AUSTIN, HEIDI ELIZABETH, Ed.D. Community-Based Initiatives for Promoting School Readiness: The Story of Celebrate Liberty's Children. (2010)
Directed by Dr. Rick Reitzug. 177pp.

Much evidence supports the theory that the early years of a child's development are crucial in determining future student achievement. This in-depth case study examines a community-based school readiness initiative that was launched in a rural area where high numbers of children were entering school with potential delays. This research serves to highlight how rural, limited resource communities can increase opportunities for children's experiences and access to services prior to school to enhance school readiness. Interviews, observations, and document reviews were conducted to gain insight into the development of this school readiness initiative and its impact on enhancing the school readiness of entering kindergarten students. Results show that transformational and participatory leadership; community collaboration across multiple sectors; and volunteer management, resource development, and marketing were key factors in the success of this rural school readiness initiative. In addition, surveys of community members indicate high awareness and usage of early childhood resources as well as heightened knowledge of the benefits of early childhood education.

COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTING SCHOOL READINESS:

THE STORY OF CELEBRATE LIBERTY'S CHILDREN

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks goes to my committee members: Dr. Heidi Krowchuk, Dr. Carl Lashley, and Dr. Lelia Villaverde. I especially want to thank my committee chair, Dr. Rick Reitzug for his support and assistance throughout this project. Special acknowledgement goes to the Randolph County Partnership for Children, Randolph County Schools, and current and former members of Celebrate Liberty's Children. Their willingness to help made this study possible. Thank you to my aunt Mary Joe Fowler for her constant encouragement and support of my pursuit of higher education. Lastly, thank you to Frank L. Goss and Cashmere E. Austin for their love and support throughout this project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> The bumblebee is too large for its tiny wings to be able to lift it off the ground to fly. However it does it anyway just because. You see the bumblebee does not know that scientifically it is not suppose to fly. It just has a desire to fly and it does. This story of the bumblebee reminds me of all the volunteers that have helped Celebrate Liberty's Children over the years. Looking back, I would not have thought that it could be possible for a group comprised of all volunteers to do what it has, but the desire was there and they just did it (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

This dissertation is a case study of a local advisory council (Celebrate Liberty's Children) of the Randolph County Partnership for Children that planned a comprehensive array of services for young children (birth to age 5) in Liberty, North Carolina. The municipality of Liberty faces challenges that negatively affect school readiness and children's ability to enter school healthy and ready to succeed. This study serves to highlight the unique approach used by Celebrate Liberty's Children to meet the needs of families with young children with the intent of enhancing school readiness. The primary goal of this dissertation is to explore what can be learned about leadership, resource development, and community collaboration from the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children. This study also serves to describe the formation of the local advisory council as well as the council's activities and programs targeted towards young children using the case study method that synthesizes and integrates both quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter I discusses the background of the issue that was investigated in this case study – services for children in their early years – and the history of Smart Start and the Randolph County Partnership for Children which serve to enhance access to services for families with young children. Chapter I also states the study's research problems and includes a definitions section, an overview of the methodology, and a discussion of the study's delimitations. An overview of the succeeding chapters appears at Chapter I's conclusion.

Background

Much evidence supports the theory that the early years of a child's development are crucial in determining future student achievement. Recognizing that this period of childhood is increasingly considered a key determinant in future student achievement, the state of North Carolina developed a new service delivery organization called Smart Start. As an early childhood initiative, Smart Start works to ensure that young children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. This dissertation is an investigation into a specific Smart Start initiative called Celebrate Liberty's Children in Liberty, North Carolina.

In 1989 the National Education Goals Panel established eight education goals. The first goal stated that "By 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn." Since this goal was established, it has received national attention in terms of understanding what school readiness really means, how we best measure it, and what we should do to support school readiness. As defined in the *School Readiness in North Carolina: Strategies for Defining, Measuring, and Promoting Success for All Children* (2000) report, school readiness is the condition of children when they enter school, based

on the following five domains of development: health and physical development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning, language development and communication; and cognition and general knowledge.

Within North Carolina, school readiness is highlighted in multiple ways. Smart Start, North Carolina's early childhood initiative, is working to ensure that all children are healthy and prepared to succeed when they enter school. The North Carolina First in America initiative includes school readiness as one of five major education goals for the state. Finally, the State Board of Education's strategic plan, ABCs Plus, includes school readiness as a priority. None of these three organizations—Smart Start, the Governor's Office, or Public Schools—is solely responsible for school readiness. School readiness is a shared responsibility of families, early childhood programs, schools, and other community organizations. It is this shared responsibility for school readiness among the community in Liberty, North Carolina that is the focus of this study.

The No Child Left Behind Act is evidence of increased political pressure by mandating that all students will be grade level proficient by the school year 2013-2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Yet, if children enter school already behind, this will have a profound impact on their later achievement (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn, & McLanahan, 2005). Thus, the beginning status of children in entering school may prove to be a crucial turning point in the academic achievement of our society's youth.

School Readiness can be adversely affected by various risk factors. Studies show that differences in children's cognitive, language, and social skills upon entry to kindergarten are correlated with families' poverty status, parents' educational levels or

ethnic backgrounds, and children's health and living environments (Currie, 2005). More specifically, kindergartner's reading and math abilities, general knowledge, and overall health can be lower when parents have low levels of education and the family receives some type of public assistance (Caughy, 2006). Living in an unsafe or poverty-stricken neighborhood and having a minimal family income are correlated with scoring low on an assessment of verbal abilities, and thus being "at-risk" for experiencing problems in school (Kohen, Hertzman, & Brooks-Gunn, 1998).

Living in a rural area can also indirectly affect children's readiness. Limited employment opportunities may mean parents have to work more than one job to provide food and housing, decreasing the amount of time they can spend with their children. Families may also have less access to public transportation, libraries, and health care services, and little choice when it comes to adequate child care. Rural schools may also be less able to serve the diverse needs of students from wide geographic areas (Perroncel, 2000). Although none of these risk factors "guarantee" that children will not be ready for kindergarten, children from low-income or less-educated families are less likely to have the supports necessary for healthy growth and development, resulting in lower abilities at school entry.

Smart Start/Randolph County Partnership for Children

Smart Start, a non-profit agency, is North Carolina's early childhood initiative for research, planning, and funding to support programs that benefit children ages birth to age five and their families. Smart Start was launched in 1993 by North Carolina

Governor Jim Hunt and during Hunt's tenure as governor from 1993-2000 Smart Start was expanded across all 100 counties. Smart Start was created to respond to the needs of young children from birth to kindergarten and to address multiple indicators that demonstrated that the well-being of young children was at risk in North Carolina.

Smart Start programming is implemented locally through county based Partnerships in all of North Carolina's one hundred counties. Within North Carolina, Smart Start provides funding to local partnership's to meet the unique needs of young children in each county. Smart Start is administered locally through 82 partnerships covering all 100 North Carolina counties. Some partnerships operate to solