to recover (Leithwood et al., 2010).

When school leaders know why their school is failing, they can begin the process of identifying methods to garner success. Often the process of school decline is

overlooked. Duke (2008) argued, “Failing to nip student achievement problems in the bud can set into motion a dangerous downward spiral in which every downturn trigger new problems and accelerates the school’s rate of decline” (p. 667). To reduce the number of failing schools, researchers and school leaders must understand the systemic causes.

Theories on private sector organizational development have focused on the growth, improvement, and success of organizations, but the dilemma of organizational decline for the educational sector has been overlooked (Duke, 2008). Education has been a complex problem, based on examining successes and failures in American schools for a long time, and effective strategies to improve student success continue to be researched (Anyon, 2005). Many educational policies, such as curriculum and administrative adjustments, increased financial resources, and increased district and school measurements, were designed to increase student success. However, school performance has been insufficient.

Educational reform is as evident today as it has been in the past. As Anyon stated, “Academic learning in city schools is undoubtedly higher than in, say, 1900, yet there is still no large urban district that can demonstrate high achievement in even half its students or schools” (p. 66). While the quality of education is troubling in many urban schools, federal and state policies have not been able to improve student achievement gainfully in over 30 years. According to Leithwood et al. (2010), school failure is intricate because it depends on external factors such as the school location, homogenous student populations (segregated schools), high poverty, and student lack of cognitive

abilities. Additional factors related to internal conditions like inadequate instruction, uncertified teachers, and weak leadership can influence school decline.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

Some public schools in urban areas that were once recognized as exceptional schools are declining with limited explanation as to why. In an effort to understand the cause of school decline at the study site, it was important to explore possible factors leading to the decline of a school. The purpose of this study was to understand the factors that have contributed to the decline of a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school.

First, the idea of school decline has not been studied in abundance when compared to the second concept, school turnaround, a school reform with mixed success (Hochbein, 2011). Table 1 describes the significant constructs associated with school decline. To lead a school to improve, the school must go through appropriate research-based strategies. According to Trujillo (2015), these strategies must include high expectation of students, positive student relationships, and community to help turn around a failing school.



Table 1

*Major Constructs Distinguished From School Decline*

Construct	Definition
School decline	School decline, taken from the organizational sciences, is a process that occurs over a series of stages of increasing neglect, resulting in the collapse of an organization (Duke & Hochbein, 2008; Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989)
School turnaround	School turnaround is applied to low-performing schools and involves drastic changes to prevent the school from closure (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010).
School improvement	School improvement is an expectation that all schools will continue to improve over time (Leithwood et al., 2010).

*Note.* Sources: “Rising to the Challenge of Studying School Decline,” by D. Duke and C. Hochbein, 2008, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 7, 358-379; *Leading School Turnaround: How Successful Leaders Transform Low-Performing Schools*, by K. Leithwood, A., Harris, and T. Strauss, 2010, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; and “Decline in Organizations: A Literature Integration and Extension,” by W. Weitzel and E. Jonsson, 1989, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34(1), 91-109.

School decline is a process that occurs over time. The major constructs in the school decline are shown in Table 1. School turnaround and improvement are the phases school leaders take after the school has reached decline. School leaders must turn around the declined school and set the school on a path of improvement. This study addressed two research questions:

1. What in-school and out-of-school factors led to school decline at a predominantly African American, urban high school?
2. How do key stakeholders describe in-school and out-of-school factors that led to school decline at a predominantly African American, urban high school?

Understanding why a school succumbs to failure is essential. Many urban schools have started to gradually decline without attention from school leaders. Moreover, efforts to turn around some of these schools have not been met with success (Duke & Hochbein,

2008; Leithwood et al., 2010). Increasing knowledge as to why schools decline and fail will help policymakers and educational leaders set regulations and strategies that are suitable for school and student success.

### **The Significance of the Study**

This study adds to the current literature on school decline and the turnaround process. Duke and Hochbein (2008) suggested many considerations that can be investigated to determine school decline, but they also noted many other variables that they did not mention could be a cause of school decline. The causes of school decline might not have been previously cited in the literature. Further, this contribution to the literature brings awareness to school and district leaders as they contemplate the local mandates that service the schools with success and not failure. By identifying the gaps in the literature on school decline, the goal was to inform future researchers in their quest to understand why a school declines and how to prevent school failure. This study examined the factors contributing to school decline and may influence how researchers and educational leaders think of future educational reform policies impacting student achievement in urban schools.

### **Overview of Methodology**

I used a qualitative case study approach with a historical analysis and participant interviews to get a deep understanding of school decline at Andrews High School. First, I examined historical artifacts such as school newspapers, yearbooks, and employee records. These documents shaped a more robust assessment of school decline at Andrews to get an understanding of the traditions of the school. Finally, the participants interviewed were a former school district leader, two former school principals, two

alumni and community leaders, two alumni parents, and a parent. Interviewees discussed their lived experiences at the study site to provide answers that helped the research on school decline. This research design provided multiple layers of essential data to help understand and triangulate the details of school decline of a historic, African American, urban high school in the southern United States.

Analyzing the student assessment data specifically for this campus will help the readers to understand the decline at Andrews along with the local and state mandates and other internal and external causes that might have caused the school to decline. The knowledge of participants provided a lens on the past of Andrews. The participants selected have lived experiences of Andrews and its eventual decline and shared a rich perspective of the school's past. This study may help guide school and district leaders in the process of school turnaround. For this study, leaders included elected leaders who serve on the school board, responsible for making decisions for the schools in the district.

### **Limitations**

Studies on school decline are limited; the phenomenon, according to Hochbein (2012b), was defined initially by scholars Brookover and Lezotte in 1979, but the “construct has remained understudied” (p. 94). Duke (2008) further described a “scarcity of research ... of declining schools” (p. 667). This study was limited to one urban secondary school after the decline had occurred. However, reviewing the historical records of Andrews captured a wealth of valuable information. Numerous external and internal conditions may impact school decline, such as school leadership, teacher quality, the instructional curriculum, student outputs, and educational policy factors. This study

was limited by only interviewing the study participants once. However, other sources of data were analyzed to address the factors leading to the decline at Andrews.

### **Assumptions**

Some assumptions I have are that low-performing schools are predetermined by the increased accountability system, student population, resources, or a lack of resources. The student population at the school in this study was mostly African American students who were highly segregated and low resourced (see Leithwood et al., 2010).

Additionally, there was the assumption that all local mandates were designed to promote student achievement and lead to the success of schools. Campus and district leaders were assumed to be motivated to ensure the success of their students. However, there was an understanding that the impact of the implementation of local mandates has not been equitable towards all schools and student populations. Interviewees were assumed to be in a position to give meaningful data about the school. They also were assumed to give full and honest answers, particularly given the confidentiality of their identities.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

In Chapter 2, I review the literature related to school decline and school turnaround and discussed the implications for leadership. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methods of the study, including the research design, the selection of the sample, the data collection steps, and the data analysis procedures. In Chapter 4, I discuss the research findings and the data analyses and describe how the research methods were applied. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings in terms of their importance and significance. In Chapter 5, I also discuss how current school and district leaders are addressing school decline at Andrews and provide recommendations for further research.

## Definition of Terms

**Board of Education:** The Board of Education is the official policy-making body of the district. The nine trustees are elected from separate districts and serve 4-year terms, according to the district website in 2020.

**Campus leadership:** The instructional leadership team on the campus includes the school principal, assistant principals, dean of students, and counselors.

**District leadership:** This study included leaders from the district office such as assistant superintendents, chief of schools, and district Board of Education trustees.

**Failing school:** For this study, chronically low-performing schools are considered failing schools. Murphy and Meyers (2008) stated,

The term *failing* is used interchangeably with terms that range from euphemistic substitutes to graphic descriptors—for example, needing help, in need of improvement, needing improvement, underperforming, low performing, schools in decline, ineffective schools, troubled schools, corrective actions schools, special interventions schools, reconstitution-eligible schools, educational bankruptcy, and academic bankruptcy. (p. 15)

**Local education agency:** A local education agency is defined in federal law as follows:

a public board of education or other authority legally constituted in a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function, public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for

its public elementary schools or secondary schools. (Local Educational Agency, 2020, § 300.28)

**Local mandates:** Local policy is developed and approved by the local Board of Education, according to the district website in 2018.

**Low-performing:** “Some public schools are called low-performing schools if a substantial number of students (usually 20 percent or more) are not proficient in reading or mathematics for two or more years” (Pascual, 2013, para. 1).

**Migration:** In this study, migration will represent movement from one part of the city to another neighborhood in the city.

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):** Kutash et al. (2010) described NCLB as follows:

The federal government’s NCLB Act of 2001 required all public schools to administer statewide standardized tests annually to students in certain grades and subjects. NCLB represented the most sweeping changes to ESEA since its 1965 enactment. In addition to a focus on stronger accountability, the act increased school choice and local control and emphasized proven teaching methods. (p. 21)

**Reconstitution:** “This reform strategy seeks to enhance the stock of human capital in schools by replacing (or threatening to replace) large percentages of a school’s administrators, teachers, and support staff with individuals who are presumably more capable and committed” (Rice & Malen, 2010, p. 5).

**School decline:** This term refers to “the process by which a school’s ability to accomplish its student achievement goals diminish over time” (Hochbein, 2011, p. 290).

**School reform:** This term includes “any planned changes in the way a school or school system functions, from teaching methodologies to administrative processes” (RAND, 2020, para. 1).

**State assessments:** The state Student Assessment Division manages and oversees student standardized assessment, including the development, administration, scoring, and analysis of results, according to the state education agency website in 2020.

**State mandate:** A mandate “refers to a state law that requires a political subdivision to engage in an activity or provide a service, or to increase the level of its activities or services” (U.S. Legal, 2020, para. 1).

**Student achievement:** Students are achieving when they acquire knowledge and skills in key contents areas such as language arts, math, science, and history, which are critically important building blocks for higher order thinking (Education Evolving, 2016).

**Turnaround:** “Turnaround is a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that: a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years; and b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization” (Kutash et al., 2010, p. 13)

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

Education historian McGuinn (2006) pointed to racial and financial inequities, stating, “If education was the key to social mobility, ... it was clear that too many schools lacked the resources to provide the necessary skills to students from disadvantaged backgrounds” (p. 29). In the quest to improve schools, educators, researchers, and policymakers have not closely examined reasons for the conditions of the schools labeled as low performing (e.g., Duke, 2008; Hochbein, 2010). With mounting pressures to improve America’s failing public schools after NCLB (2002), accountability data became available to the public to indicate whether schools were meeting standards established by the state, marking schools as successful or low performing. Current federal educational reform mandates allow easier access for policymakers, researchers, and educators to public school data. By reviewing public school data, policymakers, school leaders, and researchers can analyze the causes of failing schools (Stone, 2002).

This literature review draws on the findings based on the use of key terms, such as *the achievement gap*, *private sector organizational decline*, *school decline*, *failing schools*, *school turnaround*, *urban school challenges*, and *urban school leadership*, to help develop a thorough understanding of the causes of school decline. I included 62 peer-reviewed articles found through Google Scholar, ERIC, and multiple universities’ online libraries. Additionally, 62 books aided the research for this study. However, all of the books reviewed are not cited in this study because of their lack of specific relevance to the topic. Articles and books selected for this research included the most relevant information on the key terms used in this research.



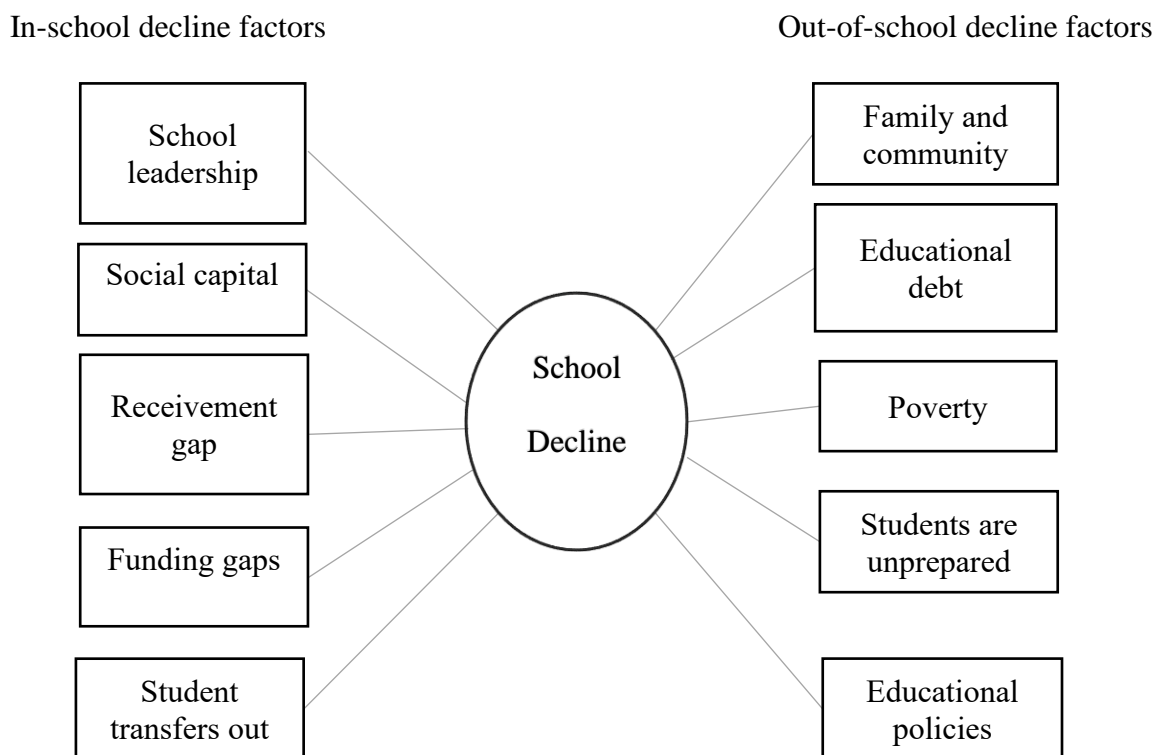
This chapter includes the conceptual framework and five main sections of the literature. First, I address urban public school challenges that the literature discussed, which a school in decline may encounter. These urban challenges include poverty, social capital, the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement, underprepared students, funding gaps, and student transfers out of the school. The number of students transferring out of low-performing schools can result in a loss of financial resources to the school. Second, I discuss urban school leadership in turnaround schools and the approaches school leaders may take with a school in decline. Third, I discuss education debt and its impact on vulnerable students in urban public schools. Fourth, I discuss literature to frame an understanding of school decline as noted by school reform scholars. This section on understanding school decline includes the definition of school decline, organizational decline, mapping the decline process, ignoring early warning signals, prototypes of declining school performance, indicators of decline, and the impact of homogeneous populations. In the fifth section, I discuss an understanding of school turnaround as it relates to school decline. It is important to provide an understanding of the previous research for the school decline phenomena, as well as to provide a rationale for the need for further research on school decline. Finally, I close with a conclusion of the literature review.

### **Conceptual Framework**

With any problem, there is a cause, and if that cause is not identified, only the symptoms will be addressed and the problem will continue. An extensive review of literature on the organizational and school decline revealed types of conceptual or theoretical frameworks used by educational reform scholars (Duke, 2004; Hochbein &

Duke, 2008; Slatter, 1984; Slater & Simmons, 2010). The conceptual framework that I selected for this study is the causal framework. Slatter (1984) defined the causal framework as the development of a “suitable system to classify factors causing school decline” (p. 24). The causal framework helped me identify the critical juncture of school decline for Andrews by looking at the antecedent conditions (Hochbein & Duke, 2008; Slatter, 1984; Slater & Simmons, 2010) that produced the downward spiral in the school. The causal framework helped to capture a picture of what caused the school to decline and possible explanations (Limoges, Gemmel, Landry, & De Paepe, 2017).

I used the conceptual framework in one approach (Murphy & Meyers, 2008) that reviewed existing antecedents of school decline based on the literature on organizational and decline studies. For this study, the antecedents were considered in-school and out-of-school decline factors. Education reform scholars (Argenti, 1976; Duke, 2008; Hochbein & Duke, 2011) cautioned that existing causes of decline identified in the literature were inadequate. Argenti (1976) deemed causes in the literature “inadequate weapons in the prediction of failure” (p. 152). Although factors described in the literature provided a clear image of the circumstances of the causes for decline (Murphy & Meyers, 2008), which might be reflected in school decline at Andrews, other conditions must be considered. To support the causal framework, a cause-and-effect diagram, a “visual technique which aids the process of defining the elements of a problem or event and determining how it probably occurred” ((Doggett, 2005, p. 35), is provided in Figure 1. Whereas these factors might have shifted the decline at Andrews, other factors might arise or these factors identified in the literature might not all be relevant to this study.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework: Research-based factors of school decline.

Figure 1 is a summary of existing causes of school decline based on the review of the literature. Gaps in this framework were completed after the participant interviews and analyses of the data revealed emerging themes from their lived experiences.

### **Urban School Challenges**

Research on school decline and school turnaround has indicated many urban factors that can impact student learning in urban areas and lead to school failure: (a) poverty; (b) social capital, cultural capital, Black cultural capital, or myth; (c) the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement; (d) unprepared students; (e) funding gaps; (f) transfers out, resulting in school closures; and (g) urban school turnaround leadership. These factors leading to school failure are major concerns for public urban schools in America.

**Poverty.** Poverty is a challenge for American public schools (Gorski, 2013; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Rebell & Wolff, 2012). The problem of children living in poverty is difficult and complicated. More than 72 million children under 18 are living in the United States, and 45% reside with families of low-income status. The South has the greatest number of children living in poverty (12.5 million or 45%) of U.S. regions (Jiang & Koball, 2018; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018; Rebell & Wolff, 2012). Poverty rates among Blacks (26%) and Hispanics (24%) are greater than for Whites (13%) in the United States (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). Poverty can affect student progression through high school (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018). Leithwood et al. (2010) stated that low socioeconomic status and lack of student achievement are dominant factors that determine student success. Students who live in poverty are more vulnerable to dropping out of school and, in many instances, are underperforming when compared to students of higher socioeconomic status.

Poverty affects not only educational opportunity, but also rising mobility, well-being, and safety for many children (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018). Scholars have argued that children who live in poverty cannot control their socioeconomic status, which may be the result of many generations of unemployment, low income, a lack of parental education to help their children learn, and a lack of educational opportunities or access to enrichment activities and advanced classes (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015; Gorski, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Rebell & Wolff, 2012).

**Social capital, cultural capital, Black cultural capital, and myth.** Social capital scholars Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (1995) made significant

contributions to theorizing social capital. According to Quilley and Loyal (2017), French sociologist Bourdieu stated individuals with access to resources, knowledge, and cultural and societal values, gained from their parents, tend to have a position of power. By adding extracurricular cultural habits combined with educational credentials, Bourdieu coined the term *cultural capital*, which is defined as “instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 488). However, Bourdieu has been criticized for his views on social and cultural capital because they create social inequities with race and class (Quilley & Loyal, 2017) and are considered a deficit view rather than asset-based thinking (Yosso, 2005). Coleman’s (1988) approach to social capital was based on trust, values, and bringing all people together regardless of race or class, as a community. Since 2000, social capital has moved into other contexts such as politics and education to help combat social inequities in education and political policies.

Some educational scholars have noted social capital is lacking among students who live in poverty, contributing to lower student achievement. For example, Leithwood et al. (2010), school turnaround researchers, stated the “absence of social capital, which is in abundance in affluent schools, makes it much more difficult for schools in disadvantaged circumstances” (p. 46). Leithwood et al. (2010) contended that many urban school districts are riddled with areas of unemployment, crime, and drugs; for many students, this is a way of life. In many instances, Leithwood et al. (2010) said, it is a challenge for educators to convince young people of the benefits of education and achievement, given the students’ origins in generations of hardship. However, Leithwood et al. (2010), in their statements on social capital, mirrored a deficit view, similar to the criticized view of Bourdieu.

Education scholar Ladson-Billings (2006, 2018) created new models for examining ways to reduce disparities between mainstream and minority students. Ladson-Billings (2006) argued that there is a “relationship between schooling/social capital of one’s neighborhood and decisions by young people regarding their level of schooling” (p. 5). Ladson-Billings (2006) noted the myth that students in urban schools do not care about education or achievement. Sociologist Carter (2005) argued that conventional interpretations of cultural capital promote deficit perspectives of the poor and working classes. Carter (2005) preferred to use the term *Black cultural capital*, defined as “the appreciations, tastes, styles, and coded expressions of urban African American youth” (Wallace, 2016, p. 40). Carter (2003) further argued that in urban schools, African American youth’s expressions, language, response to teaching, and learning are labeled deficient. Carter (2005) maintained that African American youth in urban areas have capital like taste, style, and knowledge that are cherished in local groups, by their peers, and gradually by the White majority. According to Carter (2005) and Ladson-Billings (2006), students in urban schools do care about education and their achievement. Additionally, Gorski (2013) identified many studies that provide evidence that families with low income value education equally to families who are not low income.

**The impact of teacher expectations on student achievement.** In many cases, urban schools demonstrate poor academic achievement. Literature has indicated a connection between teacher beliefs and expectations and student academic performance (Fergus, 2017; Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016). Fergus (2017) and Peterson et al. (2016) found that that teacher beliefs were not fully responsible for

unequal outcomes, but rather inequitable behaviors toward students of color impacted student achievement. Eccles, Wong, and Peck (2006) stated that African American high school students who encountered daily racial discrimination by their teachers lost academic motivation and engagement. Teachers with different expectations of students based on their beliefs deprive students of color of high-level learning opportunities (Rubie-Davies, 2015).

In a study on erasing opportunity gaps, Gorski (2013) defined opportunity gap as “the inequities in working class and poor families’ access to a wide variety of opportunities and resources outside of school” (p. 86). In an effort to promote equitable classrooms, Gorski developed equity literacy principles to aid educators in developing effective strategies for working with diverse populations.

An in-school factor that impacts the success of a turnaround school is creating an environment of high expectations for students. G nal and Demirtaşh (2016) stated that turnaround teachers must promote an atmosphere of high expectations, connecting student experiences and cultures to support a safe learning environment. According to Bernard (2003), turnaround teachers provided “three supports and opportunities critical to healthy development and school success: caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation/contribution” (p. 117). When teachers have high expectations regarding student performance, students perform accordingly to these expectations (G nal & Demirtaşh, 2016). High expectations must become standard practice for each classroom.

**Underprepared students.** Researchers of the challenges of urban education in the United States have observed that African American students and other students of

color receive fewer instructional resources. With fewer instructional resources, learning opportunities for the more vulnerable student decrease (Darling-Hammond, 2001). With the federal regulation of high-stakes testing (NCLB, 2002), many students in urban areas were unprepared to do well on high-stakes accountability tests because of unequal access. Policymakers must continue to distribute funds equitably to all schools if they are serious about providing an equitable education to all students. Policymakers must share the labor of creating funding systems for education that will meet the needs of all students.

**Funding gaps.** The cost of education varies across the United States, leaving some of the poorest children in urban areas with insufficient resources (Owing & Kaplan, 2013; Reece, 2012; O. K. Wong & Casing, 2010). According to school finance scholar Yinger (2004), many education finance systems have been ruled unconstitutional. Ladson-Billings (2006) illuminated the gaps in funding, noting that high-poverty schools receive less funding than low-poverty schools. Ladson-Billings (2006) further argued that funding gaps create inequities that undermine historical landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), which made racial segregation in schools unconstitutional.

Scholars also have challenged how the achievement gap is conceptualized in education. Darling-Hammond (2013), in her research on inequality and school resources, helped policymakers understand the opportunity gap, which is defined as a “cumulative differences in access to key educational resources that support learning: ... expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and plentiful information resources” (p. 77). The cumulative differences listed by Darling-Hammond (2013) supported Duke’s (2008) list of 11 school decline



indicators (see Appendix A). The lack of educational resources reduces a student's educational opportunity and can negatively influence student achievement, increasing the risk that the school will decline. Darling-Hammond (2013) further suggested these resource deficits were not new concepts to education, but rather have complicated educational opportunities for students of color. Darling-Hammond (2013) agreed that the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) is a major factor that has created inequities with educational resources for ethnic minority children.

**Transfers out resulting in school closures.** Another factor is that White and wealthier families have been moving into communities of color yet often opt out of enrolling their children in the neighborhood school (Garcia, 2008; Wilson, 2016). The transfer policy shares many similarities with the desegregation strategy of moving students among institutions to achieve abstract equality of results among individuals in different groups. Transfers, in some instances, have done “just as much damage as desegregation to social order in schools” (Bankston, 2010, p. 194). Garcia (2008) compared attendance data of Arizona district schools with charter schools from 1997–2003. Garcia found when “parents opt out of their neighborhood schools for charter, magnet, and private schools, the schools they leave will face even lower test scores, decreased funding, and eventual closure” (p. 5). School closures can be attributed to the lack of funding for some public schools due to the lack of student enrollment, an increase in government mandates, or the lack of preventative action or monitoring by school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2010).

With schools facing the possibility of closure, Duke (2016) shared that many district leaders were compelled to decide (a) to close the low-performing school and

redirect students to higher performing campuses or (b) to opt for the restart turnaround model option, closing the school and reopening the school under new leadership.

Deciding to close a school or not has become an area of concern for families of potentially displaced students and the community. Engberg, Gill, Zamarro, and Zimmer (2011) discovered that over 10 years many urban school districts across the United States opted to close schools when student enrollment declined and student achievement was low. Engberg et al. stated school closures incited concern over the negative impact of student achievement. Engberg et al. said transferring students typically enrolled in schools with low student achievement, with only a small percentage (6%) of students from closed schools enrolling in high-performing schools.

Corrales (2017) noted that many schools closing are in areas with a high concentration of students of color. Peck and Reitzug (2014) claimed school closures negatively impacted urban African American and Latino families by hindering access to social services as well. According to Corrales, the goal of school closures and the reality of school closures amounted to racial discrimination, resulting in increased educational inequality for students of color.

### **Urban School Turnaround Leadership**

Many studies have explored the trials and strategies for turning around underperforming schools (Duke 2008; Ferris, 2012; Housman & Martinez, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lochmiller & Chesnut, 2017; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; Slayton & Mathis, 2010; Zeinabadi, 2014). However, research is limited on low-performing schools that have been turned around (Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008). Leadership is critical for success, according to educational reform researchers Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, and

Russ (2004). Muijs et al. reviewed prior studies on school effectiveness and school improvement and determined that true school leadership includes “distributed and democratic” (p. 156) forms of leadership that embrace teachers leaders. In addition to the inclusion of teacher leaders, Muijs et al. reported school leaders in turnaround schools were more successful when they practiced open and clear communication of vision and expectations, which resulted in student gains in vulnerable urban school districts in the United States. In many turnaround schools, few leaders and teachers were adequately prepared with turnaround strategies to handle the complex challenges the schools face. Teachers and leaders of these schools must be expert teachers and leaders with passion, skills, and the ability to effectively manage the improvement process (Orr et al., 2008).

In many turnaround schools, the systemic cause of school failure is a lack of a team approach to student academic success, lack of the implementation of a standards-based curriculum, lack of the use of data to improve instruction, and lack of ensuring instructional resources (Ferris, 2012; Orr et al., 2008). Successful school turnaround leaders provide teachers time to plan together, to review student performance data, and to improve instructional practices (Leithwood et al., 2010). Effective instructional leadership strategies promote teacher reflection, personal growth, collaboration and efficacy, respect for knowledge, and risk-taking and build successful authentic relationships between teachers and leaders (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). When teachers and leaders work in this type of partnership, they share a vision of school improvement. According to Zeinabadi (2014), relationships among teachers and principals were an important predictor of a school’s readiness to reform and ability to sustain reform.

Researchers on school decline have agreed that unsuccessful leadership is a key cause of school decline.

A turnaround environment requires a team approach of influential leaders, teachers, and teacher leaders who are empowered to act, with district support, to provide coaching and mentor teachers (Ferris, 2012; Orr et al., 2008). The team must receive professional development specific to turnaround schools (Ferris, 2012; Orr et al., 2008). This team approach has been successful in turnaround schools in Boston, Massachusetts, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Ferris, 2012). Every turnaround school must have a dynamic partnership with competent teachers and leaders to ensure every student receives highly effective instruction (McGuinn, 2006; Orr et al., 2008; Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

According to Kutash et al. (2010), building capacity for turnaround schools is an external condition that impacted the success of turnaround schools. Between 2005 and 2009, roughly 15,000 schools in the United States were labeled as needing improvement, with 6,000 of these schools in the stage of being restructured. These schools needed adequate turnaround experts to assist in the initial turnaround process through long-term sustainability. Building capacity for an effective turnaround will require aligned support from the community and other partnerships.

Many states have specific departments committed to turnaround efforts by helping local schools establish turnaround systems for long-term success (Kutash et al., 2010). Successful turnaround schools should be led by effective leaders. Still, a capacity gap remains; many states do not have specific units to prepare leaders for the challenges of school turnaround efforts (Calkins et al., 2007). Large urban centers like New York and Chicago have paved the way by building capacity with local organizations and

foundations to broaden their external capacity to help with underperforming schools (Calkins et al., 2007). For example, in the state that is the focus of this study, a Turnaround Center was created for district and school support, provide technical assistance to districts and schools, build capacity for school improvement, and develop a network of support and knowledge for a sustainable turnaround.

Although many states have taken an approach to building capacity to ensure turnaround efforts, research has indicated some key gaps impede efforts to building capacity in turnaround schools:

1. According to Kutash et al. (2010), there were not enough turnaround leaders with experience to support the number of schools designated as needing restructuring.
2. Additionally, state and local leaders feared that federal infusions of funding such as Race to the Top were temporary and might not sustain the turnaround work necessary unless it was rooted in NCLB (Kutash et al., 2010). Manna and Ryan (2011) also pointed out the Race to the Top is a few regulatory paragraphs from the U.S. Department of Education.
3. Discussions about turnaround schools can spark heated debate, when a decision must be made to close a school.
4. Turnaround schools may be hindered by teacher agreements, which may limit leaders changing staff.
5. More research is needed on effective turnaround initiatives that can be shared with other turnaround schools.

6. School improvement is complicated but more challenging for high schools that need to be restructured in urban areas (Kutash et al., 2010).

Strong school leadership is important to the success of a low-performing school (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). According to researchers (Lochmiller & Chesnut, 2017; Orr et al., 2008; Peck & Reitzug, 2013; Trujillo, 2015), successful turnaround leaders focus on teacher leadership attentive to instructional improvement, use district data to urge individualized instruction, increase their understanding of students' cultural backgrounds to impact learning, and increase parental involvement.

### **Education Debt's Impact on Vulnerable Students**

With tremendously low achievement results for student achievement and increased accountability systems, Democratic and Republican political leaders over the last two decades have attempted to close the gap on their views about the role of the federal government in education (McGuinn, 2005) to support education reform (Tampio, 2016). A number of speeches have been made, and a lot of money has been spent on education reform (McGuinn, 2005; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; Tampio, 2016), with the goal to support the success of all students in America (McGuinn, 2005; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). However, success of all students has not always been the case, as evidenced by the achievement gaps between White students and students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2013; McGuinn, 2005). Students of color and students living in poverty in many instances have not acquired the literacy skills necessary to benefit from a society of economic wealth or share a level of education (Chambers, 2009; Gorski, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). Students of color need the same opportunity to have economic prosperity as students who were wealthy. Vulnerable students must be

provided with the same access to opportunities to participate in healthy learning, participate in high-quality school-related activities, and be included in advanced programs well before high school (Chambers, 2009; Gorski, 2013; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Peck & Reitzug, 2014). School leaders and schoolteachers must practice equity literacy, which Gorski (2013) explained as the following:

The skills and dispositions that enable us to recognize, respond to, and to redress conditions that deny some students access to educational opportunities enjoyed by their peers and, in doing so, sustain equitable learning environments for all students and families. (p. 20)

When teachers and school leaders use equity literacy, their goal is to ensure all students have the same equal access to rich learning at the onset of their educational experience (Chambers, 2009; Gorski, 2013; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). Ladson-Billings (2013) analyzed concerns related to the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students compared to White students, and whether this achievement gap could be a factor leading to school decline for schools with homogeneous populations.

Student achievement for all students is important because poor student performance may lead to low-level employment that will not rise above poverty. Ladson-Billings (2013) argued, “The only way to truly understand achievement disparities is to understand the larger context in which they developed” (p. 14). Rothstein (2013) supported Ladson-Billings’s (2013) argument on the achievement disparities and identified those factors of the larger context. Through his research on children from a lower socioeconomic status, Rothstein said that student health, the lack of affordable housing, and parents from different social classes were the disparities impacting the

achievement gap. Rothstein further argued that public schools were failing if they produced large gaps in academic achievement between middle-class White students and low-income students of color.

Ladson-Billings (2006), in her research on the achievement gap, described how the term is common, used in many realms of conversation to theorize why there is such a gap—this is evident in much of the research on decline. Ladson-Billings (2006) preferred to view the achievement gap as a result of education debt, created by “the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society” (p. 5).

Ladson-Billings (2006) continued her argument that education debt is a result of historical debt, such as racial inequities against African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. She cited landmark education segregation cases such as *Mendez v. Westminster* in 1946 and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which sought to remedy the exclusion students of color from an equitable and high-quality education. Ladson-Billings (2006) argued that students of color were exposed to funding gaps in comparison to White students. Using Chicago Public Schools as an example, the district served a student population that was 87% African American and Hispanic and received roughly \$8,400 annually per student; in comparison, Highland Park, a district with a 90% White student population, received over \$17,000 annually per student. Ladson-Billings (2006) called the funding disparities an economic debt that leads to income and employment disparities, because students who graduate from high school will earn more than a student who does not graduate from high school; race and gender also dictate income earnings. Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1965, people of color were denied active participation in



civic processes, which Ladson-Billings (2006) called a sociopolitical debt, stripping African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans of civic processes that were afforded to Whites. Ladson-Billings (2006) concluded her discussion on education debt with moral debt, which is “the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do” (p. 8). Ladson-Billings (2006) stated, “Personal responsibility must be coupled with social responsibility” (p. 8), and education debt must be addressed “because it is the equitable and just thing to do” (p. 9).

Chambers (2009), in her research on the achievement gap, examined the phenomenon by addressing the *receivment gap*, which she coined as “educational inputs—what the students receive on their educational journey” (p. 418). Chambers argued that some Black students were treated differently by their teachers because of their background. The different treatment leads to disparate schooling experiences between Black students and their White counterparts. Disparate experiences may occur in the same school and even in the same classroom. These disparate experiences have a negative influence on the Black students’ academic outputs on standardized tests, contributing to the achievement gap. Administrators and educators must provide a caring environment, staffed with highly qualified teachers, from the onset of a student’s education to reduce the number of students facing the challenges of the receivment gap. Thus, the receivment gap is another layer that can increase the achievement gap, rather than closing it.

Another layer of disparities facing education was identified and discussed by Tate and Striley (2010) in their research on epidemiology and education research, which highlighted health disparities and the impact on education outcomes. Tate and Striley

compared the parallels of NCLB with the health disparities movement because both were designed to eliminate unjust social outcomes. In their analysis of the literature on health disparities and educational achievement, Tate and Striley found a connection between health and student achievement. Specifically, they found a link between childhood illnesses and childhood and adolescent mental health problems and poor academic performance, including an increased risk of high school dropout. Tate and Striley noted that a California study finding “900,000 school-aged children in California diagnosed with asthma missed about 1.9 million days of school, and poor children with the illness were more than twice as likely to miss a week or more of school as non-poor children with asthma” (p. 2). Students need to be in class to learn the lesson, and such findings are important for school leaders to understand the impact of physical illnesses on student success. Tate and Striley discussed another growing concern of mental illness in school-aged students in which only “5-7% have received health services for their disability, ... a significant problem in poor and racially segregated schools and communities” (p. 2). School leaders must understand the impact that external concerns such as health and attendance can have on the overall performance of the campus.

More recently, Childs (2017) detailed critical research on chronic absenteeism in urban education, leading to declining student enrollment. Childs’s research demonstrated the impact of student attendance on student outcomes, a decline in federal and state funding, increased support for school choice, and the need to create federal regulations to track chronic absences. Many urban school district leaders were aware of the impact of student attendance and were creating programs to help increase student attendance and improve student outcomes. When Duke (2008) and his team of researchers studied

declining schools, they discovered that many low-performing schools were populated with a significant number of students with reading deficits and low attendance rates, and reading and literacy curricula were not aligned to meet the needs of the students. To prevent further decline, Duke (2008) recommended that school leaders find solutions to improve student attendance and adjust their literacy curriculum.

According to the Brookings Institution (2020), “Over the last several decades, it has become clear that achieving the American Dream now takes both hard work and good education—good enough to command a job that pays a non-poverty wage” (para. 2). This finding also supports other observations that U.S. schools have not been preparing students to compete globally, and students do not have sufficient skills in advanced technology, reading, problem-solving and inquiry, which would enable them to seek jobs as “scientists, engineers, and mathematicians who would enable us to keep pace” with international competition (Rhim & Redding, 2014, p. 20). Some schools have not provided all children with equal opportunities to learn, thus creating the need for additional federal regulations to support equity for students of color and students with special needs. An “unequal allocation of resources and program opportunities” further sparked conversations with educational advocates (Rhim & Redding, 2014, p. 20).

The focus on the achievement gap, according to Ladson-Billings (2006), helped to demonstrate the inequality that continues to exist in the U.S. educational system. However, what continued to elude discussions about gaps in achievement were the fundamental causes of the continued achievement gap, causes Ladson-Billings (2006) termed the education debt. Peck and Reitzug (2014) argued there has been little discussion on the general needs of students and their learning experiences in low-

achieving schools. Rather, Peck and Reitzug stated literature on achievement gap seldom has separated students from their achievement, performance, or progress, thus connecting their worth to how well they performed on a test. Student test scores should not be the only determining factor on whether the achievement gap is widening. Peck and Reitzug as well as Lineburg and Gearhart (2013) argued that more conversations are needed about student social and emotional well-being in low-achieving schools.

### **Understanding School Decline**

With limited research on the causes of declining school-level academic performance, it is difficult for school and district leaders to understand why so many schools are not meeting federal and state regulations to improve academic performance. Duke and Hochbein (2008) and Trujillo and Renee (2013) found learning from previous studies on school improvement is difficult, due to researchers using short-term data rather than data collected over the entire course of the school reform period. Murphy and Meyers (2008) confirmed in their investigation of turnaround literature that education reform springs from school problems to school reform solutions with limited knowledge of why schools and districts were not successful. Leithwood et al. (2010) shared the following regarding school failure:

Many approaches aimed at improving underachieving schools have served to further disadvantage them, largely by failing to take adequate account of their context and by locating the blame for failure squarely within the school. (p. 38)

To understand the spaces in literature on school decline, researchers of educational reforms looked at organizations that have declined in the private sector for answers.

**Operational definitions of school decline.** Hochbein (2012a) investigated the rate at which schools decline and created three operational definitions for school decline: absolute decline, relational decline, and crossing decline. Absolute decline was defined as “schools with a greater English/Language Arts pass rate in 2003 than 2008” (Hochbein, 2012a, p. 75). By using this definition, Hochbein (2012a) identified over 200 elementary schools in decline. Relational decline “compared individual school pass rates from 2003 and 2008 to the annual population mean pass rate in 2003 and 2008” (Hochbein, 2012a, p. 75). The application of relational decline in his study found over 500 elementary schools in decline. The final operational definition of decline, crossing decline, referred to “schools with English/Language Arts pass rates above the population mean in 2008 and below the population mean in 2003” (Hochbein, 2012a, p. 75). Using the third definition, crossing decline, over 150 elementary schools were identified in decline. These three operational definitions to identify schools in decline did not include factors outside of the school. Hochbein and Duke (2011) stated school decline was limited to standardized test passing rates in the late 1970s. Hochbein’s (2012a) examination of the operational definitions was intended to provide educational reformers with some clarity on the definition of school decline, establish the characterization of school decline, and determine if various definitions of school decline will identify declining schools.

**Organizational decline.** In addition to the lack of understanding of school decline and its importance to the field, Cameron et al. (1987), Hochbein (2011), Duke and Hochbein (2008) agreed that there has been some uncertainty about school decline in the turnaround literature and hardly any agreement on the meaning of organizational decline. The definition of school decline has to be represented as organizational decline,

which is a “condition in which a substantial, absolute decrease in an organization’s resource base occurs over a specific period” (Cameron et al., 1987, p. 224). Another definition of private sector organizational decline is “a deterioration in an organization’s adaptation ... and reduction of resources within the organization” (Cameron et al., 1988, p. 209). I will discuss multiple definitions of organizational decline that are relevant to school decline.

Weitzel and Johnson (1989) asserted that external and internal needs not being met on a campus were an early indication of decline. Researchers (Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Trujillo, 2015) encouraged school reform researchers to examine the pitfalls of failing organizations to keep from making the same mistake in the future. Additionally, Trujillo (2015) shared that school reform leaders must look at best school reform efforts from urban settings to learn ways to implement school turnaround successfully.

**Mapping the decline process.** Duke and Hochbein (2008) indicated that previous school reformers and scholarly researchers did not establish pathways or create a diagram that could map the decline process. Duke and Hochbein stated that without established pathways, analyzing school decline is difficult. Hochbein (2011) noted prior to the transparency required by NCLB, educators were distrustful, suspicious, and uncertain about questions related to their schools’ performance. Hochbein (2011) stated school leaders prevented access to their campuses, preventing researchers from helping establish why schools were failing, causing the schools to continue their decline. When school leaders do not accurately identify warning signs of problems with student achievement, their schools will begin to decline, leaving some schools with slim chances of a full

recovery. Duke (2008) also stated that declining student outcomes can be a cause for deeper problems for the school and the students.

Flaws in the American educational system are not new. Pressures to improve the American public education system yielded educational policies such as NCLB (2002) to reevaluate how students were being assessed, how schools were being rated based on student performance, and increasing public knowledge on schools with low student performance (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). The need to turn around public schools was a result of efforts by political leaders, school leaders, and educational reform researchers to improve the American school system (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). To some extent, the inclusion of accountability mandates has helped school reformers gain access to low-performing schools' student performance data with the goal of improving student learning.

**Ignoring early warning signals.** When school leaders know the causes of why their school is failing, they can begin the process of identifying methods to turn around school decline. To reduce the numbers of failing schools, stakeholders need to understand systemic causes (Duke, 2008). Despite many approaches including curriculum and administrative adjustments, increased financial resources, and district and school measurements, school performance often remains low. According to Hochbein and Duke (2011), the dismal evidence of educational reform and school improvement indicated that school leaders, policymakers, and researchers must have a better comprehension of the circumstances for schools' underperformance. Elements of private sector organizational decline such as cutbacks or closures (Hochbein, 2012b) can be applied to the educational sector. Duke and Hochbein (2008) found that failing schools could be prevented from

spending millions of dollars on turnaround strategies that were not delivering desired student performance. They further noted several benefits to understanding school decline as improving chronically low-performing schools is necessary. Hochbein (2010) stated that previous educational reforms and turnaround strategies might have been based on potentially flawed assumptions and speculation as to why schools were failing.

**Prototypes of declining performance.** Hochbein (2012a) shared that the process of school decline includes three prototypes. The first prototype is a catastrophe, which can be described as a single event that sparked a significant decrease in accomplishments (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). The second prototype is a downward spiral, which is a series of connected events that evolve over time, deteriorate the situation, and escalate the speed of decline (Collins, 2009; Hambrick & D'Aveni, 1988; Kanter, 2003; Mausch, 1985). Pearson, Wolgemuth, and Colomer (2015) said, "When schools were in a downward spiral, they had an influx of students with low-income which may have wealthy parents look at other school choice options for their students" (p. 5). Pearson et al. further noted the departure of more affluent students will result in a decline in enrollment, a decrease in test scores, and potentially more segregation in schools. The third prototype is the "boiled-frog phenomenon" (Hochbein, 2012a), in which change is slow and goes unnoticed over time (Senge, 1990). According to Hochbein (2012a), this is a gradual downward spiral that will continue with time.

**Indicators of decline.** The challenges of identifying factors of school decline were originally limited to student performance rates on standardized assessment (Hochbein & Duke, 2008), and researchers rarely focused on other factors of decline proved to be controversial. To identify other factors of school decline, Hochbein and



Duke (2011) encouraged school leaders and researchers to consider all factors to turn around low-performing schools and not just consider the results of standardized testing. Duke (2008) discussed 11 indicators linked to school decline (see Appendix A): (a) undifferentiated assistance, (b) inadequate monitoring of progress, (c) unadjusted daily schedule, (d) alignment problems, (e) ineffective staff development, (f) lost focus, (g) lack of leadership, (h) hasty hiring, (i) increased class size, (j) overreliance on untrained helpers, and (k) more rules and harsher punishments. The list of indicators provided by Duke (2008) is limited to internal operational causes and does not include out-of-school decline factors. Duke and Hochbein (2011) and Hochbein (2012b) suggested that other factors such as external influences should be investigated.

**Homogenous populations.** Mthiyane, Bhengu, and Bayeni (2014) stated factors of decline were related to the quality of the teacher, school leadership, and lack of establishing high expectations for students. However, Leithwood et al. (2010) argued that the fundamental causes of school failure were related to poverty, which has severe consequences on student success in schools with homogeneous populations and schools that lack internal and external assistance. Leithwood et al. (2010), Duke (2008), and Murphy and Meyers (2008) identified other markers of school decline. Murphy and Meyers noted failing schools “serve a disproportionate number of minority students” (p. 638). Influences on school decline include a cyclical pattern of poverty, ill-prepared teachers, unsafe climates, and fearful leadership.

Several studies on school decline (Duke, 2008; Hochbein & Duke, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Murphy & Meyers, 2008) have examined factors associated with school decline and school policies that support the improvement of school performance.

Hochbein and Duke's (2008) work closely followed the research of Duke (2008) and Murphy and Meyers (2008), who wrote extensively on failing schools, organizational decline, school turnaround, and school leadership. Leithwood et al. (2010) analyzed the stages of school decline to support school turnaround success. This study explored new ways of understanding school decline.

### **Understanding School Turnaround**

Growing concerns have emerged with the school turnaround model. Mixed results from school leaders and turnaround scholars have questioned the assumption that school turnaround is the most valuable way to improve student achievement, although it is a major fixture in recent federal education policy (Duke, 2008; Hochbein, 2012b; Leithwood et al., 2010; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; Trujillo, 2012). Additionally, the turnaround model is associated with low student performance, high staff and leadership turnover, instability, poor school climate, inexperienced teachers, and racial and social economic segregation (Duke, 2006; Hochbein, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2010; Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Trujillo, 2012). Interventions aimed at improving school and student performance have intersected with federal education policies to making funding available for urban schools (Anyon, 2005) to support school turnaround efforts (Kutash et al., 2010). Trujillo (2015) posited that schools using interventions from district-level data were having more impact than bold strategies used with School Improvement Grant reform models.

Public school accountability is nothing new; what is new is the language in new educational policies that require states to inform the public of their failing schools. According to Calkins et al. (2007), various criteria such as state assessments and state

accountability were designed to enable improving the most chronically underperforming schools. NCLB (2002) promised reforms that would increase student learning, increase graduation rates, and decrease dropout rates. The impact of NCLB was rated satisfactory in 2004 by the *Times Magazine*, which further said increased accountability standards and testing in chronically low-performing schools in high-poverty areas can be successful (Calkins et al., 2007). However, Aragon and Workman (2015) said NCLB was criticized for inequities in American public education systems inundated with federal and state regulations. According to the American Institutes for Research (2011), “After a decade of NCLB, a subset of schools still had chronically low performance” (p. 2).

Many federal mandates have supported turnaround initiatives since 2002. NCLB (2002) created standards for reading and math and established regulations that determined if a school was failing or passing. This NCLB mandate has impacted the Race to the Top program, which requires states to implement a turnaround model if they have underperforming schools. According to Kutash et al. (2010), local education agencies can select from four turnaround models: the turnaround model, restart, closure, or transformation. The turnaround and transformation models, which replace the principal and 50–90% of the staff, were the most commonly used models. According to Duke (2008), “The goal is to train school principals to be school turnaround specialists and to support them in their efforts to reverse a downward trend in school performance” (p. 667). A school in decline, such as Andrews, requires a school leader who has the experience to recognize the indicators that caused the school to decline and knowledge on how to stop the decline and reverse the downward spiral.

**Conclusion**

Organizing this literature review helped me focus on the background of organizational decline, educational school decline, school turnaround, and educational policies that shape educational reform efforts today. The literature review helped me situate this study. First, I gained an understanding of federal educational policies that shaped school reform. Second, I gained an understanding of organizational decline and how school leaders and school researchers have been able to apply private sector concepts to education to begin to map out a definition of school decline. Third, I had to understand the challenges that urban schools face, such as achievement gaps; funding gaps; and the involvement of the federal government with increased accountability measures that have been criticized for not being equitable for all students, especially students of color in urban areas.

## **Chapter III**

### **Research Design and Methods**

In this study on school decline, I concentrated on examining in-school and out-of-school decline factors that had an impact on the study site, Andrews High School. I used a qualitative case study design using a combination of historical analysis and participant interviews to establish a deep understanding of school decline at Andrews High School. The research questions that guided this study are presented first, followed by details of the research design and the decision to select a case study design. Site and participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis are discussed. Finally, I close this chapter with a positionality statement and a conclusion.

#### **Research Questions**

School decline and organizational decline literature guided the research questions. The research should add to what researchers such as Duke (2008); Hochbein (2011); Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2013); and Murphy and Meyers (2008) found about school decline and contributing factors. As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature has suggested many origins of why schools decline.

As a former administrator familiar with the school under study, I was provided an advantage to learn the history of the strong tradition of excellence that existed many years ago. However, today, the community opinion of the school rests on the reputation of a poor-performing campus. I examined a diverse collection of data that helped me make sense of school decline at the traditional, urban public high school. The purpose of this research was to understand the factors that have contributed to the decline of a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school. Therefore, I examined the

experiences of eight stakeholders, including former students and current district leaders, on the educational challenges and the impact on school decline at Andrews. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What in-school and out-of-school factors led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school?
2. How did key stakeholders describe in-school and out-of-school factors that led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school?

### **Research Design**

During this case study, I collected data in multiple ways to triangulate the raw data. Data were collected through a review of a wide range of historical school archives from the inception of the school, including state assessment records, district policies, newspaper articles, school newspapers, and school personnel records. I briefly present the eras of the study site in Appendix B. In addition, I conducted in-depth interviews with a former school district leader, two former school principals, two alumni and community leaders, two alumni parents, and a parent. The parents were active in the Parent Teacher Organization, including a former president. The findings were specific to a single case study categorized by historical data and participants' interviews. I analyzed the historical data to identify the in-school and out-of-school decline factors that might have caused the school to decline. Additionally, the analysis of the participants' interviews revealed factors that led to school decline.

The potential participants identified to participate in this study were considered based on their relationship with the study site. Two participants were considered because they were former school leaders at the study site and had lived experiences of the

operation of the campus. One participant was considered based on his experience as a former district leader as well as a state and federal educational leader with key insights to educational policies on the local, state, and national levels. Three participants were parents with a child in attendance at the study school; two of the three were alumni as well. Parents were identified to provide their perspective on the school today based on their involvement with the school. Additionally, two participants were alumni of the site and notable community leaders in and around the school. The next section describes the selection and rationale of research methodologies, which supports a case study.

### **The Rationale for Methodology**

Research on school decline has yielded mostly studies that used quantitative methods to measure school decline. For example, Hochbein (2012b) used a longitudinal analysis of school turnaround and school decline, observing the accomplishments of schools after going through an impressive upturn or decline. Hochbein and Duke (2011) used an unconditional linear model to study school decline at an elementary school after an influx of students with low socioeconomic status. However, not all research on school decline has been quantitative. For example, in his study of his alma mater, Thomas Jefferson High School, Duke (1995) analyzed the history of the school's changing demographics in its attempt to underline school decline. Using a descriptive account of the past, Duke (1995) analyzed written notes he solicited from people familiar with the changes of the school but failed to get individual understandings or sources from research. In later research, Duke (2008) argued that circumstances such as a reduction in resources, new educational policies, changes in school personnel, and shifting student demographics were challenges of public schools. Duke (2008) further pointed out that

these circumstances will not cause school decline, but rather the failure to address these challenges will cause a school to decline. Duke (2008) thus referred to the challenge and response analysis to help explain school decline. However, the research on school decline has provided very few perspectives of individuals who might have witnessed school decline.

The choice to use a data triangulation approach was motivated by a study by Valenzuela (1999) in which she coupled qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a vivid understanding of the phenomena of school decline. Hearing the voices of people closely related to Andrews might provide a deep understanding of why the school declined from a school of excellence to its current state of low student performance. As part of the historical analysis, an analysis of student assessments in core subjects gave me insight into student performance from 2003 to 2008 at the site. The analysis of student assessment data was compared to local and state educational policies during the same time frame to determine if they intersected with the school decline at Andrews.

School decline is a complex topic, and the triangulation of the data was helpful to argue this single instrumental case study, defined by Creswell and Poth (2018) as when “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue” (p. 98). Thus, using a case study research design to examine school decline allowed me a rigorous exploration of the concept from various perspectives. Appendix C provides definitions of the data collection methods for this study. A summary of the research questions linked to the data collection method is indicated in Table 2.



Table 2

*Summary of Research Questions Linked to the Data Collection Methods*

Research question	Data collection methods
1. What in-school and out-of-school factors led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school?	Interviews, historical analysis
2. How do key stakeholders describe in-school and out-of-school factors that led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school?	Interviews

**Site Selection**

To study school decline, selecting an appropriate school to study was necessary.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), an ideal site is where

(1) entry is possible; (2) there is a high probability that a vibrant mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures were present; (3) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relationships with the participants in the study; and (4) data quality and credibility of the study were reasonably assured. (p. 51)

After exploring various approaches, such as collecting background pilot data at multiple schools, ultimately Andrews was chosen because it fit the description of a school in decline. Andrews has been in decline off and on for the past 20 years. As a former administrator of the school, according to Yin (2014), I can “fit into some role during participant observation and access a range of subgroups and activities” (p. 54). Table 3 includes student demographics from 2003–2008, the years I examined for this study.

Table 3

*Andrews High School Student Percentage Demographics for 2003–2008*

Year	% of student population				Mobility rate
	Black	Hispanic	White	Economically vulnerable	
2003	91.0	8.1	0.3	73.0	31.1
2004	90.9	8.0	0.2	74.6	30.5
2005	91.7	7.5	0.2	76.4	32.7
2006	92.2	8.0	0.1	87.7	34.7
2007	91.9	7.3	0.4	76.8	31.2
2008	91.5	7.6	0.2	76.1	27.8

*Note.* Mobility rate refers to the % of students who unenrolled from the school that school year.

In 2003, legislative mandates required a more comprehensive assessment to measure the state curriculum. During 2003, Andrews' student population was mostly students of color, with 91% African American and 8% Hispanic students. The study will begin with 2003 as a year of analysis, and at that time, Andrews had 1,379 students. As of the 2018-2019 school year, Andrews served just 874 students. The southern city where Andrews is located has multiple high schools that vary in academic performance. Some high schools were high performing, and some high schools were consistently low performing.

### **Participant Selection Criteria**

I used purposive sampling to choose research participants. Purposive sampling was defined by Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Liao (2004) as “the deliberate seeking out of participants with particular characteristics, according to the needs of the developing analysis and emerging theory” (p. 884). All participants in the study were “carefully chosen ... [and] have all experienced the phenomena” (Creswell, 2018, p. 18). In this

case, the phenomenon was school decline at Andrews. Each participant met the eligibility criteria for this study as stated in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval documents.

After the participants were identified, they were sent an e-mail asking them to participate in the study (see Appendix D). The recruitment e-mail included a copy of the IRB Study Approval and the IRB approved Consent Form. When the participants agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled appointments with them by telephone. I then created an Excel spreadsheet Study Participant Data Tracker (see Appendix E) that detailed the participant's name, assigned study code, date and time of interview, location of the interview, the status of the consent form, field notes from the interview, and emerging themes from the interview. At the onset of the meeting, I read the consent form and had each participant sign the consent to participate (see Appendix F).

In reviewing the literature on school decline, the original selection of participants for this case study changed. According to Lewis-Beck et al. (2004), a novice investigator may not consider participants critical to the study because of the limited knowledge of the study topic. As such, for this study, it was necessary to gain perspectives on the phenomena from multiple layers. Thus, the data collection included interviews with two former students who were community leaders, two current school leaders, three current parents, and a former district leader to hear their lived experiences of decline at Andrews. Eight participants were selected for this study.

### **Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis**

Selected historical documents were included in each interview with the participants. Including the artifacts to review before the interview was designed to elicit

their memory about Andrews. Table 4 identifies the order in which information was collected and analyzed.

Table 4

*Historical Data Collection Timeline*

Week	Data source	Evidence
1	School yearbooks	Images, events, articles
2	School personnel data	Employment history
3	School, public newspaper articles	Student, staff achievement
4	State accountability data	Student assessment results
5	Researched Board of Education	Policies, district policies
6	Participant interviews	Responses to semistructured, open-ended questions

I reviewed yearbooks from Andrews from 1969 to 2015 and scanned pages that evidenced campus and student achievements. Other historical artifacts such as local newspapers were dated from 1962 to 2005, and student newspapers were dated from 1963 to 2004. I found a few local newspaper clippings from 1962 to 2005. All of the scanned pictures of the yearbooks were sent to my Evernote application on my cellular phone and stored as Historical Documents. When I was done scanning the pictures from the yearbooks, I had to return them to the school librarian. The newspapers were photocopied and placed in a box label Archival Data.

To collect historical student assessment data, I called the Performance Reporting Division at the state level to inquire how I could obtain archival student data. The state Performance Reporting Division e-mailed me individual download links for student assessment data for the school years 1993-1994 through 2004-2005. The student assessment data from 2005-2006 to 2018-2019 were accessible to the public online, so I

was able to retrieve the current student assessment data from 2005-2006 to 2018-2019. The Performance Reporting Division also assisted me through a Zoom meeting to show me how download the archival data. The student assessment data can be found in Appendix G.

Field notes were taken on each historical document (see Appendix H). Historical district reports were retrieved from the Internet and saved electronically. Prior to the participant interviews, I reborrowed only a few of the yearbooks for the archival elicitation process. I carried the archival data in a large box with a lid on it to each interview. Due to the weight of all of the yearbooks, I thought it was best to only pack around the yearbooks that covered a specific era. The archival data selected for interview elicitation included yearbooks dated 1969, 1977–1979, and 1986; a selection of student-created and local newspaper articles from 1963–2005; and state assessment records for the site from 2003–2008. These particular archives were selected because they aligned with the era and experience of each of the participants recruited to participate in the study. I invited each participant to review the artifacts and audio recorded their responses. All responses to the archival review were included in each participant’s interview and transcribed if they had any responses or comments about the artifacts.

**Historical data: A declarative memory approach.** Declarative memory or explicit memory is one’s ability to recall general information about events that occurred in the person’s life (Jawabri & Cascella, 2020). My motivation to use declarative memory by providing an array of historical documents for the interview participants to review was to enhance their memory and experience related to Andrews. For this section of the study, the term *declarative memory* will be used. The librarian at Andrews allowed me to

investigate various documents prior to the study to identify artifacts useful for this part of the study. After selecting the participants for the study, I intentionally selected historical artifacts for the participants to review during the interview phase of the study. Some of the historical data were older than the scope of this study because I wanted to select artifacts aligned to the time frame of the participant's experience with Andrews. The table of historical data sources (Appendix H) is a small fraction of the historical data investigated for this study. I did not want to overwhelm the participants with too much data.

Prior to each semistructured interview, each participant was informed about the historical data and the opportunity to review all or part of the historical artifacts of their choice. I audio recorded the participants as they commented on the historical data. Three of the eight participants (Dr. Roberson, Mr. Holmes, and Ms. Kelley) chose not to look at the historical data. Dr. Roberson stated when he left Andrews, he left everything behind. Mr. Holmes and Ms. Kelley had seen many of the artifacts during events at Andrews.

The artifacts provided detailed a thriving culture within the community that supported a tradition of education excellence devoted to curriculum, after-school activities, community involvement, parental support, educational policies, district goals to support the school, and articles to show alumni support of the school's leadership. A full description of each of the artifacts is detailed in Appendix H.

**Historical analysis.** The purpose of the historical analysis was to provide the audience with detailed and factual events from the past. Through the historical analysis method, such events can increase the appreciation of contemporary issues in education by studying its past behaviors (Lune & Berg, 2017). According to Marshall and Rossman

(1995), historical analysis is useful to establish a strong knowledge base before interviewing participants.

**Data collection.** The data collected for this study came from doing fieldwork at the study site. A request was made to review the historical documents. The librarian of Andrews helped identify relevant materials such as news clippings, other articles, yearbooks, and files from the organization. According to Yin (2014), records are beneficial because they can lead to other valuable sources that will validate and supplement the evidence necessary to build an exceptional case study. Other documents such as public reports, government documents, and regulations were used as well. The historical analysis is an unobtrusive measure, defined by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as “methods of collection of data that do not require the cooperation of the subjects ... and [are] particularly useful for triangulation” (pp. 94-95).

**Procedure.** A Microsoft word document (Appendix H) was generated to identify and detail each historical document collected. The database consists of the following fields: (a) document type, (b) author, (c) year of publication, (d) description of item, and (e) key words. The interview participants were shown some of the historical documents, artifacts such as school newspapers, to engage them in a more meaningful dialog. The participants had the opportunity to review the assessment results from 2003 to 2008 in reading and mathematics and photographs that helped the participants begin to elicit their memory.

**Instruments.** A log of the historical documents was created in Microsoft Excel. All papers were scanned using the Evernote Scannable Software Application downloaded on an iPhone. All papers were coded by phrases or themes that emerged from the data.

**Data analysis.** All data collected were analyzed using Dedoose, a research and evaluation data application, the student version for Windows. Saldaña, Leavy, and Beretvas (2011) said, “There is no standard method of data analysis, ... but the primary methods of discovery ... are deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning” (p. 93). The historical data collected in this study went through an inductive analysis. According to Bhattacharya (2017), the researcher “examines raw data sources, chunks of information that is similar in meaning, and then looks for commonalities across and within these groups to identify broad patterns or themes” (p. 112). Using the inductive inferencing method, according to Saldaña et al., allowed me to “explore and infer ... based on the examination and accumulation of knowledge” (p. 93). I developed a codebook (Appendix I) with the name and explanation of each code for this study.

**Interviews.** According to Yin (2014), interviews are “one of the most important sources of case study evidence” (p. 110). Interviews were scheduled with eight participants: two former school leaders, one former district leader, two alumni who were current parents with children attending the study site, one parent, and two community leaders who were also alumni. One of the eight participant interviews was conducted with an influential educational leader in what Marshall and Rossman (1995) considered elite interview. The elite interview was deemed to be based on the participant’s knowledge and expertise in education. An interview protocol for all participants is included in Appendix J. The interview questions (Appendix K) were field tested with a nonparticipant to ensure the questions were valid and would yield responses to answer the research questions. The responses from the nonparticipant are not included in the data.



***Procedure.*** All participant interviews were scheduled in advance after the completion of the IRB process. A site to conduct the interviews was away from the study site to ensure the participants were comfortable sharing their views.

***Instrument.*** Interviewees were asked semistructured interview questions. Jamshed (2014) defined the semistructured interview as an “in-depth interview where the respondents have to answer preset open-ended questions” (p. 87). The interviews lasted 1 hour to 1.5 hours and thus were considered to be what Yin (2014) called shorter case study interviews, which provide a host of valuable information to support the study. Each participant was asked for written permission to audio record the interview using the Voice Record application on a smartphone. After the analysis of the transcribed recordings and coding from individual and focus group interviews, follow-up interviews were unnecessary.

***Data analysis.*** I conducted a deductive analysis of participant interview transcripts. According to Saldaña et al. (2011), a deduction is “what we generally draw and conclude from facts and evidence. ... Deductive inferences are certain (so long as their premises are true)” (p. 93). After a rigorous review of the transcripts, a code was assigned to each commonality or pattern based on the literature review, conceptual framework of school decline, and emergent data. Emerging themes from the literature review on school decline were identified (Table 5). In addition to the preexisting codes (Table 5), I considered the 11 indicators of decline identified by Duke (2008; see Appendix A). The codebook (Appendix I) includes the name and explanation of each code for this study.

Table 5

*Preexisting Codes About School Decline*

Code	Description	Framework code
Weak leadership	“Lack of vision, poor communication, inattention to teaching quality, and failure to make decisions are ... characteristics of poor or weak leadership” (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010, p. 52).	Interlocking factor
Negative effects of poverty	“Parents and families in poor and vulnerable communities are less able to work the system, leaving more and more students in high-poverty areas grouped together in the same school, ... [which] has been shown to significantly reduce a school’s ability to improve its performance” (Leithwood et al., 2010, p. 45).	Interlocking factor
Poor teacher quality	“Limited skills and knowledge, inexperience, and teaching out of specialty” (Murphy & Meyers, 2008, p. 639).	Internal factor
Lost focus	“One of the first signs of school decline may be the loss of a clear academic focus. ... Lack of focus makes it difficult to provide effective staff development and targeted assistance for struggling students” (Duke, 2008, p. 670)	Operational cause

*Note.* Sources: *Leading School Turnaround*, by K. Leithwood, A. Harris, and T. Strauss, 2010, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; *Turning Around Failing Schools*, by J. Murphy and C. V. Meyers, 2008, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin; and “Diagnosing School Decline,” by D. L. Duke, 2008, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(9), 667-671.

**Evidence of Quality**

An approval from IRB guided this study with standards for the recruitment of participants via an e-mail script, the consent form for participants, letters of cooperation from the school district and Andrews High School, and the trustworthiness statement. Additionally, a member-checking e-mail was sent to each participant with a copy of the interview transcript. Four participants responded to the member-checking e-mail, and I

was able to ask follow-up questions for clarification. Member-checking also included informing participants of the study results for feedback.

### **Positionality Statement**

The familiarity of the site has been advantageous to the research of the school in this study. I was excited to hear people speak about the great traditions of the school and to make comparisons to today. The workday consisted of speaking with parents, former students, who passionately stated they wanted their children to attend and graduate from the same school as they had because of their love and affection for their former school. According to Peshkin (1988), researchers must seek out their subjectivity while they were actively involved in the research to avoid influencing the study outcome, which can be done by “formal, systemic monitoring of self” (p. 20).

Extra attention is necessary to monitor subjectivity by writing honestly about the views, beliefs, and assumptions about this research topic (Bhattacharya, 2017). Readers should understand the complexities of the history of the school, the positive stories of the school, as well as how it has been portrayed with challenges that face many urban high schools. My positionality increased the risk of being biased influencing the results of this study. To reduce any bias or negative impact, I created open-ended protocol questions, so the participants could respond with their lived experience and not something that I would like to hear.

### **Conclusion**

This study triangulated many sources of data, as the topic of school decline is complex. Andrews was chosen because the school has been in decline off and on for 20 years. The methods chapter addressed the study’s two research questions using a

qualitative case study and historical analysis to gain a deep insight into the perceptions of school decline from individuals with lived experiences with the study site. Historical analysis was useful to establish a strong knowledge base before interviewing the participants. The data collected for this study came from fieldwork at the study site and underwent an inductive analysis. The rationale of the methodology was provided to explain the choice of research design. The site selection, participant selection criteria, the historical data collection timeline, the research design, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and positionality statements were included in this chapter to outline the research study.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

The overall aim of this study was to understand the factors that have contributed to the decline of a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school. The study was designed to determine the impact of in-school and out-of-school decline factors that might have caused a predominantly African American urban high school in the southern United States to decline. In this study, the in-school and out-of-school decline factors derived from artifacts and participant interviews were examined as the cause of school decline for Andrews. Two research questions guided the study:

1. What in-school and out-of-school factors led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school?
2. How did key stakeholders describe in-school and out-of-school factors that led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school?

This chapter begins with a detailed description of the district and school setting, followed by profiles of the interview participants. Archival data findings are presented first, with in-school and out-of-school decline factors presented separately. Then, findings from interviews are presented, including participants' definition of school decline, perceptions, and described in- and out-of-school decline factors.

#### **District and School Profile**

Andrews is in a large southern U.S. district, which serves over 200,000 students. In 2019 the district operated over 100 elementary schools, over 30 middle schools, more than 30 high schools, and 40 combined schools, employing about 28,000 full- and part-time employees. The district is one of the largest districts in the region. Over 60% of the

students in the district were Hispanic, 24% African American, 9% White, and 4% Asian. Over 74% of students were economically vulnerable, meaning many of the district's students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch due to their household income bracket. Additionally, the district is a high-poverty school district and thus eligible to receive funding allowing all students in the school district to receive free breakfast and lunch.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the district's general revenue was \$1 million. Over 70% of the revenue came from local resources, 20% came from state resources, and 10% came from federal resources. Per-pupil expenditures were \$7,000, lower than those of neighboring school districts by \$3,000.

The district has been awarded on multiple occasions for gains in student achievement, and more than 20 high school campuses have been recognized as the best high schools in the nation. However, more than 10 schools in the district may be forced to close due to lack of student achievement gains for several years—the majority of them attended by predominantly African American students.

Andrews High School (a pseudonym), is a historic, comprehensive neighborhood school in the district, located in a predominantly African American community. The Andrews student population meets the requirements to receive Title I funding due to the number of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Of the 927 students enrolled during the 2015-2016 school year, 89% were African American; 10% were Hispanic; and the remaining 1% were a combination of students who identified as American Indian, Asian, White, or two or more races. Sixty-eight percent of the students were economically vulnerable, and 20% were receiving special education services. During the 2015-2016 school year, 38% of all students met the standard in reading, and

47% satisfied the measure on the math exam. Further, 54% of educators at Andrews had 6 or more years of experience. More than 84% of all teachers were African American, with 7% White and 5% Hispanic, according to the 2015 School Improvement Plan. With its stagnant student achievement, declining student enrollment due to the number of students transferring out of their zoned school boundaries, and cuts in funding, Andrews has been in a slow spiral decline. Table 6, the federal AYP for the school between 2003 and 2008, indicates that the school has received inconsistent federal AYP ratings.

Table 6

*Andrews High School Accountability Ratings 2003–2008*

Year	State rating	Federal rating
2003	Not rated	Needs Improvement
2004	Unacceptable	Missed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
2005	Unacceptable	Missed AYP
2006	Unacceptable	Missed AYP
2007	Acceptable	Missed AYP
2008	Acceptable	Missed AYP

The state accountability ratings for Andrews in Table 6 are based on the end-of-course assessments in reading and mathematics from 2003–2008. The data show that the school was rated unacceptable for multiple years and did not meet the federal threshold of AYP for several years after significant federal educational mandates were implemented.

### **Demographic Profile of Interview Participants**

The participants in this study include two former principals, a former district school leader, three current parents, and two former adult students. The participant pseudonym and descriptors of the participants are included in Appendix L. Ten

participants were considered for this study, and I recruited and selected eight participants to participate in this study. All of the participants have experience with Andrews as a parent, alumnus, school, or district leader. All of the participants were African American, as the study site is a predominantly African American high school. All of the participants were employed in service-oriented positions in the broader community. Below I describe each of them, along with their relationship to Andrews, and refer to them by a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Dr. Stevenson is a 52-year-old African American. He grew up in a community in the midwestern United States. He played sports in college and was not sure that he liked school. Attending school and playing sports was a way for him to escape the perils of alcohol and drug abuse in his family. Dr. Stevenson has over 29 years of experience in education. He has been a classroom teacher; an instructional specialist; an assistant principal; and an elementary, middle, and high school principal. As a principal at Title I campuses with low student achievement, he was able to increase student success, effectively improving the accountability of each of his campuses rapidly. He was recruited for this study based on his educational success as a turnaround leader and the former principal at Andrews 2015–2018. He has a doctorate in Education from a local university and is currently an assistant superintendent and an adjunct professor.

Dr. Anderson is an 80-year-old African American who grew up in a rural area in a southern, segregated state. His parents taught him that the vehicle to overcome problems was education. He knew when he started school at an early age that he would go to college to meet his parents' expectation. He was an athlete and a coach. His educational career has spanned over 60 years. He has been a successful leader as a school board



member, a superintendent of schools, a dean of a college of education, a state educational leader, and a key leader for federal education reform. He was recruited to participate in this study because of his governmental regulatory and leadership experience on the local, state, and federal levels. He is currently an educational consultant. He was the superintendent of schools responsible for creating and implementing educational policies. He has a Doctor of Education degree.

Dr. Hamilton is a 60-year-old African American who grew up in the community near Andrews, attending Andrews during high school. Dr. Hamilton is a 1972 alumna of Andrews. She is a retired school district employee, a community leader focused on issues of equality, and an experienced higher education leader. She has earned her doctorate in education from a local university. Today, she is a local policymaker who wants all students to be successful. She was recruited to be in this study because she attended Andrews when it was considered an excellent campus. She has a strong commitment to K-12 and higher education, her leadership activity in the community, and the community where she has lived for 60 years.

Dr. Roberson is a 41-year-old African American who grew up in the northeastern United States before moving to a southern state. He was a classroom teacher at the middle and high school levels, an instructional specialist, an assistant principal, and a high school principal. He is the former school leader of Andrews. Today, he is a successful high school principal in the northeastern United States, having successfully turned around two low-performing campuses in a year. He was recruited to participate in this study because of his experience as a former school leader of Andrews. When he became the principal of the Andrews, he was a 1st-year principal inheriting a school

whose accountability rating had fluctuated between a “Met Standard” and “Unacceptable” rating. He is an educational consultant, author, and motivational speaker and has fought for equity and excellence for all. He has a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Management from an online doctoral program.

Mrs. Scott is a 40-year-old African American. She grew up in the community but later moved to another southern state to attend high school. She is employed by the state Child Welfare Department and serves as a manager overseeing family cases. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree. She has a child who has attended Andrews for the past 4 years and two other children who graduated from Andrews. She was recruited to participate in the study because she is a current parent actively involved with the Parent Teacher Organization and other activities at Andrews.

Mr. Scott is a 40-year-old African American married to Mrs. Scott, just described. They were interviewed together. Mr. Scott grew up in the community and attended Andrews but did not graduate from the school. His mother, uncles, sister, and nephews graduated from Andrews. His great-grandmother lived across the street from the school, and his grandmother worked at the school. He has a daughter graduating this school year. He is a senior technician with a local power company. He was recruited to participate in the study because of his passion for Andrews. He is actively involved with the Parent Teacher Organization and other school-related activities. His family has a long tradition of attending, graduating, and working at Andrews. Mr. Scott is passionate about the school.

Mr. Holmes is a 60-year-old African American who grew up in the community around Andrews. He attended elementary, middle, and high school in the community. He

is an alumnus of Andrews. He has a master's degree in public administration and a master's degree in urban and regional planning. He is a retired teacher and has been appointed as a board member to several major local organizations. He is well respected in the community as an experienced leader with governmental relationships on the local and state levels. This participant led a committee of alumni, parents, and community stakeholders over the construction of the newly designed Andrews in 2014. He was recruited to participate in the study because he graduated from Andrews, as did his wife and children. He continues to be actively involved with various organizations that continue to support Andrews.

Ms. Kelley is a 40-year-old African American who lived in multiple communities around Andrews before moving into the area during her early years. She works for the school district as a substitute teacher. She has attended college and plans to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree. She was recruited to participate in this study because she is a parent, a former president of the Parent Teacher Organization, and an alumna. She is an actively involved parent at the school as well as in the community.

### **Archival Data Findings: In-School and Out-of-School Decline Factors**

**In-school decline factor: Loss of traditional legacy.** In this section I discuss findings from the participant observations of the visual stimulus through the declarative memory approach. Overall, I identified one in-school decline factor, loss of traditional legacy; the participants who viewed the archives associated this legacy with generations of family members attending Andrews. It is important to note that although I gave all participants the opportunity to view archives, only three participants provided comments based on their recall of any artifacts described in Table 7. The others likely chose not to

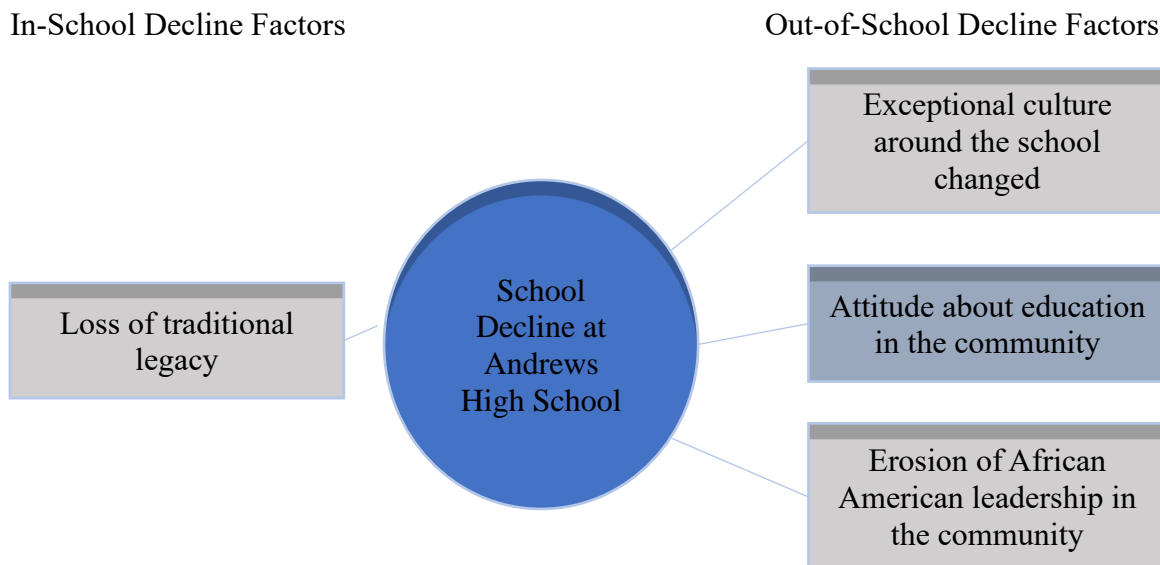
participate in the visual stimulus due to the amount of time to review the documents and answer the interview questions.

Table 7

*Historical Data Sources Used Before Participant Interviews*

	Source	Date	Document content
1	Newspaper article	5/19/1962	After-school activities
2	Student newspaper	3/20/1963	Student awards in English and journalism
3	Yearbook	1969	Academic programming
4	Yearbook	1977–1979	Academic enrichment from 1977–1979
5	Student newspaper	5/1981	Curriculum enhancement
6	Student newspaper	10/11/1985	District staff reorganization, student voice
7	Yearbook	1986	Academic programming
8	Student newspaper	09/2002	State accountability celebrated
8	Student newspaper	12/2002	Student's international living experience
9	Student newspaper	03/2003	Students win prestigious award
10	Student newspaper	12/2003	New principal with new leadership
11	Student newspaper	09/2004	District top leader wants advanced classes
12	Local newspaper	02/2005	Alumnus fights for principal to keep the job

By using a causal framework, I analyzed the participants' responses during the archival review process to capture their perspectives of the antecedent conditions that caused school decline at Andrews. The cause-and-effect diagram in Figure 2 separates their responses into two categories: in-school decline factors and out-of-school decline factors that caused a critical juncture for the school.



*Figure 2.* Cause-and-effect diagram: Archival analysis factors of school decline

Attending Andrews was a tradition among families in the community. Students knew from the start of the elementary school that they would attend the high school in the community. Interviewee Mr. Scott picked up the 1969 yearbook because that was the year that his mother and uncle were juniors in high school. He flipped through the pages and became ecstatic about seeing school pictures. He stated,

Here are pictures of my mother and her twin brother in the yearbook. My mother graduated, two uncles, my sister, her two boys, and ... my oldest daughter is about to graduate from there. So, it is a longstanding tradition. As a matter of fact, at the old campus, my great-grandmother stayed across the street from it, and my grandmother used to work at there.

Mr. Scott was so thrilled to see a picture of his mother and uncle that he took a picture of the page so that he could share the picture with them. Dr. Hamilton also mentioned the longstanding tradition by stating, "My older brother graduated in 1968 and his class, you

know, you have heard of class 1968, but they were still very much involved and very cohesive.”

Alumnus and parent Mr. Holmes glanced at the archival data and stated, “My family went to Andrews, and I went to Andrews, so it was natural but kind of expected for family members to continue to go.” A community leader and alumnus, Dr. Hamilton concurred that the legacy at Andrews changed among the students by stating, “I don't think they appreciate the legacy of Andrews and how Andrews has always been such a beacon” in the community. Ms. Kelley, a parent and alumna, added her sentiments on the loss of traditional legacy by stating,

However, in our mind, that was the place to go. You knew you were going from your elementary school to middle school if you stayed in this area then to Andrews it was, it was no question about it. Maybe some people a few went to ... probably a few went out or whatever. However, for the most part, you knew exactly where you were going ... you know the culture, you knew. It is like you had a pathway, and you understood that, and you were excited to get there, and you enjoyed your time.

An analysis of the 1984 yearbook showed a dedication page for the Wilson (pseudonym) family for their traditional legacy of enrollment by listing the names of 14 family members who attended Andrews between 1926 and 1984.

Until 1997, the student attendance boundary zones around Andrews were not interrupted. Students in the neighborhood would attend the elementary and secondary schools in the neighborhood. The lack of the interruption to the attendance zone supported a healthy student enrollment from the elementary and middle schools to

Andrews. The steady student enrollment at Andrews was a part of the traditional legacy. When the student attendance zones were interrupted, student enrollment became a challenge for Andrews and so would its traditional legacy. School choice options that were created through NCLB gave parents options to enroll their children in a higher performing school if their neighborhood school was low performing. Thus, each school year, over 600 students would not enroll in their zoned neighborhood school, resulting in a significant reduction in funding and resources to provide additional educational experiences for the students.

**Out-of-school decline factors.** Out-of-school decline factors are factors that occur outside of the school, such as district, state, or federal educational mandates or changes in the structure of the community (Hochbein & Duke, 2011). The key out-of-school decline factors that I identified from the archival data review revealed three significant themes pointed to community erosion that led to Andrews toward a downward spiral of decline. These themes were (a) change in the exceptional culture around the school, (b) change in the attitude about education in the community, and (c) the erosion of African American leadership in the community.

*Change in the exceptional culture around the school.* Former district leader Dr. Anderson was strategic in what historical artifact he picked up to review. He picked up the 1977–1979 yearbook and began to flip through the pages. He suddenly stopped on one page and stated,

This is not just a school that changed. The culture around the school changed. For example, look at these two gentlemen here. After looking through this, I know what I am going to say. So, I am going to cut to the point. Those are two leaders

that kind of shaped the Black culture there. They were examples of Black culture leaders.

Dr. Anderson spoke highly of two former Andrew graduates he saw in the 1977–1979 yearbook. Dr. Anderson continued, “They were not the only ones, there were more people that shaped the Black culture leadership around the city and around Andrews.”

The Black culture and leadership in the community around Andrews focused on advancing the Black community through education.

Dr. Stevenson, former principal, found that the exceptional culture in the community was a driving force that launched many students through graduation and into meaningful careers around the nation. He stated,

There was some exceptional culture, and that exceptional culture there believed that they were pushing kids to be successful, and they were all around the globe.

The citizens that lived in the community around Andrews were very supportive of education; many were professionals such as dentists, doctors, lawyers, elected officials, and clergy members. Many of the alumni endured professional careers, became elected officials, national celebrities, and professional athletes.

I found that the positive culture in the community had an impact on the success of the students. The local newspaper in 2007 disclosed that the community was enhanced with a large national organization from 1955–2005. The organization was a “a symbol of what it meant to be Black in the community,” where the “civil right activities were planned” and “a community staple.” The organization encountered difficulties due to declining memberships and left the community. When the organization closed its doors,



the culture of the community started to decline, and educational enrichment opportunities were swept away.

*Change in attitude about education in the community.* Former district leader Dr. Anderson was not from the community, but he immediately noticed the outlook that many of the Black leaders in the community had about education. Education was critical to the Black culture in the Andrews community. Dr. Anderson reflected on the impact two former graduates of Andrews had on the community and the school. One former student was a city council member and the other was a physician. Dr. Anderson reflected,

When I came down here in 1973, I was so impressed with the Black leadership culture. Those were just two. There were a lot of them, but those two, those people help shape the attitude about education around here. ... The support came from local churches, local Black organizations that emphasized the way to progress is education, as it is a vehicle ... for social mobility, was a much healthier attitude then than it is now.

These two graduates that Dr. Anderson referred to in his quote had a positive impact on Andrews, sponsoring enrichment activities for the students, as well as on the community. The attitude about education in the 1973 yearbook confirmed the strong belief of success and value with this printed statement: “The enjoyment of achievement leads to the appreciation of life itself ... by consistently striving for the betterment of ourselves and fellow students.” The 1976 yearbook was dedicated to Andrews for “giving Blacks the education they have so long been denied.”

The former Andrews principal, Dr. Stevenson, stated the following about the excellent attitude at Andrews:

The attitude supporting educational excellence started to shift when many of the professional and middle-class families started moving away from the community.

Many of the families moved to surrounding communities in the suburbs. When the families moved out of the neighborhoods, the community changed.

Dr. Stevenson stated, “The instructional community starts to shift, and it went down very quickly. ... Thus, when you have that shift, all that happens, and sometimes within a matter of 5 to 10 years.” When the instructional community began to shift from an instructional community, the exceptional culture around the school started to dwindle. Many of the participants believed that is when Andrews started to decline.

The shift in the instructional community impacted the attitude towards education, which led to an erosion of the African American leadership in the area. With the masses of families leaving the area, so did their children. The driving force behind exceptional Black culture and a positive attitude toward education started to elude the community.

***Erosion of African American leadership in the community.*** For many years, the African American leadership in the community around Andrews was notable, according to the research of archival documents on Andrews. The African American leadership supported not only Andrews, but also the entire community. However, the African American leadership in the Andrews community began to erode when they began to gradually move away from the community in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Dr. Anderson, the former school district leader, explained why the African American leadership in the community changed:

Gradually it has eroded. ... The leadership has eroded, the African American leadership around here and in other cities as well. It is more focused on personal

advancement; people were seeking political advancement to ingratiate themselves. Those guys were doing this to ingratiate the neighborhood and the community and the Black race. So that made a big difference. They appreciated education as a vehicle to move people farther, so that attitude has for all practical purposes has eroded in spots. It is not as, well, let us say it is not as broad now as it was then, because attitudes now were less focused on the African Americans race to advance as they were individual. Leadership positions now were positions for self-advancement, not positions to advance the race. That is a big difference.

In 1987, the Class of 1940 held its reunion, which included a souvenir journal that dedicated a memory to the first principal of Andrews for his excellent leadership in the community and the school. The memory read,

Mr. [Gregory, a pseudonym] was connected to every civic moment launched in the community. [Andrews] had grown and expanded correspondingly in curriculum and extra activities. Without exaggeration, hundreds of young men and women and scores of young teachers owe their success to Mr. [Gregory].

For many years, school leadership was consistent. Many of the school leaders had long tenure during their careers at Andrews, which included agendas to advance education positively in the campus as well as in the community.

However, with the exodus of the many African American leaders in the community, Andrews would begin to see turnover in the school leadership more often. Incoming school leaders did not have the same attitude toward education but were prone to be self-gratifying. For example, Mr. Holmes, a former student, stated that the new

leaders coming to Andrews had a different purpose for being at Andrews other than education:

Those people came from out of town. They came in, but they did not come in to build up the school, they came in to tear it up, move up, and move on. ... We started getting those kinds of people in Andrews ... and they were there to get what they needed for themselves ... and they [leadership] caused us to change.

The quote by Mr. Holmes substantiates the finding that some school leaders hired to lead Andrews did not always have good intentions for the school but rather for their own personal reasons.

Consistent turnover in leadership impacted the students, parents, and the community because they lost trust in the leadership at and had lowered expectations about Andrews. The former principal, Dr. Stevenson, explained,

It affects our school, our kids and our community. We were there for one purpose and to educate kids. And that was it. And that changed what we valued in terms of this is going to be an institution of learning. And that's what we pushed for. And the results showed. So, we changed the culture, we changed the systems, we changed the norms, we changed the expectations for kids. We did a major overhaul because we saw what was not happening for kids ... convincing the community because we solved issues, and then they started to build trust.

Dr. Stevenson concluded, "The leadership has changed, and then the consistent leadership changed." Dr. Stevenson was the principal at Andrews for 3 years, which was the longest tenure as a campus leader for many years due to the constant turnover in leadership.

**Archival data summary.** This section included findings from the archival data and how interview participants responded to some of the exhibits I shared regarding in-school and out-of-school decline factors. Explicitly, I examined the commonalities that emerged through an examination of responses from participants who participated in the declarative memory exercise. I analyzed the responses from three participants, Dr. Stevenson, Dr. Anderson, and Mr. Scott. These three participants elected to review the archival data. The findings were based on the frequency of the findings and similar responses by the participants. The next section presents the findings of the participant responses to the interview questions.

### **Findings From Participant Interviews**

In this section, I discuss how each participant described factors that he or she believed led to school decline. After the participants described their demographic backgrounds, they were asked to define school decline. The next set of questions inquired about their experience as a student, a former school leader, or district leader at the Andrews. Then I asked them to discuss their viewpoints on how and why they believed the school had transitioned from their first experience with Andrews. The participants' standpoint on how the school transitioned provided the factors that led to school decline, essentially providing evidence to answer the two research questions guiding this study. The goal was to identify the in-school and out-of-school decline factors that had an impact on Andrews, through the perspective of the critical stakeholders. As a researcher, I found the in-school decline factors were leadership and the loss of academic programming. The out-of-school decline factor was the community erosion around Andrews.

**Definition of school decline.** I asked each participant to provide a definition of school decline. This was important to discuss because it allowed me to observe their perspective of school decline. Further, their definitions segued into emerging themes from the data.

Dr. Anderson, the former school district leader, defined school decline as “when it is not meeting the academic needs and social, emotional needs ... of the kids that are there.” Dr. Hamilton, alumnus and community leader, defined school decline in terms of lack of reading achievement: “The achievement of the students ... is based, I think, on their inability to read.” Mr. Scott, a parent and alumnus, also offered a perspective on school decline aligned with the students’ academic ability, stating decline led to higher achieving students leaving the school to attend other high schools. Dr. Roberson, former principal, defined school decline as

a fixed mindset from the school, a fixed mindset from the district. Inequity ... you cannot have the same formula for every school. ... Everybody gets the same 1.1 [allotment], ... but some of these schools need 1.8 worth of allotment because the needs were just that great.

Dr. Roberson was concerned that the funding cost per student was lower for students that need more resources. Historically, funding has not been equal for students in schools in vulnerable neighborhoods such as Andrews. Dr. Stevenson, former principal, offered a definition of school decline aligned to funding resources: “Schools that are not performing well, they are out there not aligned according to the resources.”

Mrs. Scott is a current parent and defined school decline as the following: “Enrollment is low. ... People moving out of the area, ... performances from teachers. ...

When you lose good teachers. ... School decline comes from the lack of leadership.” As a parent, Mrs. Scott was aware that the student enrollment had decreased at Andrews over the previous 4 years. Ms. Kelley agreed that student performance was different today, stating, “We were held to a higher standard and we were exposed to a lot. Now, I think that part of creativity, that empowerment has been taken away from the students.”

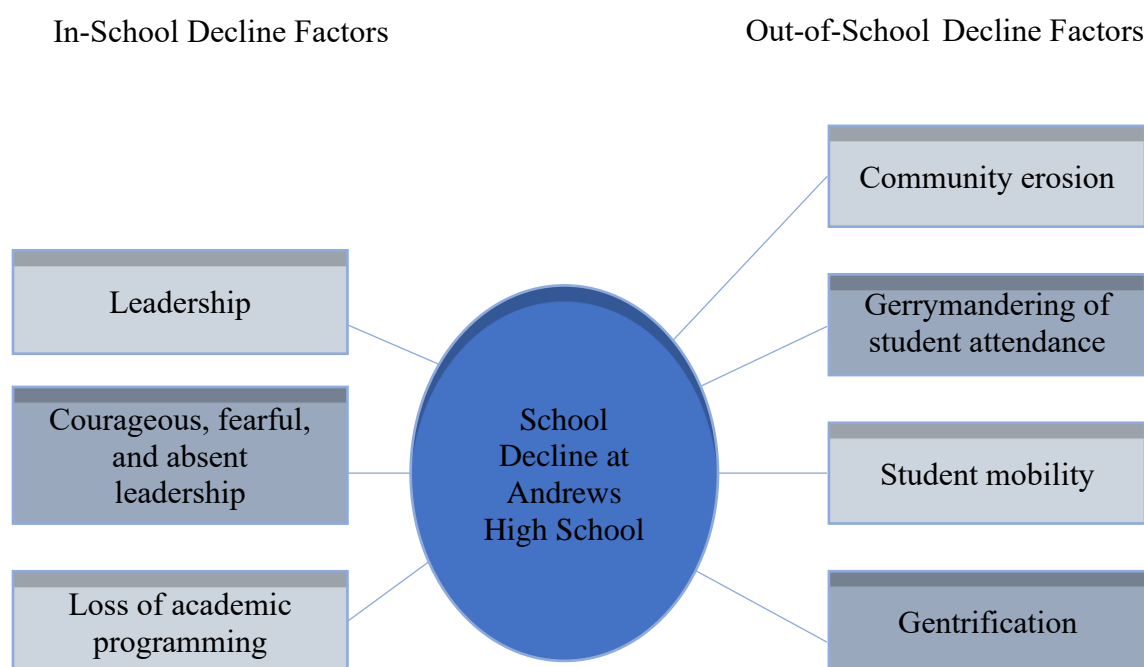
Andrews is considered a hard-to-staff school by the district because the school continues to lose good teachers. As a former administrator, I found that many classes were staffed with substitute teachers who were not certified for the content for long periods of time, which is documented as a requirement by the federal government if the school is receiving Title I funds, which Andrews is. According to Duke (2008), having uncertified teachers in a classroom is an indicator for school decline.

Mr. Holmes, alumnus and community leader, defined school decline as “raiding the feeder patterns. ... They were redrawing the lines around the feeder patterns.” When Mr. Holmes spoke about raiding the feeder patterns, he was referring to how the school district redrew the school boundary zone that removed a significant number of students from Andrews school boundary, thus redirecting students away from Andrews and reducing the student enrollment. The reduction in student enrollment at Andrews had many other consequences for the school. Additionally, the participants believed the redirection of students away from Andrews was a political attempt to undermine Andrews or to intentionally cause the school to decline due to low enrollment.

**Perceptions of school decline factors.** The responses from the interview questions generated themes for in-school factors and common themes for out-of-school factors that participants believed were reasons for the school to decline. The key themes

for in-school factors were (a) leadership and (b) loss of academic programming. The key theme for out-of-school factors was community erosion. One of the common themes came from deductive codes, based on preexisting theories and the literature on leadership, and two themes emerged from inductive codes, based on the review of the transcription data (community erosion and the loss of academic programming).

Presenting the participants with archival data helped focus three participants' responses during the semistructured interviews to capture their perspectives on their lived experiences about the antecedent conditions that caused school decline at Andrews. I then used the causal framework to analyze their responses. The cause-and-effect diagram in Figure 3 identifies their responses into two groupings: (a) the in-school decline factors and (b) the out-of-school decline factors that caused a perilous crisis for the school.



*Figure 3.* Cause-and-effect diagram: Interview findings of school decline factors



**In-school decline factor: Leadership.** Within the literature on school decline, weak leadership was often identified as the “lack of vision, poor communication, inattention to teaching quality, and failure to make decisions” (Leithwood et al., 2010, p. 52). However, four participants (Dr. Stevenson, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Roberson, and Mr. Holmes) discussed the following types of leadership, which impacted school decline: courageous leadership, absent leadership, and fearful leadership.

*Courageous leadership.* In this section I discuss the idea of courageous leadership. Although this aspect of leadership was only mentioned by Dr. Stevenson, I felt it was worth discussing in depth. Dr. Stevenson, a former school leader and current district leader, stated the following about courageous leadership:

When I became the principal, ... the team and I worked very quickly to put in systems and structure around how we do what we do. Moreover, that was a ... paradigm shift for the staff because they were not accustomed to the structure. We ... stood our ground because we were there for one purpose ... to educate kids. ... Moreover, that changed what we valued in terms of this is going to be an institution of learning. Moreover, that is what we pushed for. And the results showed. So, we changed the culture, changed the systems, changed the norms, and changed the expectations for kids. We did a significant overhaul ... because we saw what was not happening for kids.

Dr. Stevenson described his role as a new high school leader and the importance of hiring the right people who also had a passion for education. Dr. Stevenson is an experienced turnaround school principal who has worked at low-performing elementary, middle, and high schools for over 25 years. He was successful in turning around each of

the campuses within 3 years, earning Acceptable state ratings; with the exception of Andrews, he was able to turn schools around in 1 year. Because of his success as a school leader, he now coaches school principals. Dr. Stevenson also shared his belief on changing leadership:

The shift started happening when a lot of the funding structures changed. Then, the leadership has changed, and then the consistent leadership change. ... I had been the longest-lasting principal. I was only there for 3 years. ... That was in the past 15 years, and that is horrible at a school.

Dr. Stevenson described when he believed the downward spiral of Andrews began. He believed that the turnover in leadership had an impact on the decline of Andrews. The archival data analysis of school personnel revealed that the earlier principals at Andrews were in their positions for long periods of time. The first principal at Andrews, Mr. Gregory (pseudonym), was there for 15 years (1926–1941) until his death. The second principal, Mr. Olson (pseudonym), was there for 17 years (1941–1958) until he was replaced by the Board of Education. Mr. Olson was an outspoken advocate for the students and community, and he set high expectations for leadership in the community. A review of a local newspaper confirmed that under Mr. Olson's leadership,

The school acted as the community anchor. ... [Olson] not only ran the school, he also set the tone for expectations of success throughout the community. ... The board replaced [Olson] with ... the principal from [Andrews's] staunch rival. ... This act destroyed the community's cohesiveness and hampered its leadership.

When Mr. Olson was replaced, the community started to dwindle, and so did the leadership. In the 1980s, after racial integration of the neighborhoods, the Black middle-class families moved away, leaving the community vulnerable to crime and poverty.

Before he was appointed principal of Andrews, Dr. Stevenson visited the school and spoke with the staff to gain their perspective on what they wanted to see in a school leader. He found the students had not had a leader who cared for them. He stated school leaders must have concern for their students:

When I entered the school as the principal, I had never been to high school before. I heard the history of Andrews and all the drama that was happening on the campus. I was able to galvanize a great group of leaders that believed in the work and thought that we could do some ... really good things for kids. ... I just believed that it was because we as a team had enough heart and care and strategic strategy and knowledge around instruction and kids and relationships.

Dr. Stevenson explained that before he accepted the position at Andrews, he wanted to take a tour of the building and speak with some of the current students and teachers. In his conversation with one teacher, he realized that the students needed a school leader to care about them.

As a former principal and current district leader, Dr. Stevenson has been tasked with mentoring and coaching principals at some low-performing schools with ongoing district-level support and training in areas of campus leadership development, campus administrative team development, and best instructional practices for low-performing campuses. Dr. Stevenson talked about courageous leadership. He stated,

I think that I am helping academically because I am still training principals, still working with them on how to look at the instructional leadership team and determine who has strengths and weaknesses and how effective they are at their work. ... So I have much heart-to-heart conversations of “Why are you letting this happen on your campus? ‘Cause you look like me, and your kids look like us.”

Dr. Stevenson discussed his role as a mentor and coach for school leaders at low-performing campuses. He speaks with principals about their instructional practices, their leadership team, and their effectiveness in ensuring that student outcomes will increase.

Lastly, Dr. Stevenson shared his perspective that leadership should be courageous:

I think it takes courage. I think it takes leadership courage, not just from the district level. I think it takes it from the White House to the state level to say we are going to focus on making sure that our population is highly educated because we are one of the few countries around the globe that educates everybody.

Dr. Stevenson stated that he believed every leader should have the courage to lead their campuses and not lose sight of the vision and mission to educate all students.

***Absent leadership.*** Dr. Anderson, a former district leader, stated educational leadership has been absent in the sense that previous school leaders voiced advocacy of education. Leadership now is absent of positively advocating for education, which he referred to as absent leadership.

Educational leadership is not working. ... There is a certain kind of leadership that you have got to have now that seems to be absent in the larger picture. ... The high quality of leadership that we had in the past has met some challenges. ... So,

that is, in my mind, has been the primary determinant for the school, I mean, of an education problem.

Dr. Anderson intimated that the educational leadership in the community around Andrews in the late 1970s had a different attitude. The more recent attitude about educational leadership in the community did not have the same culture of excellence that the school had been known for. He used the term *educational leadership*, which is effective leadership that is necessary for school improvement at a declining school (Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2019).

Dr. Anderson drew on his experience as a former district leader by expressing his view on leadership that supported the community by setting high expectations and promoted student success. Dr. Anderson explained the tone of district leadership under his tenure:

I wanted the district to think of itself as an institution of high respect and honor. I wanted them to feel that and believe that we had to work to identify that was part of our definition. That is who we were. We actively sought to be understood or as an organization of high respect, first of all, for ourselves. And then as we moved towards helping kids, and others see us that way. My staff had to set the tone. So, I was very careful of the people that sat around the cabinet with me. They had to be experts in their positions. They had to be fully dedicated to the cause. They had to be trustworthy. And that was a long and complicated journey.

Dr. Anderson described how he modeled the path of high expectations at the district and campus levels. He hired staff he could trust, who had high expectations and were experts in their jobs. Dr. Anderson explained that setting high expectations with his

cabinet staff would be modeled on the campus level. He wanted to set high expectations not only for the district, but also for education in general. As a researcher, I found that other school districts in the area would model the same high expectations.

When asked about selecting school leaders, Dr. Anderson said that hiring the right campus leaders was important. Dr. Anderson shared his view on the selection of school leaders:

How our leaders were selected has to be looked at. ... Character leadership in education has to be, in my view, remodeled, and looking at leadership in a different way to attract more good people from other leadership positions to do education. ... Economically we need to have leadership valued more by having the opportunity for income enhanced somewhat as well.

Dr. Anderson stated that the leadership selection for a school in decline is essential to the success and longevity of success and the school. The leader of a failing school must have specific characteristics to meet the school's challenges and needs. He also referred to the professionalization of the educational leadership by increasing salaries to attract better qualified individuals to the profession.

Dr. Anderson shared his perspective on district leadership as Andrews succumbed to decline. He stated,

I think the district itself had other schools to pay attention to, and the school did not get any special needed support for the factors that they had to deal with to be a better school. The district I do not think was able to support and guide the school with the transition that was taking place there. The school needed careful and

understanding and some elements that were absent in terms of leadership. ... Each issue had its characteristics ... that had to be understood.

Dr. Anderson believed that decline could have been prevented at Andrews if leaders had understanding or knowledge that the school was in decline. The challenges of Andrews went unnoticed by the district and school-level staff. Dr. Anderson stated his view on absent leadership:

Elected boards and appointed boards need to be considered based on a higher criterion for success than it is right now. Many dynamics need to be fixed to make the situation work, but it cannot be fixed with absent leadership. And by leadership, I also mean the boards, the administrators, and the principal teachers.

Dr. Anderson described that absent leadership in education is aligned with leaders on the district, campus, and classroom levels. Coordination and collaboration are required between the district leader, school leaders, and teachers. Absent leadership has been loosely defined in the literature; however, Edwards (2006) described it as the following: “There is no leadership present. This does not mean, however, that there is not a person in a designated leadership position” (p. 24). Absent leadership occurs in three instances, according to Edwards: (a) the leader is ill, (b) the leaders is physically present but otherwise removed from daily school operations and events, or (c) the leader lacks involvement or interest in the curriculum.

In this study, absent leadership appeared as a lack of involvement or interest. Ms. Kelley, a parent and alumna, shared her perspective on absent leadership regarding lack of interest in the community’s input, stating, “A lot of stuff was not welcomed unless it was on the same page, on the same line. ... Principals that come in, they already have

their agenda.” Ms. Kelley believed in many instances when stakeholders met with some principals, they left the meeting feeling, “We still weren’t heard.” Mr. Scott shared his view on absent leadership when he spoke about the lack of interest, he observed from one of the campus administrators:

School decline comes from the lack of leadership. ... We had to check one of the administrators at [Andrews]. ... You are not here to be a deterrent for these children. You are here to encourage them. If you are discouraging them, you need to find another job.

Multiple participants presented similar perspectives on how absent leadership had an impact on the community and the students.

***Fearful leadership.*** Dr. Roberson discussed his experience as a 1st-year principal and the challenges that he faced at the low-performing school:

So, it was very urban. ... It was academically challenged, and it was alumni driven. The alumni had their foothold on that school, and it was not in the direction that the school needed to be going. ... This level of poverty and then gaps in education, instruction, opportunity. ... It was a storm of epic proportions. ... I just did not know that the school was in that much peril. ... This was a different type of school. ... There were so many forces, both seen and unseen.

Dr. Roberson described to me that the kids “can’t read,” so he created a “literacy initiative” with the “support of the community and the libraries from two local colleges ... to change the narrative of the school.” Dr. Roberson’s literacy initiative was met with pushback from one alumnus who wanted the principal to use the money for an after-school program. The pushback from the alumnus caused disruption with the campus



principal and the district leadership, who were afraid of the alumnus. Dr. Roberson felt unsupported by the district, and his literacy initiative was abandoned as a result of fearful leadership.

The missed educational opportunity relates to Ladson-Billings's (2006) concept of education debt; she argued, society has a responsibility to support education for vulnerable students and not personal agendas. It also relates to Chambers's (2009) description of the receivment gap, because the students had prior reading gaps when they got to high school. Finally, the missed educational opportunity supports Gorski's (2013) work on opportunity gap, because Black students historically have been denied educational opportunities that could close the gap between them and other students. Missed educational opportunities to read can have an impact on the student's success.

Dr. Roberson described the challenges as a 1st-year principal that he perceived had an impact on the decline of Andrews. He related the term *gaps* to education, instruction, and opportunities. Dr. Roberson also reflected on hiring selection and why he believed low-performing campuses should have the right staff:

Hasty hiring. You cannot undo a bad hire until time proves that that hire should not be there, ... but you do not have that kind of time to waste. ... I needed a different skill set so that while I was fixing, they could be building those skills, while over here, fixing the political side of this and fixing the financial side. 'Cause I am telling you, it was a mess. It was like that cancer that just spread here. If you do not have the right assistant principal with that right temperament and right strength, make it tough. ... One of my most significant flaws was my hiring decisions for those that in leadership, ... they just really could not flourish there.

... They were not equipped to handle that level of poverty and that level of a gap and that level of special education population.

Dr. Roberson shared his perspective on why Andrews declined. He examined the importance of hiring the right staff with the experience to deal with the urban challenges at Andrews. It is critical to select the appropriate school staff at a low-performing school to deal with complex issues that may negatively impact the school. Here he used the term “hasty hiring,” which was discussed by Duke (2008) as an indicator for school decline. In other words, the principal in a declining school may “rush to judgement and select individuals about whom they have reservations, ... settling for ‘warm bodies’ ... who are unlikely to make a positive impact on student achievement” (Duke, 2008, p. 670).

Similarly, as a former administrator at Andrews, I noted the many challenges with hiring highly qualified teachers and administrators. The timing of hiring the best staff at Andrews was important, and if we missed that window of opportunity, other schools would recruit them, leaving Andrews with less qualified teachers and administrators to choose from. To avoid hasty hiring at low-performing schools, the district offered monetary incentives to recruit and maintain highly qualified teachers and administrators to low-performing schools. Hasty hiring at Andrews had a negative impact on student success. Prior to Dr. Stevenson accepting the principalship at Andrews, he requested in advance to bring his leadership team with him, and his request was granted.

Teacher turnover is high at Andrews, which may increase the risk of hasty hiring. An August 2003 national article stated the principal at Andrews “replaced dozens of experienced teachers with substitutes and uncertified teachers, who cost less.” Another historical document, a December 2003 school editorial, quoted a student saying, “There’s

a teacher shortage, some of the teachers don't really care and a lot of the good teachers have left. It's also overcrowded, especially in the classes." A September 2004 school journal announced the hiring of 17 new teachers the following school year.

Dr. Roberson, during his 1st year at Andrews, believed that he did not have positive and supportive district leadership. He believed that the leadership on the district level operated out of fear at certain times when dealing with some community leaders. Dr. Roberson shared his viewpoint on how fearful district leaders impact school leaders:

When you have fearful leaders in high places, that is another thing that works towards school decline. Fearful leaders in high places ... they do not know how to lead. This transitive environment is laden with all this negativity and impunity, but you still have to be able to find that silver lining. That is not easy for everyone to do. It is a skill.

Dr. Roberson reflected on how important it is to have successful leaders on the district level to support a positive culture of growing campus leaders without fear of the people in the community and alumni of Andrews. The principal had a problem with one alumnus and "his posse." Dr. Roberson stated,

He would come in, him and his posse, boxing gloves and all kind of stuff, trying to intimidate my staff. I put him out, and then in December of 2014, I banned him from the campus, and that's where it really got ugly.

Here he used the term *fearful leadership* because the banning of the alumnus had escalated to the district leader who did not support the principal. Dr. Roberson described the conversation with district leadership this way:

“Well, you banned him.” I was like, well, you should have banned him instead of letting them come down here and cut up at these meetings and giving him passes to come on schools and he’s not a watchdog, you all have given him this strength, and then don’t get me started on that powerful picture. ... He called for a student walkout.

Dr. Roberson gave a few examples on how one alumnus caused campus disruption during Dr. Roberson’s 1st year at Andrews, stemming from the campus budget. The rift between the principal and the alumni member upset the culture of the campus. Dr. Roberson did not have the district leadership support to manage the situation with the alumni. Dr. Roberson shared his experience with the district leadership:

Unfortunately, especially in a school like this, it is our own [race]. I cannot remember if that is genocide or whatever it is, but the alumni association erodes progress. One of the things another leader was masterful about was he found a way to neutralize the alumni.

Although Dr. Roberson had a difficult relationship with one alumnus, this was not the case of all of the alumni. Mr. Holmes, an alumnus and community leader, shared his relationship with the principals at Andrews.

I have not liked a couple of principals, if I had a vote for, I did not vote for them to be over there, but after they got there, I worked with them. I don’t think it’s my place to jump the principal. It’s my place to have dialogue and offer some solutions.

In 2005, the local newspaper reported that the district leader solicited proposals from the community to take over three struggling high schools, which included Andrews,

which had been struggling since 2001. The state was going to either shut the school down or restructure the leadership teams. To show support of Andrews Principal Collins (pseudonym), several members of the community attended the meeting to ask the district leader to give allow Principal Collins to stay. Mr. Holmes stated to the board, “Just like we have to give you a chance, it would only be fair to give the administration at [Andrews] a chance.” Principal Collins and two other low-performing school principals were able to keep their jobs. Mr. Holmes is an active alumnus and community leader who continues to support Andrews. Similarly, Dr. Hamilton stated her class is “still actively involved” with Andrews and that her “older brother graduated in 1968 and his class, you know, you've heard of class 1968, are still very much involved, very cohesive.”

Throughout the analysis, I also reflected on my experiences as a former Andrews administrator and have woven in my perspective in that role where appropriate. My observation as a former campus administrator confirmed that the alumni association at Andrews is involved and wants to be involved. In my observations over 4 years, I was able to call alumni, parents, or other community members to assist with school functions with no hesitation.

The local newspaper reported on May 8, 2015, that Dr. Roberson had announced his resignation from Andrews after 2 years of leadership. When speaking about another leader who was masterful about neutralizing the alumni, he was describing Dr. Stevenson, who was hired to lead Andrews for the 2015-2016 school year. At that point, I became a member of the leadership team, and I observed that the same alumnus who had been banned by the previous administration on the campus most days. He made observations of the new leadership team and their impact on the campus. Under the

guidance of Dr. Stevenson, we were coached on how to interact with the alumnus cordially and respectfully. By December 2015, that alumnus member did not come on campus as much. The alumnus told me that the new leadership team was doing a good job and supported our efforts to restore a positive culture at Andrews.

Fearful leadership can have a negative impact on school leaders. I found that a fearful leader is hesitant or does not support school leaders to avoid conflict with community members. However, without the support from the district leadership, the campus leader feels abandoned and unsupported. An unsupported campus leader risks misplacing their focus on their mission and vision of student success, an indicator of school decline (Duke, 2008).

Dr. Roberson also shared his experience with district supervision as a 1st-year principal. He indicated that the turnover in district supervision during his 1st year was constantly changing and impacted his leadership and his vision. Ultimately, he felt that he was always starting over with a new agenda.

I had five supervisors during my 1st year. They were leaving, reprimanded and disciplined, and what will get me was that the people you were putting over me were not the right people, but I am still being held to the standard of what they dropped off. Then you get a new one that comes in that is like, “Well, why are you doing this work?” “That is what I was told to do.” ... But ... now I should be doing this.

The turnover in district-level leadership was constant and disruptive to the school leader. He was always starting over from a different perspective with district supervision.

Dr. Roberson stated that when he became principal of Andrews, he inherited many problems from the previous school leader and was not given any assistance from the district. He had an abundance of teachers but lacked the resources in the budget to pay them. Dr. Roberson shared his viewpoint on what he inherited from the previous school leadership:

When I got there, I inherited all of [the previous principal's] crap, all of it. So, the 1st year I was trying to stabilize from all the things they took from me, because he had run the budget so far to the left. The district was not forgiving any of the previous administration's debt. The teachers he hired, he did not have any money to hire. My master schedule was now destabilized. I mean, there were so many things that the average person doesn't know that were going on here.

Dr. Roberson described the campus budget when he arrived as the new school leader. He shared that all of the prior hiring decisions made by the administration were absorbed into the next school year. The budget woes stay with the school and do not leave with the previous school leader. His new role would require him to manage a staff of teachers whom he did not have enough funding to support.

We had to do a lot of house cleaning. I had teachers, new teachers, 1st-year teachers, teachers that were from other buildings that were not very good. I had to build a cadre of teaching and build pedagogy. I mean, you know, we had to teach them how to teach because they didn't have a clue.

This quote by Dr. Roberson supports what Leithwood et al. (2010) found on teacher quality as a factor that can lead to school decline.

Mr. Holmes, an alumnus and community leader, stated that Andrews changed when the district reorganized the teachers from Andrews. The reorganization involved removing the experienced teachers from Andrews and replacing them with inexperienced young White teachers. Mr. Holmes shared his perspective on the impact the reorganization had on Andrews:

Well, it changed over time. We endured the crossover when they took all of our excellent teachers, sent them over to the White schools, made them go, and then sent all of the little White girls and all of the ... guys ... I am just saying from the universities ... and gave them kids teaching job teaching over here. I mean, just got rid of all the experience and put in nonexperienced people, you know, but we survived it. We endured it because they had an excellent feeder pattern background. After they got rid of all of them and started getting other people in leadership, many people came in because they said they know the school, but then we got the people. ... They would move in, move up, screw up, and move on.

Mr. Holmes said that the “inexperienced White young teachers did not have experience to deal with the challenges at [Andrews] because of the differences with their backgrounds.” The White teachers at Andrews did not care for the students like the Black teachers.

Dr. Hamilton concurred by stating, “The young White teachers would rather befriend the students than discipline them. The lack of discipline would result in increased negative behavior in the classrooms.” Urban education scholar Emdin (2016) stated,

White teachers held perceptions about the students and the type of instruction they needed that were rooted in bias ... and should lead to conversations about how



these approaches to teaching actually support the persistence of the gaps they are designed to close. (p. 39)

In a declining school, teachers have to connect to their students and have a vested interest in the students' success (Chamber, 2009; Emdin, 2016).

Additionally, a trend in school leadership turnover started to occur. School leader turnover has a negative impact on schools in decline. As an administrator at Andrews, I found that the constant principal turnover had an impact on the students, the staff, and the community. The students had low expectations because of the constant shift in the mission and vision of the school with different leaders. The parents did not have trust because of the revolving door of leadership. Furthermore, principal turnover at Andrews had a negative impact on student success. Student assessment data proved that student results were consistently dropping. Literature on the impact of school leadership informed that highly effective principals have a positive impact on student gains (Duke, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). Mr. Holmes used the term *feeder pattern*, which he related to school boundaries, inexperienced teacher, and leadership.

Dr. Hamilton, an alumna and community leader, was a student at the time of the reorganization of the teachers. She stated removing the Black teachers from Andrews changed the quality of education the students at Andrews received. She shared her viewpoint on the district leadership reorganization:

Well, here again, we will go back to when they changed. 'Cause I was there when they did that, when they changed. And they put the White teachers at the school and moved a lot of the Black teachers out. A lot of the White teachers wanted to

be cool with the kids, and they wanted to be friends. Black teachers did not want you to be their friend. They wanted you to do your work and do what you needed to do. So that culture started to change, and the students just did not perform as well because the expectations were different. Thus, that kind of changed the whole climate at the school. I mean, you had some strong teachers still there, but you had so many that were not.

Related to fearful leadership, inexperienced, White teachers led their classrooms tentatively, without the strength and discipline of experienced Black teachers at the school. This quote by Dr. Hamilton speaks to the research by Chambers (2009) in which she discussed the historical educational and racial disparities on Black and Latino students' educational development. Chambers further stated that the lack of such educational development is related to the lack of teacher investment in their student's success. Ultimately, when Black and Latino students do not receive sufficient opportunities to learn (Chambers, 2009; Gorski, 2013), it affects their ability to do well on state assessments. Poor classroom management affects learning opportunities. Dr. Hamilton had a similar viewpoint as Mr. Holmes, who opined that Andrew's downfall was related to the restructuring and movement of experienced Black teachers to other campuses. Dr. Hamilton believed the culture of Andrews started to shift downward along with the quality of education the students received.

**In-school decline factor: Loss of academic programming.** Similar to what I found in the archives, the loss of academic programming emerged during the interviews. The loss of academic programs was an important theme for many of the participants. The loss of all of the academic programs at Andrews stifled the quality of education and

experience the students received, which would have prepared them for life after high school. The participants believed that the loss of academic programs contributed to the decline of Andrews. I created a comparative list of academic programs from 1969 to 1986 based on the archival data (see Appendix M). In 1969, Andrews had 28 academic programs, dropping to 17 in 1986. As of 2019, Andrews offers nine programs, seven new academic programs and two programs from the past, such as printing. The loss of academic programming was a result of lost funding and resources, a preexisting theme. The participants did not speak dominantly of the lack of funding. However, it is worthy of discussion because the loss of academic programs resulted from the loss of funding. In other words, the decrease in student enrollment would have an impact on the amount of funding and thus on the amount of educational programs offered and the number of teachers and administrators a school leader could hire.

Dr. Stevenson, a former principal, shared that Andrews changed when the academic programs were reduced due to a lack of funding and resources. Dr. Stevenson shared his perspective on when the decline started at Andrews. He stated,

I cannot put my finger on the exact date or time, but I can tell you the shift that happened from the glory days. ... I'll call it that because there were some exceptional programming. ... A lot of the funding structures changed. ... So, I think that when you were looking at schools that were not performing well, they are out there not aligned according to the resources that they have. ... That model we have must be equitable for those kids in that community that need more resources so that they have an equal opportunity to move forward into the world ... to get a good job, so that they can raise a family. ... But I have a group of

people over here that I cannot bring up to the same level as you were because they were missing resources.

Dr. Stevenson recognized that during better times, Andrews had many opportunities after school and during the school day for students to participate in programs teaching students critical-thinking skills. Students were able to compete with other students to get jobs after graduating from high school because they had academic programs that enriched their opportunities for success.

Mr. Scott, an alumnus and parent, stated that when his two children attended Andrews, more academic programs were available for the students. By the time he had enrolled his daughter, the academic programs had vanished. He stated, “The administration has changed. ... The programs were different. They offered cosmetology when he was there. When she got there, they took it away from the school.” In this example, Mr. Scott’s perception of when Andrews changed was centered around the turnover in leadership, the reduction in funding and resources, and the reduction in academic opportunities.

The impression that I received from the participants regarding the loss of academic programs was a result of a reduction of funding to the school. Another reason could be related to a shift in the mission on the campus level or the district level. My research led me two historical pieces from 1983 and 1985 that confirmed the state education board had “organized the honors system in 1983.” In 1985, the district reorganized staff and assigned a lead instructor to Andrews “to raise test scores, improve instruction, and promote higher character standards through the teachers, students, and community.” Another archive from 1986 revealed that the push for higher student

success paid off when state assessment data showed that 84% of Andrews 11th-grade students had passed the language arts examination and 75% had passed mathematics. My final impression about the reduction in academic programs comes from a field note that I jotted down regarding a conversation I had with a teacher, who stated that Andrews was a dominant competitor in academic competitions against high schools in the district considered to have better students. Andrews would sweep past the competition, according to a 1986 student newspaper. An instance in the archival data that supported this claim is in 1986, when the Drama Department competed against five top suburban schools (two private schools) and took the top three awards in every category.

Dr. Hamilton, an alumna and community leader, believed that the resources were different at Andrews because the school lacked a strong Parent Teacher Organization to raise money to fill in the funding gaps as other schools. She stated,

The resources were different. ... Our students do not get the full impact of what they could get if we had the resources. ... Back when I graduated from high school, you could go into the industry. A lot of them went to work at all of these significant industries, where they made perfect money and stayed there for many, many years.

In this example, Dr. Hamilton remembered when Andrews had academic programs that enriched the student's abilities to find high-skilled jobs after high school that would increase the graduates' earning power. Dr. Hamilton believed that the lack of academic programs would result in economic inequality for the students graduating from Andrews.

Dr. Roberson, a former school leader, discussed his perspective on the funding inequalities at Andrews. He stated that he believed low-performing schools were not always allocated enough funding to meet the needs of the students:

You cannot have the same funding formula for every school. I understand that everybody gets the same 1.1 or whatever it is for every student you have. But some of these schools need 1.8 worth of allotment because the needs were just that great. We need to figure out how to level the playing field and everyone getting the same. With inequities in funding, inequities in resources, inequities in programs, and opportunities, our kids do not get the opportunities that other kids get.

In this example, Dr. Roberson explained that the inequities around funding, programming, and resources are not isolated to Andrews but more of a systemic issue of racial inequality that has the greatest impact on schools with a majority of low-income students.

The reduction of academic programming was devastating to the participants, because they believed the lack of access to such programs would deny students critical-thinking experiences and the introduction to different economic situations. The academic programs available in the 1970s included training and development in various industries to position the students for employment after high school. Many students were able to graduate from Andrews well prepared to enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills they learned from the academic choices available to them at that time. The participants were concerned that the students' lack of academic programs would not allow the students to have the "full impact" of the academic experiences as other students

would have, disadvantaging Andrews graduates. The participants believed that changes in the funding structures changed the structure of the academic choices Andrews can provide to students today. The participants echoed that the lack of resources has denied students at Andrews the same educational opportunity, thereby increasing the economic disadvantage of students of Andrews. The participants believed that the “funding formula” must provide more resources for declining schools such as Andrews that need more money to support students who have less than other students. They believed funding inequities and resource inequities amounted to academic program inequities for the students at Andrews.

**Out-of-school decline factor: Community erosion.** The participants were asked to share their thoughts on the community today and how it has changed over time. Community erosion was a dominant theme for the participants. Many of the participants mentioned several themes related to the erosion of their community. The participants considered community erosion around Andrews was related to the rezoning of student attendance boundaries (which will be referred to as gerrymandering student attendance zones), student mobility, the gentrification of the neighborhood, migration out of the neighborhood due to increasing property values, and the lack of social capital. Many of the smaller themes were interwoven in the responses.

Dr. Stevenson, a former principal, shared that the increase in gentrification has caused an upward shift in property values and property taxes, politics around altering the school zone, and lack of affordable housing. These external forces caused Andrews to decline. He shared his perspective on the erosion of the community:

The community where the economy changed, which caused mobility of a lot of those families that were homeowners and consistent with their work. The gentrification started happening, where you have a mix of Caucasian families that were coming back to the community. Property values ... and property taxes were shifting until some families were not able to afford it, so they will have to move to affordable housing ... outside of the city limits. Then, you started moving tracks, and school boundaries started changing in school zoning. ... You have school choice now or it has been in that effect ... because there were so many politics around school zoning boundaries, magnet schools. ... Many of those designs were not in the best interest of kids of color. Kids can go from all over the district, leave your community. So, all of those factors have caused the school's instructional setting, ... that's the school community, the educational community, to decline.

City newspaper clippings from 1997, 1998, and 2013 discussed the moving of Andrews attendance zones. For instance, in 1997, students were removed from the Andrews attendance zone and given to another high school. By 1998, the attendance was given back to Andrews when a new high school was constructed. By 2013, the attendance zone at Andrews was "raided," a word used by Mr. Holmes, when the district removed one of the middle schools from the Andrews attendance zone. Andrews originally had two middle schools that fed into the high school. Regarding gentrification, local newspapers in 2015 informed that "gentrification around Andrews" had been a concern for 10 years. More current local news in 2018 concurred and expressed that members of the Andrews community were fighting gentrification, with the median home value increasing 176%



between 2000 and 2013. These articles supported Dr. Stevenson's use of the terms *gentrification*, *school boundaries*, *school zoning*, *politics*, and *school community*.

Dr. Hamilton, the alumna community leader, believed that the social capital had eroded around Andrews because the students do not have the same sense of pride or understand the legacy or the history of the school. She attributed the lack of pride to the massive movement of the Black middle class out of the neighborhood. She stated,

Well, I know that we had a great sense of pride in the school. I do not think that the students today appreciate the legacy and how the school has always been such a beacon. ... And we started buying into the "White is right." ... We are, and not looking at the successes that we already experienced by staying in our community schools and being taught by people that looked like us. When we moved to this area, there were a lot of Jews and Caucasians that lived here. And then when the Black families moved, they were teachers, doctors, postal workers, professionals. White people, it was White flight. And now they were coming back, and the neighborhoods were changing. ... The freeway came through and took out many houses. ... It is like we were displacing and coming in between communities with this infrastructure, housing, and the ability of the current students to be gainfully employed ... to stay here. ... The culture and the ethnicity of the school may change. Yeah. It is a lot different from when we came up.

Dr. Hamilton shared her perspective on the future of Andrews with the impact of the community's reconfiguration due to increased highways. A 2001 local newspaper article also described how the historical Black neighborhood around Andrews was "sliced by a major highway dividing and displacing once thriving and self-sufficient Black

communities.” The community around Andrews is prime property attracting middle- and upper middle-class families back to the area and forcing more Black families from their community. According to online 2020 data, single-family properties in the Andrews community are valued at about \$173 per square foot, compared to \$140 in the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 data. Prices rose considerably between 2000 and 2005. A drive through the community reveals new construction of single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments. The 2010 Census Bureau indicated that the average household income for the Andrews community was over \$85,000. Yet, the student demographic data from the 2018-2019 school year revealed that more than 81% of the students at Andrews were recorded as being economically vulnerable and qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch.

Ms. Kelley shared her viewpoint on how cohesive and supportive the community was in the past based on her lived experiences. She stated,

It was a huge community from top to bottom. ... Everybody was working together, ... really about helping a child be a better citizen in life. ... They knew they were on a college or a trade path or something that they could get a certification in school and go ahead and start working.

In this example, Ms. Kelley discussed the impact of the high expectations that a close-knit community had on the success of the students and the attitude toward Andrews.

Dr. Anderson, a former district leader, shared that he believed that Andrews changed after the postsegregation when the Black middle-class population moved away from the neighborhood, resulting in a change in the socioeconomic status of the families moving into the community. When the new families moved into the area, the Black

attitude about education changed, and the culture of the community changed as well. Dr. Anderson explained,

Probably one of the most dominant changes has been ... not only the change in the school itself, but the change in the community from which the school drew their students. It became a much broader, more integrated, more economically diverse and maybe less than it had been. And also, the attitude about African American growth has not had the dominance that the school had in its dominant days. 'Cause the school was the emblem of what the Black attitude was in the area. So, as the population grew and more people came in, whose attitude was different, and there was no culture transition system in place to keep people's attitudes the same way, that caused a dominant change in the dynamics of the people who attend the school. The school did not understand that or see that they did not have the mechanics in place to combat when the situation changed, then the school just collapsed on top of it.

Dr. Anderson mentioned that the school district leaders did not pay attention to the warning signals that the community had shifted. If the school leaders had paid attention, they would have been able to provide a solution instead of letting the school decline.

Dr. Anderson further added that Andrews stakeholders have not made connections with the major industries around the school to get the support or develop relationships with the leadership in the community to build the culture around the school. He stated,

It is a community that sits ... in a place where there is much current activity, where the world is changing, the world is meeting, and many dominant

organizations that were highly successful right there in that environment, but there does not seem to be a connection between it [the school] and what is going on in the world around it.

In this example, Dr. Anderson highlighted that the Black culture dominant for many years is absent today. He further highlighted the lack of connection with the significant industries around the community. Andrews leaders have not taken full advantage of the school's surroundings.

Mr. Scott, an alumni and parent, stated that for the community to establish its dominance again, everyone must be held accountable to improve the historical legacy and pride of Andrews. His viewpoint on the erosion of the community was this: "We need to get back to it, take a village, and hold each other accountable. Pride. ... Even to this day, it is still a badge of honor." He talked about reestablishing the community where everyone is accountable for the success of the students and the community.

Mr. Holmes, the alumni and community leader, stated that the matriculation from elementary schools to Andrews provided a steady stream of students to the neighborhood school. The students, teachers, and families had high expectations from the community and from Andrews. Mr. Holmes shared his view about community erosion and his lived experience as a student.

It was all positive. ... We had high expectations. ... From the time you opened the door, ... you look forward to school. [Andrews] was kind of like ... going to Harvard or Yale or something like that. ... All you knew is that something good was on the other side of those doors. ... You were going to come out with something.

In this response, Mr. Holmes referenced the high quality of the school and the education students received from the school in its dominant days from 1926 until after school desegregation, when the educated Black families in the Andrews community started to send their students to the top White schools nearby, a trend identified by prior research (Ouchi, 2003).

**In- and out-of-school decline factor: Racial inequality.** The participants were asked if they thought that racial inequality played a role in what happened to Andrews. The former school principals (Dr. Stevenson and Dr. Roberson), district leader (Dr. Anderson), and one community leader (Dr. Hamilton) agreed that racial inequality happened at Andrews. The alumni (Ms. Kelley and Mr. Holmes) in their viewpoints were impartial about racial inequality having an impact on Andrews. It is important to highlight that racial inequality was implicit in almost all of the participants' data, demonstrating racial inequality can be a contributing factor in school decline.

Dr. Stevenson, a former principal and district leader, stated that he believed racial inequality existed in the funding sources, educational opportunities, and the community around Andrews. The gerrymandering of the school zone played a role in the decline of Andrews. Dr. Stevenson stated,

Absolutely. Absolutely. When you were talking about equitable, there were families and communities that need more than others. So, who needs more should get more. But that is not what is happening in our world. When you were looking at how we best support schools like [Andrews] or communities like [Andrews], we have to be equitable for those kids in that community that need more resources

so that they have an equal opportunity to move forward the world, ... and that is not consistent.

In his response, Dr. Stevenson stated the formula for equality is not the same for the community that supports Andrews or the students who attend Andrews. The terms used here were *equal opportunity* and *resources*.

Dr. Anderson stated his perspective that racial inequality impacted Andrews but did not produce failure or decline; rather, ignoring the warning signals (Duke, 2008) contributed to the school's continued decline. The school leader did not do something to fix the problems, and thus Andrews declined. Dr. Anderson stated,

Yes. Yes. It plays a role in perhaps a lot of situations, but not just the school, but the rest of the world, but my point is that it is just the name of that tune. You have to dance with the music that's there. You know, I do not accept that as an excuse. You cannot explain failure based on that. That is the way it is. Success means fixing it, then dealing with it, understanding it, working with it.

He stated that the decline of the school was not due to racial inequality but due to the lack of school leadership knowledge on how to spot various dangers and understand those dangers in order to fix them, a common problem in low-performing schools.

Dr. Hamilton believed that economic inequality was a bigger issue for Andrews than racial inequality, because of the funding disparities that existed in the school. She believed that the district should have provided Andrews with additional allocations of resources to close the funding gaps:

Racial inequality. Well, let me just say that I think a lot of the problem is that the resources were different at other schools. ... I think that the district or the state or

whoever, they need to put more money in to bridge that gap. ... I do think it is racial inequality, but it is more of an economic inequality than racial.

This quote from Dr. Hamilton speaks to the larger issue of funding disparities between Andrews and other schools that has resulted in fewer resources for the school.

Educational scholar Ladson Billings (2006) stated that it is difficult to prove that schools with students of color receive less funding, but it is well documented that funding inequities are not new to urban schools like Andrews. Funding inequities that have had an impact on Andrews also have increased risks and economic disparities that divide earning ratios between Blacks and Whites. Exposure to educational opportunities such as field trips gives students important experiences that help to improve their knowledge base on many different levels. The lack of such educational experiences has a negative impact on students' career and college decisions and ultimately their potential earning power.

Mr. Holmes focused on racial inequality in the design of the new school when he compared the role that the district leadership played in the resources and support for other schools getting new facilities. The district leadership did not provide Andrews with the same support and resources. Mr. Holmes stated,

Yeah, I think you have to focus on various pinpoints. For one thing, the whole situation with getting a new school and all that kind of stuff. Okay. Everything other schools asked for the district said okay, everything we asked, the district made sure they went against us in every single category. That was not right. Every single category they went against us.

In the example here, Mr. Holmes stated that racial inequality was levied against Andrews from the district level during the design of the new school.

**Participant interview summary.** The eight participant interviews yielded stakeholders' perceptions of school decline factors. Two in-school decline factors were described: school leadership (courageous, absent, and fearful leadership types) and loss of academic programming. One out-of-school decline factor was identified: community erosion. Finally, racial inequality was both an in- and out-of-school factor.

### **Summary**

This section included the findings from the participants in the interview responses and review or archival data. The findings were based on the frequency of codes noted in the data to develop emergent themes. The next chapter examines how the findings contribute to, back, or pushback on the empirical review of literature detailed in Chapter 2 of this study. I also make recommendations for future research on school decline.



## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

In this study, I presented the perceptions of eight participants on how in-school and out-of-school decline factors impacted Andrews, a historic, predominantly African American, urban high school. The causes of school decline may be complicated for school and district leaders to understand and identify given the many influences on school decline. Many of those influences were not regarded as the internal operations of the campus. External forces around the campus also exert influence. I identified multiple themes from the observations of the participants using a visual stimulus of the historical data and during the participant interviews. The themes found in this study helped me to answer the research questions that guided this investigation.

In this chapter I discuss the key themes that emerged as in-school and out-of-school factors and situate them within the literature. The next section of this chapter starts with an interpretation of the in-school and out-of-school decline themes observed from the participants during the visual stimulus exercise. The section is followed by a discussion of findings from the interviews. The implications for district and school leaders and future research and the conclusion will complete this chapter.

#### **Archival Data Declarative Memory Strategy**

The visual stimulus in-school decline theme was the loss of traditional legacy. The out-of-school themes were change in the exceptional culture around the school, change in the attitude about education, and the erosion of African American leadership in the community.

**Visual historical stimulus of school decline: Loss of traditional legacy.** I began my observations with the participants with a declarative memory strategy in which the participants had an opportunity to review historical documents from Andrews. When the participants observed the visual stimulus, the archival data, many observed one in-school decline factor emerging theme: the loss of traditional legacy.

Participants expressed that during the exceptional years at Andrews, the traditional legacy of attending Andrews was valued by those who attended the school. The participants indicated that they knew from the start of an elementary school that they would matriculate through the neighborhood middle school and attend Andrews. Many generations of families attended Andrews. Many of the teachers at Andrews were familiar with the students before they enrolled in the campus from their elementary and middle school teachers in the community as well as from the familiarity with family members previously enrolled. Several studies on school decline (Duke, 2008; Hochbein & Duke, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2010; Murphy & Meyers, 2008) confirmed that other factors should be considered besides the operations of the campus when identifying the causes of school decline. The loss of traditional legacy is one theme in this study that supports the research on school decline. The loss of traditional legacy is an in-school factor that supports school decline studies.

**Visual stimulus of out-of-school decline themes.** Further observations of the visual stimulus strategy revealed three out-of-school decline factors: (a) change in the exceptional culture around the school, (b) change in the attitude about education in the community, and (c) the erosion of African American leadership in the community. The exceptional culture around the school changed from a diverse community of career

professionals, supportive churches, and affordable housing. Many Black leaders in the city who worked in major industries, including some elected officials, lived in the neighborhood around Andrews. These leaders supported education in the community and enrichment activities for the students. Many of the participants had confidence that after graduation from Andrews, they were going to get jobs with long tenures at significant industries in the city and other parts of the country. Many studies discussed how out-of-school factors such as affordable housing, Black culture, and the shrinking of economic opportunities in an area can alter the exceptional culture around the school (Anyon 2005; Carter, 2003; Goldring & Swain, 2014; Hochbein & Mahone, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2010; Pearman & Swain, 2017). The change in the culture around the school supports school decline studies that have recommended school leaders be able to recognize external forces that impact school failure.

In terms of the second theme, change in the attitude about education in the community, several alumni participants valued the support they received from the members of the community. Additionally, the participants discussed the once-high expectations for success from the families in the community. The alumni in the study spoke with high regard in terms of what they learned at Andrews and how important it was that the teachers cared for them and their educational journey (see Chambers, 2009). The students at one time had many academic programs that exposed them to various careers. Academic enrichment after school was in abundance at the school and the community through a large corporation that remained in the community from 1950–2005. Many of the participants believed that when they left Andrews, they were well prepared for a career of their choice. One participant compared the education he received at

Andrews to that of an Ivy League campus. Several studies discussed the importance of students having access to academic programs to improve their achievement (Carter, 2003; Chambers, 2009; Childs, 2017; Coleman, 1968; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gorski, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Tate, 2008; Tate & Striley, 2010). These researchers also described the importance of social capital, supporting the attitude of education, in meeting the urban challenges that play a role in school decline.

In terms of the third theme, the erosion of African American leadership, participants respected the Black leaders in the community many years ago. These leaders came from the churches and local Black organizations to advocate for education as the vehicle for upward social mobility. Black leadership during the postsegregation era had an agenda focused on improving the instructional community. The participants shared their concerns that Black leadership in the area today has a selfish agenda (see Batagiannis, 2007) instead of escalating education in the best interest of the Black race or even the community. The participants believed that the Black leadership's erosion led to an absence of Black leadership in the instructional community, which started to shift negatively, and the community around Andrews went down. They were concerned that the community was continuing to go down. Andrews was vulnerable to school decline when professional leaders in the community started moving their families away from the neighborhood to suburban areas. This led to a significant drop in the number of students attending Andrews.

### **Interview Findings: In-School Decline Factors**

In this section, I discuss the interview responses that revealed two in-school decline factors: leadership (courageous and fearful) and the loss of academic programming. Thus far, I have discussed ranging systemic issues that contributed to school decline, including the reorganization of teachers, hasty hiring of teachers, leadership styles that are effective and ineffective at low-performing schools, the impact of leadership turnover, district leadership, and the disparities of funding. Further, in this section, I also discuss the Black middle-class flight, White flight, and racial inequalities that have impacted school decline.

**Leadership.** Researchers on school decline commonly have agreed that unsuccessful leadership is a crucial cause of school decline. A few studies (Duke, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010) connected school failure with inadequate instruction, uncertified teachers, and weak leadership. In many declining schools, few leaders and teachers are adequately prepared with turnaround strategies to handle the complex challenges the schools face. Leaders and teachers of these schools must be experts with passion and skills to effectively manage the improvement process (Orr et al., 2008).

Participants were concerned that leadership was an in-school decline factor that changed Andrews. The alumni participants were concerned about the educational journey of the students when district leadership mandated the removal of the experienced Black teachers from Andrews and replaced them with White teachers with no experience with urban school challenges. I found through historical documents that the reorganization was done to support state and district goals to improve student achievement, and staff were being rerouted to other campuses. The participants believed that the nonexperienced

White teachers did not have the same care for the students' education as the experienced Black teachers.

Consistency in leadership was a staple during the heyday at Andrews. School leaders remained in their position for many years. Not until the shift with the Black leadership moving away from the community did leadership turnover at Andrews begin. The turnover in campus leadership caused disruptions in the mission and vision of Andrews. This finding supports the literature. Several studies informed that many low-performing urban schools' principal turnover is a concern, with 1 out of every 5 principals leaving their schools either by choice or by being replaced by the district's leadership (Duke, 2008; Hochbein & Duke, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2010; Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Trujillo, 2015). Principal turnover has consequences on teacher retention and student success. Another consequence for school leadership turnover in low-performing schools is the lack of ability to attract experienced leadership and experienced teachers who understand the challenges of low-performing schools.

***Courageous leadership.*** The participants described a successful leader of Andrews as courageous and passionate for education to guide student pathways to success. Additionally, a former school leader stated courageous leadership is vital for managing a low-performing school. The literature discussed that leadership is a perilous role in U.S. schools, and having courage allows the leader to be guided by passion for education and not limited by fear (Batagiannis, 2007). With courageous leadership, the vision for the school remains transparent and leadership is sustainable. Sustainability in school leadership safeguards constant improvement to solve complex challenges at low-performing schools. Without sustainability in leadership, many schools will lose their

energy to accomplish school improvement tasks, suffer turnover in key personnel, or have school improvement efforts disrupted by mandated educational policies (Batagiannis, 2007; Youngs, 2007).

Leadership involves successes and failures, and leadership is about courage, but courageous leadership does not come with ease (Beatty, 2000). Several researchers reviewed prior studies on school effectiveness and improvement and argued that leadership is critical for the success of declining schools (Muijs et al., 2004; Youngs, 2007). Real school leadership should be distributed and democratic (Muijs et al., 2004; Youngs, 2007) leadership forms that embrace teacher leaders. Additionally, Muijs et al. (2004) noted that school leaders in failing schools were more likely to have positive student gains when they practiced open and transparent communication of vision (Batagiannis, 2007; Youngs, 2007) and had high expectations for teachers and students. To turn around a declining school requires a team approach of influential leaders and teacher leaders empowered to act with district support (Ferris, 2012; Orr et al., 2008). Strong school leadership is crucial to the success of a low-performing school (Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

***Fearful leadership.*** Although only one participant elaborated on a concern about fearful leadership, it is worthy of a discussion because of its impact on school leadership's emotional implications. The participant did not use the term *emotional leadership*, which, according to Ouakouak, Zaitouni, and Arya (2020), refers to

managing the emotions of followers by exhibiting understanding, consideration, and respect for their feelings and needs. ... It is a key leadership function to manage the emotions of group members, which in turn can influence employees'

behaviors and help establish a trusting, meaningful relationship between leaders and followers. (p. 258)

Literature supports the phenomenon. Dr. Roberson stated that when a district leader in “high places” is fearful of the critical stakeholders in the community, such fearful leadership can lead to a “transitive environment that is laden with ... negativity and impunity,” and fearful leaders “do not know how to lead,” contributing to school decline. The literature on emotional leadership in education has indicated school leaders feel they are pressured to be successful (Batagiannis, 2007; Youngs, 2007). The participant was concerned that he was “being held to the standard of what he had inherited from the previous administration” while feeling disempowered and unsupported by district leadership. The implication of fearful leadership makes it difficult for school leaders to make essential changes because they feel that they have lost their campus (Beatty, 2000). Dr. Roberson had a significant turnover of district supervision at Andrews during his 1st year. He shared, “I had five supervisors during my 1st year. They were leaving, being reprimanded, being disciplined.” He faced consequences that derailed the work he had in progress. The 1st-year principal had to continually change directions when he was assigned a new district leader. Through each change of district supervision, the school leader’s goals changed. The participant believed that fearful leadership on the district level could have an impact on school decline.

**Leadership: Implications for district and school leaders.** Not much literature is available on emotional leadership, Black leadership, and race relations, all factors of leadership that appeared in my findings. I would suggest that future study on school leadership at a declining school look at emotional leadership on a low-performing



campus and how Black leaders address critical issues such as race, ethnicity, and culture of the school community. Several studies on turnaround leadership (Duke, 2008, 2016; Ferris, 2012; Fullan, 2005; Housman & Martinez, 2001; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lochmiller & Chesnut, 2017; Muijs et al., 2004; Orr et al., 2008; Peck & Reitzug, 2013; Slayton & Mathis, 2010; Zeinabadi, 2014) suggested four aspects of leadership required for the successful turnaround of a low-performing school:

1. Leadership is effective when it has a positive impact on student learning, the school culture, and community relations, all critical for the overall improvement of student achievement.
2. Effective leaders develop the staff with skills and knowledge to address the challenges of the school and practice open and clear communication of vision and expectations. These aspects of leadership have resulted in student gains in vulnerable urban school districts in the United States. In many turnaround schools, a limited number of leaders and teachers were adequately prepared with turnaround strategies to handle the complex challenges the schools face. Teachers and leaders of these schools must be experts with passion, skills, and the ability to effectively manage the improvement process in turnaround schools.
3. Turnaround leaders were responsive and sensitive to the needs of the campus to shape the school's improvement by increasing teacher values and commitments, teacher motivation and retention, managing a budget to staff, and developing support from the community.

4. Distributed and democratic turnaround school leadership encourages positive student results.

Based on these findings, potential research questions could be the following: How does emotional leadership impact a low-performing campus? How does Black leadership in racially diverse areas address critical issues that may impact student achievement?

**Loss of academic programming.** In this section I discuss the loss of funding and its impact of inequities and the loss of academic programs at urban high schools. With a great deal of money being spent on education reform to support all students' success in America (McGuinn, 2005; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; Tampio, 2016), success has not always been the result because of biases toward students of color (Chambers, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Emdin, 2016; Gorski, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Educational scholars concerned with educational inequities have considered the achievement gaps between White students and students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2013; McGuinn, 2005). Students of color who live in poverty often do not learn the literacy skills necessary to take advantage of a society of economic wealth or share a level of education (Chambers, 2009; Gorski, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013). Previous funding sources to low-performing schools have been described as an outcome of the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Education historically has denied vulnerable students the same access to opportunities to participate in healthy learning programs (Chambers, 2009; Gorski, 2013; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

Losing academic programs had an impact on the quality of education and educational journey (Chambers, 2009) and opportunities (Gorski, 2013) for the students at Andrews. American educational equality does not mean the same thing to all racial

groups. Education reform efforts to provide African American students and other students of color with access to such educational opportunities as wealthy students have not been equal (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gorski, 2013). With high-stakes testing a requirement since NCLB (2002), students of color, students of low income, and other vulnerable groups are not likely to be successful on such tests if they have not had the same educational opportunities to learn as more advantaged students. Standardized tests “measure the opportunity and access test-takers have enjoyed in their lives up to the point of taking their tests” (Gorski, 2013, p. 85). Educational reform scholars Darling-Hammond (2000) and Gorski (2013) pointed to the disparities of high-quality curriculum and materials as just a few inequalities that impact the learning opportunities for students of color. Such learning disparities are powerfully connected to the differences in student outcomes.

**Loss of academic programming: Implications for district and school leaders.**

Districts and school leaders must be reminded that educational policies’ intentions may not always benefit all students. With such disparities to educational access, district and school leaders will be challenged to ensure that resource allocations are distributed based on the need of the students. In doing so, school leaders will need to demonstrate they have provided the same learning opportunities to support student achievement equitably as a standard practice. In 2020, district and school leaders should expect shortfalls in revenue as a result of the economic slowdown due to the Coronavirus-2019 pandemic. District and school leaders must weigh funding formulas to ensure they are equitable for all students (Roza, Hill, Sclafani, & Speakman, 2004). Eliminating inequalities in

learning opportunities for African American students is vital (Chambers, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gorski, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The implications for further research are discussed here. With the continued reduction of school funding, researchers should consider how this reduced funding will further impact the educational learning opportunities in urban schools already in the decline stage. Potential research questions are the following: How do district and school leaders create learning programs in low-performing schools to equalize learning opportunities for African American students? How will district and school leaders equalize funding formulas to support students of color after the pandemic?

### **Interview Findings: Out-of-School Decline Factors**

**Community erosion.** The erosion around Andrews was a dominant theme for the participants. Many of the participants mentioned several themes that were related to the erosion of the community. Many of the participants were concerned that the rezoning of student attendance boundaries, gentrification, and student mobility contributed to the decline of Andrews.

***Gerrymandering of school attendance zones.*** Many of the participants were concerned about the many “politics around school zoning.” Once the school district started moving student attendance track and school boundaries, students in the neighborhood were redirected from the neighborhood school to other schools, leading to school choice. The participants were concerned that the redrawn school zones were not designed in the “best interest” of students of color at Andrews. Historically, local school districts have established student attendance zones based on the location of the neighborhood and by doing so have blazed a trail of inequality along the lines of race and

income (Garcia, 2008; Goldring & Swain, 2014; Pearman & Swain, 2017; Richards, 2014). The district creation of racial and income boundaries led to the school choice option that allowed parents more latitude to send their children to schools outside of their zone (Garcia, 2008; Goldring & Swain, 2014; Pearman & Swain, 2017). Research on attendance zones (Richards, 2014) found that school districts have created attendance zones today that were markedly more gerrymandered than school attendance zones in 1991, and the situation is deteriorating intensely.

***Gentrification.*** Many of the participants valued the community in which Andrews was nestled. Participants shared that the community was mixed with White and Jewish families before more Black families settled into the community after the postsegregation era in the mid-1960s. Many of the White and Jewish families at that point started to move away from the community. However, many White and Asian, more affluent families have started to move back to the area. The neighborhood around Andrews is near many significant industries with an enhanced transportation system that can access many points of the city. This proximity to major venues in the city is in high demand for families looking to getting closer to work, school, or urban life. The participants were concerned that the newcomers moving back into the Andrews community have caused an upward shift in housing cost, thus pushing the Black families from the neighborhood to other communities. According to 2020 real estate data, the housing cost per square foot in the Andrews community is \$173, which is higher than the median cost of \$120 per square foot for housing in the city. The newcomers to the community have been buying and tearing down homes to build new townhomes, resulting in higher property values and property taxes. Given that Andrews is in a high-priced section of the community, many

Black families may not be able to afford housing at the increased prices. They will be forced to move to affordable housing outside of the Andrews community or the city limits.

The participants were concerned not only with the surge in gentrification and housing cost but also with the transportation infrastructure of new highway systems that were removing existing houses in the area. With the influx of housing and the division of the neighborhood with transportation infrastructure, the participants were concerned that these new developments have caused the Andrews educational community to decline. The participants thought that with gentrified neighborhoods, Andrews will no longer be a historic, predominantly African American high school if the White and Asian families start sending their children to the neighborhood school.

Finally, the participants believed that one of the most dominant changes is not the change in the school, but in the community. Garcia (2008) stated that the community became a much broader, more integrated, and more economically diverse area with more vulnerable families after the migration of Black professional families moved to other areas. Garcia found that many people of different ethnic groups were moving into areas, and those families often decided not to send their children to the neighborhood schools but instead to charter, magnet, and private schools. Relocation to urban cities or gentrification of White families to urban neighborhoods of color is increasing. If the school choice program expands, gentrification will continue to increase, according to Pearman and Swain (2017). Alumni participants felt they must stay engaged and active in the community to hold onto the legacy of Andrews.

***Student mobility.*** Participants stated that the economic changes around Andrews have increased student mobility, as families who owned homes had to move away.

During the 1980s, the graduating classes of Andrews were approximately 550, with 2,000 to 3,000 students in attendance at Andrews daily. As of 2019, the student enrollment is 874, largely due to school choice. As a result of NCLB, parents can unenroll their students from low-performing schools and enroll them in a higher performing school (Saw et al., 2017). Over 800 students transferred to other public, charter, magnet, or private schools in the district in 2019. Of these, 300 zoned neighborhood students transferred out and enrolled in high-performing public high schools in the district. Another 300 students transferred to other public high schools. The remaining 200 students transferred out and enrolled in charter schools in the area, leaving the school with a significant decrease in student enrollment and fewer resources. School turnaround and school decline scholar Duke (2016) shared that many district leaders were compelled to make choices to close a low-performing school and redirect students to higher performing campuses or use the turnaround school model option with new leadership to save the campus.

**Community erosion: Implications for district and school leaders.** Given the body of literature arguing that neighborhoods were more segregated due to gerrymandering student attendance zones, school district leaders must be able to establish equitable residential patterns. Student attendance boundary zones have a tremendous impact on the equity in the neighborhoods and school indefinitely (Goldring & Swain, 2014; Pearman & Swain; 2017; Richards, 2014). The common practice of student attendance margins remains a concern as the creation of racial boundaries continues to be inequitable. A potential research question for future research could be the following:

How do district school leaders draw equitable attendance boundaries to prevent gerrymandering of school boundaries zones?

**Racial inequality impact on school decline.** Racial inequalities were found to be present in the preexisting funding and resources, student mobility, and family and community. Racial disparities were found in the inductive themes of the loss of academic programming, gerrymandering of student attendance zones, and gentrification. The participants were disturbed by the disparities of “funding formulas” for students at low-performing schools, stating that “kids with less should have more, but that is not always the case.” The student attendance zone is historically unequal to school zones with low-performing schools. One participant was “tired of them raiding the feeder patterns” or “redrawing the school boundary zone” to remove students from the neighborhood school. Increasing the property values in low-income neighborhoods or removing housing with transportation infrastructure increases economic disparities along racial lines; these were just a few ways that racial injustices were present in factors of school decline.

The participants were asked if they thought that racial inequality played a role in what happened to Andrews, and they agreed that racial inequality happened at Andrews. In several studies (Chambers, 2009; Coleman, 1968; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gorski, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Tate & Striley, 2010), unequal educational disparities were well documented to show that many high-need schools do not have equal access to quality educational opportunities. Disparities exist in many high-need, low-performing schools that include per-pupil funding, equitable literacy, educational attainment, achievement scores between Black and White students, and quality instruction. These racial inequalities exist because society has not historically



invested resources in the low-performing schools, which has resulted in an education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The lack of resources trickling into many of the high-need, low-performing schools leads to consequences with crime, poverty, and unequal access to quality employment (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

### **Revisiting Research Questions**

**Research Question 1.** What in-school and out-of-school factors led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school? Overall, seven themes emerged from the study. The participants identified three in-school decline factors: (a) the loss of traditional legacy, (b) the loss of academic programming, and (c) leadership. Four out-of-school factors emerged: (a) change in the exceptional culture around the school, (b) change in the attitude about education, (c) the erosion of African American leadership in the community, and (d) community erosion.

**Research Question 2.** How did key stakeholders describe in-school and out-of-school factors that led to school decline at a predominantly African American urban high school? The participants described how the traditional legacy vanished when the school board started redrawing school boundary zones, which broke the cycle of generational family attendance at Andrews. The participants said the reduction in academic programming was the result of a loss of funding and resources that removed educational opportunities from vulnerable students at Andrews. The type of leadership was a factor for a school in decline. The participants believed that courageous leadership is required to stay the course of the mission and vision of the campus.

Conversely, the participants said fearful leaders were not the best leadership for a campus in decline because such leadership stunts the growth of the vision for student

achievement. The participants stated that the culture around the campus had diminished. Students were successful in the heyday of Andrews because the attitude about education was that education was a vehicle for advancement in society, and the neighborhood pushed students toward excellence. Participants believed that the attitude about education today is self-gratifying or based upon personal agendas rather than benefiting the school community. They stated that the Black leadership in the community is not the same as it once was, when Black leaders and local Black organizations supported education through the churches and major industries. The participants believed that the politics of gerrymandering the student attendance zone raided the feeder patterns and diverted students in the neighborhood away from Andrews and sent them to other public schools, causing the enrollment and resources to dwindle at Andrews. The participants believed increasing home purchases by White and Asian families in the neighborhood were driving up the property values and property taxes, preventing many vulnerable families from acquiring or keeping properties in Andrew's neighborhood. The incoming gentrifiers had not committed to sending their students to Andrews but would instead opt to send their student to a school of choice.

### **Summary**

This research suggested that the decline at Andrews High School was influenced by complex in-school and out-of-school factors. The impact of the in-school and out-of-school factors raised concerns about the school and district leadership, the Black leadership in the community, the social capital beliefs about the attitudes of education in the community, the politics of school boundary zones, the lack of affordable housing, the increasing gentrification around the school community, and the lack of funding and

resources. These in-school and out-of-school decline factors were laced with racial and economic inequalities. The school leader and district leaders recognized they lacked awareness of the warning signals that caused Andrews to spiral downward and did not pay attention or understand what was happening. The findings were consistent with school decline literature on funding, family and community, leadership, and student mobility. School decline literature identified indicators of decline but suggested many internal and external factors can influence school decline.

The causal conceptual framework provided a lens to examine school decline. Schools in decline have challenges that are not prevalent at all schools (Hochbein & Duke, 2011); thus, leaders must be selected who have skills to deal with such challenges. District-level supervision requires expert training to coach and guide entry-level principals toward success. Youngs (2007) found that courageous leadership is needed to stop overriding views and deal with how the broader meaning of leadership is modeled at low-performing schools. Fearful leadership can be avoided with district-level professional development in emotional leadership. Many educational leaders leave the field of education for other opportunities that do not have an emotional cost (Beatty, 2000). The erosion of Black leadership in urban school areas such as Andrews can present a host of concerns regarding race relations and school leadership. In a study on Black leadership, Brooks and Jean-Marie (2007) indicated that schools in “a racially diverse society will require leaders and models of leadership that will address the racial, cultural, and ethnic makeup of the school community” (p. 756). Effective school leadership is a concern for schools in decline in urban areas.

NCLB was passed to improve low-performing schools in the broader context. The literature on low-performing schools has noted many low-performing schools have been in distressed areas with crime, violence, high poverty, family distress, and a concentration of students of color (Baker & Gulley, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2010). The NCLB regulations for many schools in dwindling neighborhoods have not been equal to all students or had a similar impact as in neighborhoods with fewer social challenges. Many educational and political scholars have criticized NCLB because all schools collect an equal amount of resources (Hochbein & Duke, 2011). The impact of NCLB has raised concerns with educational reformists, according to Baker and Gulley (2004), because the laws require increased accountability without enough resources. According to Calkins et al. (2007), current data suggest that school improvement has not been enough to improve low-performing schools consistently.

Urban school challenges highlight areas of concern that may cause school decline with inequitable educational opportunities for students of color, which block access to enrichment activities, limit exposure to advanced classes, and over time negatively impact achievement (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015; Gorski, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2010; Lineburg & Gearheart, 2013; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Rebel & Wolff, 2012). Another urban challenge is social capital. Today, social capital models are concerned with social inequities in education that cause disparities leading to poor student performance. More new social capital views were advanced by education scholar Ladson-Billings (2018), who examined ways to reduce disparities between mainstream students and students of color and advocated a bond

between schooling and social capital in the neighborhood. Additionally, Gorski (2013) provided evidence that families, regardless of income levels, value education equally.

However, teacher opinions about students of color have determined, in some cases, the amount of help students would receive from the teacher. This type of deprivation of learning opportunities is a challenge in urban schools (Rubie-Davies, 2015) because it produces gaps in learning opportunities. In Gorski's (2013) study to promote equity classrooms, he provided educators with strategies to work with diverse student populations.

Additionally, school funding differences leave some of the most impoverished children in urban areas with insufficient resources. Limited learning opportunities decrease the opportunity for vulnerable students to be successful in high-stakes testing (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Thus, creating funding gaps in high-poverty schools (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Owing & Kaplan, 2013; Reece, 2012; Wong & Casing, 2010) is another challenge for urban schools. White and wealthier families have been moving into communities of color but do not enroll their children in the neighborhood school (Garcia, 2008; Wilson, 2016). Wealthy families not sending their students to the neighborhood schools results in abstract inequality of outcomes among individuals in different groups (Bankston, 2010).

School decline continues to be a real concern for educational leaders in the United States. It is incumbent on school leaders and school reform researchers to keep identifying factors that cause schools to plummet downward and identify equitable solutions to meet the needs of all students. Through a causal framework, I identified the conditions that led to the critical juncture of school decline at Andrews. Additionally, this

research provided a systematic way to present school leaders and school reformers with useful information from archival and interview data to inform how one predominantly African American urban high school declined.

## References

- Aladjem, D. (2016). The future of low-performing schools. *State Education Standard*, 16(3), 32-34. Retrieved from <https://www.nasbe.org/the-future-of-schools/>
- American Institutes for Research. (2011). *Reauthorizing ESEA: Making research relevant. School turnaround: A pocket guide*. Retrieved from [https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/0669\\_PG\\_SchoolTurnaround\\_Online\\_d41\\_0.pdf](https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/0669_PG_SchoolTurnaround_Online_d41_0.pdf)
- Anyon, J. (2005). What “counts” as educational policy? Notes toward a new paradigm, *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(1), 65-88. doi:10.17763/haer.75.1.g1q5k721220ku176
- Aragon, S., & Workman, E. (2015). *Emerging state turnaround strategies*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/12139.pdf>
- Argenti, J. (1976). *Corporate collapse: The causes and symptoms*. London, England: McGraw-Hill.
- Baker, C., & Gulley, B. (2004). The impact of the No Child Left Behind Act. *Current Perspectives on Learning Disabilities Advances in Special Education*, 16, 193-206. doi:10.106/S0270-4013(04)16010-8
- Balfanz, R., Legters, N., West, T. C., & Weber, L. M. (2007). Are NCLB’s measures, incentives, and improvement strategies the right ones for the nation’s low-performing high schools? *American Educational Research Journal*, 44, 559-593. doi:10.3102/0002831207306768
- Bankston, C. L., III. (2010). Federal control of public schools and the decline of the community. *Modern Age*, 52(3), 184-194.

- Batagiannis, S. (2007). Leadership guided by courage: A challenge to instantaneous perfection. *Journal of Educational Thought (JET)/Revue De La Pensée Éducative*, 41(2), 145-164. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23767319>
- Beatty, B. R. (2000). The emotions of educational leadership: Breaking the silence. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 3(4), 331-357. doi:10.1080/136031200750035969
- Bernard, B. (2003). Turnaround and teachers and schools. In B. Williams (Ed.), *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices* (2nd ed., ch. 6). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/102010/chapters/Turnaround-Teachers-and-Schools.aspx>
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141. doi:10.1108/09578230010320082
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Bracey, G. W. (2009). How do "you" define a failing school? *Principal Leadership*, 9(6), 58-59.



- Brookings Institution. (2020). *A good education is important to achieving the American Dream*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-good-education-is-important-to-achieving-the-american-dream/>
- Brooks, J. S., & Jean-Marie, G. (2007). Black leadership, White leadership: Race and race relations in an urban high school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(6), 756-758. doi:10.1108/09578230710829928
- Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Bush, T., Bell, L., & Middlewood, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Principles of educational leadership & management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The turnaround challenge: Why America's best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools*. Boston, MA: Mass Insight. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/sites/default/files/resources/TheTurnaroundChallengeMainReport.pdf>
- Cameron, K. S., Kim, M. U., & Whetten, D. A. (1987). Organizational effects of decline and turbulence. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 32, 222-240. doi:10.2307/2393127
- Cameron, K. S., Sutton, R. I., & Whetten, D. A. (Eds.). (1988). *Readings in organizational decline*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Carter, P. L. (2003). "Black" cultural capital, status positioning, and schooling conflicts for low-income African American youth. *Social Problems*, 50(1), 136-155. doi:10.1525/sp.2003.50.1.136

- Carter, P. L. (2005). *Keepin' it real: School success beyond Black and White*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Chambers, T. V. (2009). The “receivment gap”: School tracking policies and the fallacy of the “achievement gap.” *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(4), 417-431.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25676096>
- Childs, J., (2017, Summer). What Pittsburgh is doing to ensure every child has a fighting chance to succeed. *National Civic Review*, 106(2), 3-9. doi:10.1002/ncr.21315
- Coleman, J. S. (1968). Equality of educational opportunity. *Integrated Education*, 6(5), 19-28. doi:10.1080/0020486680060504
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120. doi:10.1086/228943
- Collins, J. (2009). *How the mighty fall: And why some companies never give in*. New York, NY: Collins Business.
- Corrales, A. (2017). Factors impacting school closure and configuration. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 20(4), 85-105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917714285>
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). New standards and old inequalities: School reform and the education of African American students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(4), 263-287. doi:10.2307/2696245
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2001). Inequality in teaching and schooling: How opportunity is rationed to students of color in America. In B. D. Smedley, A. Y. Stith, L. Colburn, & C. H. Evans (Eds.), *The right thing to do, the smart thing to do: Enhancing diversity in the health professions* (pp. 208-233). Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind.' *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 245-260. doi:10.1080/13613320701503207
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2013). Inequality and school resources: What will it take to close the opportunity gap? In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 77-97). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- D'Aveni, R. A. (1989). The aftermath of organizational decline: A longitudinal study of the strategic and managerial characteristics of declining firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(3), 577-605. doi:10.5465/256435
- Dee, T. S., & Jacob, B. (2011). The impact of No Child Left Behind on student achievement. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30, 418-446. doi:10.1002/pam.20586
- DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B. D. (2015). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2014* (P60-252). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from

<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.pdf>

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Doggett, A. M. (2005). Root cause analysis: A framework for tool selection. *Quality Management Journal*, 12(4), 34-45. doi:10.1080/10686967.2005.11919269

Dragoset, L., Thomas, J., Herrmann, M., Deke, J., James-Burdumy, S., Graczewski, C., Boyle, ... Griffin, J. (2017). *School Improvement Grants: Implementation and effectiveness: Executive summary* (NCEE 2017-4012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Duke, D. L. (1995). *The school that refused to die. Continuity and change at Thomas Jefferson high school*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Duke, D. L. (2004). The turnaround principal: High-stakes leadership. *Principal*, 84(1), 12-23. Retrieved from <https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/resources/2/Principal/2004/S-Op12.pdf>

Duke, D. L. (2006). What we know and don't know about improving low-performing schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(10), 729-734. doi:10.1177/003172170608701005

Duke, D. L. (2008). Diagnosing school decline. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(9), 667-671. Retrieved from [http://www.pdkmembers.org/members\\_online/publications/Archive/pdf/k0805duk.pdf](http://www.pdkmembers.org/members_online/publications/Archive/pdf/k0805duk.pdf)

Duke, D. L. (2016). *The children left behind. America's struggle to improve its lowest performing schools*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Duke, D., & Hochbein, C. (2008). Rising to the challenge of studying school decline. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 7, 358-379. doi:10.1080/15700760802155515
- Eccles, J., Wong, C., & Peck, S. (2006). Ethnicity as a social context for the development of African-American adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 407-426. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.04.001.
- Edwards, G. B. (2006). *Absent leadership in curriculum implementation* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/vital/access/services/Download/uj:7023/CONTENT1>
- Education Evolving. (2016). *Our working definition of student achievement and school quality*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationevolving.org/files/Definition-Achievement-School-Quality.pdf>
- Emdin, C. (2016). *For White folks who teach in the hood ... and the rest of y'all too*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Engberg, J., Gill, B., Zamarro, G., & Zimmer, R. (2011). Closing schools in a shrinking district: Do student outcomes depend on which schools are closed? *Journal of Urban Economics*, 71(2), 189-203. doi:10.1016/j.jue.2011.10.001
- Fergus, E. (2017). The integration project among White teachers and racial/ethnic minority youth: Understanding bias in school practice. *Theory Into Practice*, 56(3), 169-177. doi:10.1080/00405841.2017.1336036
- Ferris, K. (2012). Human capital in turnaround schools. *School Administrator*, 69(7), 36-39. Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=24056>
- Fullan, M. (2005). Turnaround leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69(2), 174-181. doi:10.1080/00131720508984681

- Garcia, D. R. (2008). The impact of school choice on racial segregations in charter schools. *Educational Policy*, 22(6), 805-829. doi:10.1177/0895904807310043
- Goldring, E., & Swain, W. (2014). The school attendance and residential location balancing act: Community, choice, diversity, and achievement. In G. K. Ingram & D. A. Kenyon (Eds.), *Education, land, and location* (Ch. 4). Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- Gorski, P. (2013). *Reaching and teaching students in poverty: Strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Günel, Y., & Demirtaş, R. N. (2016). Pathway to educational accountability: The relationship between effective school characteristics and student achievement. *Universal Journal of Education Research*, 4, 2049-2054. doi:10.13189/ujer.2016.040915
- Guthrie, J. W., & Springer, M. G. (2004). *A Nation at Risk* revisited: Did “wrong” reasoning result in “right” results? At what costs? *Peabody Journal of Education* 79(1), 7-35. doi:10.1207/s15327930pje7901\_2
- Hambrick, D. C., & D’Aveni, R. A. (1988). Large corporate failures as downward spirals. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 33(1), 1-23. doi:10.2307/2392853
- Hochbein, C. (2010). Book review: *A School in Trouble*. [Review of the book, *A school in trouble: A personal story of Central Falls High School*, by W. R. Holland]. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 15, 326-328. doi:10.1080/10824669.2010.541383

- Hochbein, C. (2011). Overlooking the descent: Operational definition, identification, and description of school decline. *Journal of Educational Change*, 12, 281-300.  
doi:10.1007/s10833-010-9135-9
- Hochbein, C. (2012a). Downward spirals, boiled frogs, and catastrophes: Examining the rate of school decline. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 11(1), 66-91. doi:10.1080/15700763.2011.577927
- Hochbein, C. (2012b). Relegation and reversion: Longitudinal analysis of school turnaround and decline. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 17, 92-107. doi:10.1080/10824669.2012.636728
- Hochbein, C., & Duke, D. (2008). Rising to the challenge of studying school decline. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 7(4), 358-379. doi:10.1080/15700760802155515
- Hochbein, C., & Duke, D. (2011). Crossing the line: Examination of student demographic changes concomitant with declining academic performance in elementary schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 22(1), 87-118. doi:10.1080.09243453.2010.550462
- Hochbein, C., & Mahone, A. (2017). The failure fallacy: Examining the rate of school turnaround. In C. Meyers & M. Darwin (Eds.), *Enduring myths that inhibit school turnaround* (pp. 11-28). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Housman, N. G., & Martinez, M. R. (2001). *A brief for practitioners on turning around low-performing schools: Implications at the school, district, and state levels*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive Reform.

- Jamshed, S. (2014). Qualitative research method—Interviewing and observation. *Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacy*, 5(4), 87-88. doi:10.4103/0976-0105.141942
- Jawabri, K. H., & Cascella, M. (2020). *Physiology, explicit memory*. Treasure Island, FL: StatPearls. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554551/>
- Jiang, Y., & Koball, H. (2018). *Basic facts about low-income children: Children under 18 years, 2016*. New York, NY: Columbia University, National Center for Children in Poverty.
- Kamenetz, A. (2018, April 29). What ‘A Nation at Risk’ got wrong, and right, about U.S. schools. Retrieved from [https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/04/29/604986823/what-a-nation-at-risk-got-wrong-and-right-about-u-s-schools?](https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/04/29/604986823/what-a-nation-at-risk-got-wrong-and-right-about-u-s-schools?hpid=hp%3Aeducation%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&hpid=hp%3Aeducation%3Ahomepage%2Fstory)
- Kanter, R. M. (2003). Leadership and the psychology of turnarounds. *Harvard Business Review*, 81(6), 58-67. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2003/06/leadership-and-the-psychology-of-turnarounds>
- Kutash, J., Nico, E., Gorin, E., Rahmatullah, S., & Tallant, K. (2010). *The school turnaround field guide*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-School-Turnaround-Field-Guide.pdf>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *American Educational Research Association*, 35(7), 3-12. doi:10.3102/0013189X035007003
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). Lack of achievement or loss of opportunity? In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to*



- give every child an even chance* (pp. 11-23). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2018). The social funding of race: The role of schooling. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(1), 90-105. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2017.1403182
- Lashway, L. (2004). *The mandate to help low-performing schools*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED478248)
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5-22. doi:10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Strauss, T. (2010). *Leading school turnaround: How successful leaders transform low-performing schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Strauss, T. (2013). How to reach high performance. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey Bass reader on educational leadership* (pp. 255-273). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Bryman, A., & Liao, T. F. (2004). *The Sage encyclopedia of social science research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Limoges, V., Gemmel, P., Landry, S., & De Paepe, P. (2017). Emergency boarding: An integrative framework for analyzing causes and seeking solutions. *Journal of Hospital Administration*, 6(2), 88-106. doi:10.5430/jha.v6n2p88
- Lineburg, M. Y., & Gearheart, R. (2013). *Educating students in poverty: Effective practices for leadership and teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Local Educational Agency, 34 C.F.R. § 300.28 (2020).
- Lochmiller, C., & Chesnut, C. (2017). Preparing turnaround leaders for high needs urban schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 55(1), 85-102. doi:10.1108/JEA-11-2015-0099
- Lune, H., & Berg, B. L. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (9th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Manna, P., & Ryan, L. L. (2011). Competitive grants and educational federalism: President Obama's Race to the Top program in theory and practice. *The Journal of Federalism*, 41(3), 522-546. doi:10.1093/publius/pjr021
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mausch, M. (1985). Vicious circles in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30(1), 14-33.
- McGuinn, P. J. (2006). *No Child Left Behind and the transformation of federal policy, 1965–2005*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Mead, S. (2012). *Turning around low-performing schools: A white paper from Stand for Children Leadership Center*. Retrieved from <http://standleaderhispcenter.org>
- Mehta, J. (2015). Escaping the shadow: *A Nation at Risk* and its far-reaching influence. *American Educator*, 39(2), 20-26. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1064157)
- Meyers, C. (2012). The centralizing role of terminology: A consideration of achievement gap, NCLB, and school turnaround. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 87(4), 468-484. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2012.705149

- Mthiyane, S. E., Bhengu, T. T., & Bayeni, S. D. (2014). The causes of school decline: Voices of school principals and circuit managers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Journal of Social Science, 41*(2), 295-304. doi:10.1080/09718923.2014.11893364
- Muijs, D., Harris, A., Chapman, C., Stoll, L., & Russ, J. (2004). Improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas—A review of research evidence. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 15*(2), 149-175. doi:10.1076/sesi.15.2.149.30433
- Murphy, J., & Meyers, C. V. (2008). *Turning around failing schools: Leadership lessons from the organizational sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110 (2002).
- Olivant, K. F. (2015). “I am not a format”: Teachers’ experiences with fostering creativity in the era of accountability. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 29*(1), 115-129. doi:10.1080/02568543.2014.978920
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Corwith, S. (2018). Poverty, academic achievement, and giftedness: A literature review. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 62*(1), 37-55. doi:10.1177/0016986217738015s
- Orr, M. T., Berg, B., Shore, R., & Meier, E. (2008). Putting the pieces together: Leadership for change in low-performing urban schools. *Education and Urban Society, 40*(6), 670-693. doi:10.1177/0013124508324018
- Ouakouak, M. L., Zaitouni, M. G., & Arya, B. (2020). Ethical leadership, emotional leadership, and quitting intentions in public organizations: Does employee

- motivation play a role? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 41(2), 257-279. doi:10.1108/LODJ-05-20190206
- Ouchi, W. M., & Segal, L. G. (2003). *Making schools work: A revolutionary plan to get your children the education they need*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Owing, W. A., & Kaplan, L. S. (2013). *American public school finance*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Parrett, W. H., & Budge, K. M. (2012). *Turning high-poverty schools into high-performing schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Pascual, P. (2013). *Low-performing schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/low-performing-schools/>
- Pearman, F. A., & Swain, W. A. (2017). School choice, gentrification, and the variable significance of racial stratification in urban neighborhoods. *Sociology of Education*, 90(3), 213-235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040717710494>
- Pearson, T., Wolgemuth, J. R., & Colomer, S. E. (2015). Spiral of decline or “beacon of hope”: Stories of school choice in a dual language school. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(25), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.1524>
- Peck, C., & Reitzug, U. C. (2014). School turnaround fever: The paradoxes of a historical practice promoted as a new reform. *Urban Education*, 49(1), 8-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912472511>
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity. One’s own. *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17-21. doi:10.2307/1174381

- Peterson, E. R., Rubie-Davies, C., Osborne, D., & Sibley, C. (2016). Teachers' explicit expectations and implicit prejudiced attitudes to educational achievement: Relations with student achievement and the ethnic achievement gap. *Learning and Instruction, 42*, 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.01.010>
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 6*(1), 65-78. doi:10.1353/jod.1995.0002
- Quilley, S., & Loyal, S. (2017). The particularity of the universal: Critical reflections on Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power and the state. *Theory and Society, 46*(5), 429-462. doi:10.1007/s11186-017-9298-y
- RAND. (2020). *School reform*. Retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/topics/education-reform.html>
- Rebell, M. A., & Wolff, J. R. (2012). Educational opportunity is achievable and affordable. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(6), 62-65. doi:10.1177/003172171209300614
- Reece, J. (2012). School funding is vulnerable to economic downturns. In L. M. Zott (Ed.), *School funding: Opposing viewpoints* (pp. 40-44). Farmington Hill, MI: Greenhaven Press
- Rhim, L. M., & Redding, S. (Eds.). (2014). *The state role in school turnaround: Emerging best practices*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- Rice, J. K., & Malen, B. (2010). *School reconstitution as an education reform strategy: A synopsis of the evidence*. Atlanta, GA: National Education Association. Retrieved from [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/School\\_Reconstruction\\_and\\_an\\_Education\\_Reform\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/School_Reconstruction_and_an_Education_Reform_Strategy.pdf)

- Richards, M. P. (2014). The gerrymandering of school attendance zones and the segregation of public schools: A geospatial analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(6), 1119-1157. doi:10.3102/0002831214553652
- Rothstein, R. (2013). Why children from lower socioeconomic classes, on average, have lower academic achievement than middle-class children. In P. L. Carter & K. G. Weiner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 61-74). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Roza, M., Hill, P. T., Sclafani, S., & Speakman, S. (2004). How within-district spending inequities help some schools to fail. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, 7, 201-227. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20067269>
- Saw, G., Schneider, B., Frank, K., Chen, I.-C., Keesler, V., & Martineau, J. (2017). The impact of being labeled as a persistently lowest achieving school: Regression discontinuity evidence on consequential school labeling. *American Journal of Education*, 123, 585-613. <https://doi.org/10.1086/692665>
- Senge, P. M., (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency.
- Simanek, D. E. (2000). *The decline of education 2*. Retrieved from <https://lockhaven.edu/~dsimanek/decline2.htm>
- Slater, D., & Simmons, E. (2010). Informative regress: Critical antecedents in comparative politics. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(7), 886-917. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010361343>
- Slatter, S. P. (1984). *Corporate recovery: A guide to turnaround management*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

- Staw, B. M., Sandelands, L. E., & Dutton, J. E. (1981). Threat-rigidity effects in organizational behavior: A multilevel analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26, 501-524. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392337>
- Stone, D. A. (2002). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Norton.
- Tampio, N. (2016). Democracy, federal power, and education reform. *Perspectives on Politics*, 14(2), 461-467. doi:10.1017/S1537592716000153
- Tate, W. F. (2008). Putting the “urban” in mathematics education scholarship. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*, 1(1), 5-9. doi:10.21423/jume-v1i1-2a357
- Tate, W. F., IV, & Striley, C. (2010). Epidemiology and education research: Dialoguing about disparities. *Teachers College Record*, Article 160369. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org>
- Thatcher, J., Ingram, N., Burke, C., & Abrahams, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Bourdieu: The next generation*. London, England: Routledge.
- Trujillo, T. (2015). Review of *Dramatic action, dramatic improvement* [Review of book, *Dramatic action, dramatic improvement*, by T. D. Miller & C. Brown]. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://nepc.colorado.edu/thinktank/review-school-turnaround>
- Trujillo, T., & Renée, M. (2013). Democratic school turnarounds: Pursuing equity and learning from evidence. *Voices in Urban Education*, 36, 18-26.
- U.S. Legal. (2020). *State mandate law and legal definition*. Retrieved from <https://definitions.uslegal.com/s/state-mandate/>

- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.–Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Wallace, D. O. (2016). Re-interpreting Bourdieu, belonging and Black identities: Exploring ‘Black’ cultural capital among Black Caribbean youth in London. In J. Thatcher, N. Ingram, C. Burke, & J. Abrahams (Eds.), *Bourdieu: The next generation* (pp. 37-54). London, England: Routledge.
- Weitzel, W., & Jonsson, E. (1989). Decline in organizations: A literature integration and extension. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34(1), 91-109. doi:10.2307/2392987
- Wilson, T. S. (2016). Contesting the public school: Reconsidering charter schools as counterpublics. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(4), 919-952. doi:10.3102/0002831216658972
- Wong, K. K., Guthrie, J. W., & Harris, D. (2004). *A Nation at Risk: A 20-year reappraisal*. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 79(1), 1-6.
- Wong, O. K., & Casing, D. M., (2010). *Prioritizing money and power. Equalize student achievement*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yinger, J. (2004). *Helping children left behind*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91. doi:10.1080/1361332052000341006
- Youngs, H. (2007, October). Having the ‘presence’ and courage to see beyond the familiar: Challenging our habitual assumptions of school leadership. In



*Proceedings of the 2007 ACEL and ASCD International Conference: New imagery for schools and schooling: Challenging, creating and connecting.*

Sydney, Australia: Australian Council of Educational Leaders. Retrieved from <https://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/2242>

Zeinabadi, H. R. (2014). Principal–teacher high-quality exchange indicators and student achievement: Testing a model. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52, 404-420. doi:10.1108/JEA-05-2012-0056

### Appendix A: Eleven Indicators of School Decline

Indicator	Definition
Undifferentiated assistance	“Undifferentiated Assistance occurs when there is a lack of effort to identify exact causes of a student’s learning deficits and without an individual plan for the student. Some low-performing schools tend to lump all students in communal intervention that will not target the deficits of each student” (p. 668).
Inadequate monitoring of progress	“Inadequate monitoring of student progress takes place when teachers do not devote the time to assess student’s learning of requisite curriculum content on a constant basis, by allowing a significant amount of time to lapse before student progress is assessed can lead to devastating results in reading and mathematics” (p. 668).
Unadjusted daily schedule	“An unadjusted daily schedule will not allow enough time for students with knowledge gaps to receive pointed assistance resulting in low-student performance” (p. 668).
Alignment problems	“Alignment problems of the curriculum exist when teachers fail to teach the curriculums adopted by the state, causing a decrease in student achievement on exams. If teachers do not convene to discuss curriculum criteria and discuss student growth, the forecast of school decline will increase” (p. 668).
Ineffective staff development	“Ineffective staff development that are immaterial, leads to a lack of interest by some teachers. When schools begin to decline, they commonly inherit insufficient in-service programs for their staff that is only loosely related to core academic fears” (p. 670).
Lost focus	“Lost focus is another indicator and one of the initial signs of school decline due to the loss of a strong academic focus” (p. 670).
Lack of leadership	“Lack of leadership is a common concern in schools that are in a phase of decline. There is no alternative for gifted leaders when it comes to overturning a downhill trajectory in student accomplishments” (p. 670).
Hasty hiring	“It is tempting for principals in declining schools to approach the hiring process fatalistically. ... They rush to judgment and select individuals about whom they have reservations, ... settling for ‘warm bodies’ ... who are unlikely to make a positive impact on student achievement” (p. 670).
Increased class sizes	“In low-performing schools, increased class sizes are challenging when the classes involve critical academic content such as reading, language arts, and mathematics” (p. 671).

Indicator	Definition
Overreliance on untrained helpers	“An overreliance on untrained helpers occurs in low-performing schools. Turnaround schools tend to place the responsibility for assisting struggling students in the hands of qualified teachers and specialists” (p. 671).
More rules & harsher punishments	“More rules and harsher punishments equates to a reduction in student achievement due to the increase in student conduct difficulties which deprive struggling students of priceless instructional time as teachers are obligated to spend more time trying to preserve a peaceful environment for learning. Some declining schools often rely on more rules and harsher punishment that maybe necessary, but they are no surrogate for building compassion in the classroom” (p. 671).

*Note.* Adapted from “Diagnosing School Decline” by D. L. Duke, 2008, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(9), 667-671. Copyright 2008 Phi Delta Kappa International.

### Appendix B: Andrews Eras 1926–2020

1926–1946	1947–1967	1968–1988	1989–2009	2010–2020
1st principal: 1926–1941 2nd principal: 1941	2nd principal: 1941–1958 3rd principal: 1958–1964 4th principal: 1964–1972	5th principal: 1972–1978 6th principal: 1978–1986 7th principal: 1986–1988 8th principal: 1988–1990	9th principal: 1990–1995 10th principal: 1995–1999 11th principal: 1999–2003 12th principal: 2003–2007 13th principal: 2007–2008 14th principal: 2008–2010	15th principal: 2010 16th principal: 2011–2013 17th principal: 2013–2015 18th principal: 2015–2018 19th principal: 2018–present
Two principals due to death.	Three principals serving long school leadership terms.	Four principals in this era. Start of the leadership turnover. Two superintendents.	Six principals and three Superintendents. Six Unacceptable school accountability ratings in this era.	Five principals and three superintendents. Four Unacceptable school accountability ratings to date in this era.
Initial enrollment was 600 students and 17 teachers	By the mid-1950s, enrollment surpassed 3,000 students.	Magnet and alternative programs were created; steady enrollment.	Enrollment ranged from 1,252–2,118 during this era.	Enrollment ranged from 813–1,213 during this era.
Premier school for middle- and upper middle-class Black families	Accreditation stripped for overcrowding of students. New facility in 1958; attendance zone included 15 schools	Honors system was organized by the state; district reorganized staff at Andrews	Feeder pattern rezoning; increased Advanced Placement classes; reorganization removes 60 staff and leadership.	One middle school removed from feeder pattern. Students rerouted to other schools.

1926–1946	1947–1967	1968–1988	1989–2009	2010–2020
Strong community support. Strong local businesses	1958 Andrews attendance zone was redrawn and rerouted students to a new high school	Black families started to migrate from the community and send their students to other schools in the district	Low-performing campus 2001–2004. Dropout factory. Median home values started to increase.	Gentrification increased median home values by 176% 2000–2013.

### Appendix C: Definitions of Methodologies

Definition	Source
“Multimethod research entails the application of two or more sources of data or research methods in the investigation of a research question or to different but highly linked research questions. Such research is also frequently referred to as a mixed methodology. The rationale of mixed-method research is underpinned by the principle of <i>triangulation</i> , which implies that researchers should seek to ensure they are not over-reliant on a single research method and should instead employ more than one measurement procedure when investigating a research problem” (p. 677).	Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao (2004)
“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. ... They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. ... Qualitative researchers study things in terms of the meanings people bring to them. ... It involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—a case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (p. 4).	Denzin & Lincoln (2008)
“Historical analysis is a method of discovering, from records and accounts, what happened in the past. Historical analysis is particularly useful in qualitative studies for establishing a baseline or background before participant observation or interviewing. ... The researcher should consider various sources of historical data, such as contemporary records, including instructions, stenographic records, business and legal papers, and personal notes, and memos; confidential reports, ... newspaper reports and memoirs, [and] ... government documents” (pp. 89-90).	Marshall & Rossman (1995)
“Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in the depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. ... It copes with the technically the distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and ... relies on multiple resources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and ... benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (pp. 16-17).	Yin (2014)

*Note.* Sources: *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, by M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, and T. F. Liao, 2004, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (3rd ed.), by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), 2008, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; *Designing Qualitative Research*, by C. Marshall and G. Rossman, 1995, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; and *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th ed.), by R. K. Yin, 2014, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### Appendix D: Participant Recruitment E-Mail

Date:

Dear Subject:

My name is Tracy Gatewood; as a Doctoral student at the University of Houston, I am conducting interviews as part of my Dissertation to increase an understanding of why urban predominantly African American public high schools decline. As a former \_\_\_\_\_, you are in an ideal position to give me valuable firsthand information from your perspective.

The interview takes around 60 minutes and is very informal. I am merely trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on school decline. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a study code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to research and findings could lead to a greater understanding of why school's decline in urban public education.

If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day, time and location in Houston, \_\_\_\_\_, that suits you, and I will be available. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you,

Tracy Gatewood, M.Ed.

Email address: [tgrobinson@uh.edu](mailto:tgrobinson@uh.edu)

Cellular Number:

### Appendix E: Study Participant Data Tracker

Participants requested	Study code identification	Date of interview	Field notes:	Emerging themes
			Include dress, time of interview, start and end time, body language, responses to archival data review, and all other observations.	
Assistant superintendent in school district	0001539-01	2/7/2020	Prior to the arrival of the participant, I had arranged the archival data on a table, in my office. The participant arrived at 11:01 and the consent form was signed. Participant was casually dressed in red shirt in observance of Heart Day. I shared with the participant that I am using an elicit memory strategy by using the archival data. I started to record during the elicit phase to capture any responses. The interview lasted 39 minutes.	Leadership: courageous leadership; coaching; mentoring; systems; funding gaps; racial inequality
Former superintendent, influential leader	0001593-02 ( <i>participant interchanged the numbers</i> )	2/10/2020	Participant office on the 10th floor overlooks the city skyline. Participant is dressed in black and red gingham shirt with black jeans and black exotic cowboy boots.	Community excellence; Black cultural leadership; absent leadership; attitude about education; culture around the school
Alumnus, former chair of board, city council member	0001539-03	2/10/2020	In the Andrews community	Community; academic programs; gentrification; funding gaps; racial inequality



Participants requested	Study code identification	Date of interview	Field notes:	Emerging themes
			Include dress, time of interview, start and end time, body language, responses to archival data review, and all other observations.	
Former principal; current high school principal; turnaround	0001539-04	2/14/2020	Hard to get on the schedule. Conversations have been on LinkedIn. Participant called to collaborate on what tool (skype, facetime) was best for interview. The participant asked if Friday February 14, is a good day because he is flying into town to pick up his son and head to the Mardi Gras in Louisiana. Participant is flying to town. We will meet at [fast food restaurant]. The participant texted to inform that his plane had just landed.	Leadership; fearful leadership; district support; prior campus administration; alumnus woes; funding gaps; racial inequality; hiring decisions.
Alumnus, current parent duo	0001539-06/07	2/17/2020	School District Room 2C08	Traditional; pride; community; academic programs
Alumnus, K-12 education advocate	0001539-08	2/18/2020	Library near Andrews	Leadership: screw up and leave; community; feeder pattern raid; teachers
Alumnus, former Parent-Teacher Organization president and current member, and current parent	0001539-09	2/19/2020	Elementary school near Andrews	Community; feeder pattern; academic programs

## Appendix F: Informed Consent Form



### Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study

**Title of research study:** *School Decline at an Urban High School*

Investigator: *Tracy G. Gatewood. This project is part of thesis or dissertation being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth M. Lopez*

#### **Key Information:**

The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document under the “Detailed Information” heading.

#### **What should I know about a research study?**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide and can ask questions at any time during the study.

We invite you to take part in a research study about School Decline because you meet the following criteria as a former student, community leader, former school leader, current or former district leader.

In general, your participation in the research involves participating in an individual face-to-face interview, answering semi-structured open-ended questions.

There are no known risks to you in taking part in this research study which you can compare to the possible benefit of contributing your experience and knowledge to add value on school decline. You will not receive compensation for participation.

#### **Detailed Information:**

The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

## **Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study**

### ***Why is this research being done?***

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to the decline of a historical predominantly African American urban high school.

### ***How long will the research last?***

We expect that you will be in this research study for 60 minutes, for one visit.

### ***How many people will be studied?***

We expect to enroll about six people in this research study.

### ***What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?***

- The length and duration of visits and procedures
- With whom will the subject interact
- Where the research will be done
- When the research will be done
- If surveys or interviews are conducted, indicate if sensitive subject matter is involved, and give examples of such questions. Indicate whether subjects may skip questions that may make them uncomfortable.

This research study includes the following component(s) where we plan to audio record you as the research subject:

I agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

I agree that the audio recording can be used in publication/presentations.

I do not agree that the audio recording can be used in publication/presentations.

I do not agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

***Note: The subject may still participate in this research study if they do not agree to be audio recorded.***

### ***What happens if I do not want to be in this research?***

You can choose not to take part in the research, and it will not be held against you. Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

### ***What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?***

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research, contact the investigator so that the investigator can ***describe the procedures for orderly withdrawal by the subject, if any.***

If you stop being in the research, already collected data that still includes your name or other personal information ***will be*** removed from the study record.

### **Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study**

If a participant withdraws voluntarily or whose participation is terminated by the investigator without regard to the consent of the subject, the investigator, Tracy Gatewood, will destroy the data collected and exclude it from any data analysis.

### ***Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?***

We do not expect any risks related to the research activities. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please contact the researcher.

### ***Will I receive anything for being in this study?***

No

### ***Will being in this study help me in any way?***

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research.

### ***What happens to the information collected for the research?***

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information private, including research study *and medical records*, to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number, which will appear on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the code number will be kept separate from these materials. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee our research.

Your information that are collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.

We may share and/or publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

### ***Who can I talk to?***

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to the researcher, Tracy Gatewood at [tgrobinson@uh.edu](mailto:tgrobinson@uh.edu).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (713) 743-9204 or [eph@central.uh.edu](mailto:eph@central.uh.edu) if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

### ***May we contact you regarding future research opportunities?***

In the future, our research team may be interested in contacting you for other research studies we undertake, or to conduct a follow-up study to this one. There is never any obligation to take part in additional research. Do we have permission to contact you to provide additional information?

Yes

**Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study**

No

Version: Jan19

Page 4 of 5

STUDY00001539  
UH IRB Approved

**Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study**

**Signature Block for Capable Adult**

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

_____ Signature of subject	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of subject	
_____ Signature of person obtaining consent	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of person obtaining consent	

### Appendix G: Andrews Student Assessment Data 1991–2019

School year (spring)	Reading passing rate (%)	Math passing rate (%)	School accountability rating	Student enrollment
Test A				
1991	74	44	Campus Performance	1,920
1992	66	48	Campus Performance	2,062
1993	72	52	Campus Performance	1,881
1994	51	32	Acceptable	1,774
1995	53	24	Low-Performing	1,739
1996	65	25	Low-Performing	1,876
1997	69	45	Acceptable	2,118
1998	70	46	Acceptable	1,961
1999	84	73	Acceptable	1,613
2000	81	64	Acceptable	1,613
2001	74	75	Low-Performing	1,502
2002	94	82	Low-Performing	1,402
Test B				
2003	42	12	Unacceptable	1,379
2004	57	19	Unacceptable	1,379
2005	68	31	Acceptable	1,302
2006	76	36	Acceptable	1,359
2007	80	46	Acceptable	1,338
2008	76	45	Acceptable	1,333
2009	85	48	Acceptable	1,252
2010	84	57	Acceptable	1,213
2011	78	54	Unacceptable	1,179
Test C				
2012	85	75	Campus Performance	962
2013	64	73	Met Standard	969
2014	51	57	Improvement Required	973
2015	47	55	Improvement Required	1,028
2016	38	47	Met Standard	927
2017	37	55	Met Standard	845
2018	39	57	Not rated	813
2019	41	60	Letter grade: D	874

*Note.* Test A was used 1990–2002; Test B was used 2003–2011; Test C was first used in 2012. The current accountability campus rating is a letter grade starting with 2019.

### Appendix H: Historical Data Organizer

	Source	Date	Document content/key words
1	Newspaper article	5/19/1962	After-school activities
2	Student newspaper	3/20/1963	Student awards in English and journalism
3	Yearbook	1969	Academic programming
4	Local newspaper	1970	Focus on leadership
5	Local newspaper	1972	Career readiness programs
6	Yearbook	1976	50th anniversary journal
7	Yearbook	1977-79	Academic enrichment 1977–1979
8	Student newspaper	5/1981	Curriculum enhancement
9	Yearbook	1984	Traditional legacy
10	Student newspaper	10/11/1985	District staff reorganization, student voice
11	Yearbook	1986	Academic programming
12	Student newspaper	1987	Souvenir journal
13	Yearbook	1995	Heritage of Andrews
14	Local newspaper	1997	Attendance zone debate
15	Student newspaper	09/2002	State accountability celebrated
16	Student newspaper	2002	Award-winning Future Farmers
17	Student newspaper	12/2002	Student’s international living experience
18	Student newspaper	03/2003	Students win prestigious award
19	Federal AYP	8/2003	Federal results: Reading and mathematics
20	Student newspaper	12/2003	New principal with new leadership
21	Student assessment	8/2004	State results: English language arts, reading, and mathematics assessment
22	Federal AYP	8/2004	Federal results: Reading and mathematics
23	Student newspaper	09/2004	District top leader wants advanced classes
24	Local newspaper	02/2005	Alumnus fights for principal to keep the job.
25	Student assessment	8/2005	State results: English language arts, reading, and mathematics Assessment
26	Federal AYP	8/2005	Federal results: Reading and mathematics
27	Student assessment	8/2006	State results: English language arts, reading, and mathematics assessment



	Source	Date	Document content/key words
28	Federal AYP	8/2006	Federal results: Reading and mathematics
29	Student assessment	8/2007	State results: English language arts, reading and mathematics assessment
30	Local newspaper	2/2007	Community organization closes
31	Federal AYP	8/2007	Federal results: Reading and mathematics
32	Student assessment	8/2009	State results: English language arts, reading, and mathematics assessment
33	Federal AYP	8/2009	Federal results: reading and mathematics
34	U.S. Census Bureau	2010	Median home values
35	Local newspaper	10/2015	Gentrification
36	Student assessment	2020	1991–2018

*Note.* AYP = Adequate Yearly Progress report.

### Appendix I: Dedoose Codebook Analysis

Code	Definition	Count
<b>In-school decline factors</b>		
Loss of traditional legacy	Inductive. This code refers to the tradition of the generational cycle of students who attended Andrews. This code also refers to the pride they had when they attended the school. The pride is not the same now.	23
Loss of academic programs	Inductive. This code refers to the number of academic programs once available at Andrews.	24
Leadership	Inductive. This code differs from the preexisting theme, weak leadership in that other types of leadership were mentioned instead of weak leadership. "Lack of vision, poor communication, inattention to teaching quality, and failure to make decisions are ... characteristics of poor or weak leadership" (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010, p. 52)	40
Courageous leadership	Inductive. This code refers to a type of leadership that works well at a low-performing school. Courageous leadership is a perilous role in schools, and having such courage allows the leader to be guided by passion for education and not limited by fear. With courageous leadership, the vision for the school remains transparent, and sustainability with leadership is enhanced (Batagiannis, 2007).	9
Fearful leadership	Inductive. This code refers to a type of leadership that does not work well at a low-performing school. Fearful leadership is not referred to as fear-based leadership but is used when district leadership is afraid of taking a stance with community stakeholders in support of campus leadership.	2
<b>Out-of-school decline factors</b>		
Exceptional culture around the school	Inductive. This code refers to the type of positive and influential culture around the school during the heyday of Andrews. The exceptional culture included individuals, community partnerships, professionals, and major industries.	26

*Note.* Sources: "Leadership Guided by Courage," by S. Batagiannis, 2007, *Journal of Educational Thought*, 41(2), 145-164; and *Leading School Turnaround*, by K. Leithwood, A. Harris, and T. Strauss, 2010, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## **Appendix J: Interview Protocol**

### **Trustworthiness and Ethics for Individual Interviews**

The individual interviews are part of my research study and participation requires a written consent form that explains what each participant is being asked to do, what their rights are, and how privacy and confidentiality will be secured. If you volunteer to participate in this individual interview, it will last for approximately 45-60 minutes.

During the individual interview, you will be asked to discuss your views and experiences with being, a teacher, a parent, community member or leader in education. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission. The Ground Rules will invite a safe space to speak openly. Ground Rules for the interviews are listed below:

- Each person will introduce themselves.
- Your participation in the study is voluntary, and as such, you may withdraw from an interview at any time.
- It's all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are uncomfortable.
- All responses are valid – there are no right or wrong answers.
- All participants are asked to stay on the topic of the question so that we can get through all of the questions.
- Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.
- Help protect the privacy of this interview by not sharing content from the meeting.
- Avoid revealing details about yourself.

Member checking and transcripts will be provided to each participant via an email to inform them of the themes that emerged during the Archival Data Review and Interviews. Each participant will have an opportunity to respond in writing with their questions or concerns.

Risks: If you become uncomfortable with any of the questions, you may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and remain a participant in the research study. All responses will remain confidential. All participants identify will be masked with a pseudonym.

## **Appendix K: Interview Questions**

### **Demographic Questions**

1. Please share background information about yourself.
  - a. Name
  - b. Age
  - c. Hometown/Where you grew up
  - d. Describe your hometown/community/where you grew up
2. Tell me about your childhood/ teenage years/ adulthood.
  - a. What life experiences stand out in your mind?
  - b. How did this experience shape your life and views?

### **Being a Former Student or Former School or District Leader at study school**

3. What was the school like when you were a student or former school leader?
4. What was your experience as a student at the school?
5. How is it different today? Please describe.
6. Who are you today?

### **Becoming an Educator or an Advocate of Education**

7. Tell me about your career in education or as an advocate. (If Applicable)
  - a. How many years in education or as an advocate
  - b. What roles did you have?
  - c. How many years in each role?

### **Low-Performing Schools (Declining Schools)**

8. How would you define/describe school decline?

### **Thoughts About How the School Transitioned**

9. Talk about how your school changed immediately and overtime.
  - a. Culture? Climate? School values?
  - b. Teacher and student performance?
10. What do you think about the school today?
11. When do you think the school changed?
  - a. Why do you think the school changed?
  - b. What other characteristics do you think could cause Andrews to change?
12. Do you think changes in the school could have been prevented? If so, how?
13. What do you think of the school's community now? How has it changed over time? Why or how?
14. What do you think is the future of the school?
15. Do you think racial inequality plays a role in what happened to the school? Why or why not?

### **Thoughts about the Public Education System Today**

16. What do you think is the most pressing problem in education today?
17. What do you think should be done to address it?
18. What would you change about the education system?
  - a. How would you make that change?
    - a. What do you know you can change?
    - b. Is there anything you believe you cannot change? Why?
    - c. What is working in education? What is not working? How do you know?
19. What is your passion for education?

### Appendix L: Participant Pseudonyms and Descriptors

Pseudonym	Position	Relationship to Andrews	Time frame at Andrews	Gender	Race
Mr. Stevenson	District school leader	Former school leader	2000s	Male	Black
Mr. Anderson	Educational consultant	Former district leader	1990s	Male	Black
Ms. Hamilton	Community leader	Alumna	1970s	Female	Black
Mr. Roberson	School leader	Former school leader	2000s	Male	Black
Mrs. Scott	State employee	Parent	1980s	Female	Black
Mr. Scott	Electrician	Alumnus/parent	1980s	Male	Black
Mr. Holmes	Community leader	Alumnus	1960s	Male	Black
Ms. Kelley	Substitute	Alumna/parent	1980s	Female	Black

**Appendix M: List of Academic Programs for Andrews 1969 and 1986**

	Academic program	1969	1986
1	Architectural Drawing	x	
2	Auto Mechanics	x	
3	Basic Skills	x	
4	Business Education	x	
5	Child Care		x
6	Choral: Music		x
7	Civics	x	
8	Commercial	x	
9	Commercial Art		x
10	Cosmetology	x	
11	CVAE Coop Training		x
12	Distributive Education	x	
13	Drama-Speech	x	
14	Electronics	x	
15	Foreign Language	x	
16	French: Foreign Language	x	x
17	French: Music	x	
18	German: Foreign Language	x	
19	Home Economics	x	x
20	Industrial Arts	x	
21	Industrial Coop		x
22	Industrial Education	x	
23	Journalism	x	
24	Latin: Foreign Language	x	
25	Metal Work	x	
26	Military Science	x	
27	Needle Trades		x
28	Photography	x	x
29	Printing Trades		x
30	Spanish: Foreign Language	x	x
31	Typing	x	x
32	Vocational Agriculture	x	x
33	Vocational Cleaning and Pressing	x	x
34	Vocational Drafting	x	x
35	Vocational Dressmaking	x	
36	Wood Shop		x
37	Word Processing		x

*Note.* Source 1969 and 1986 school yearbooks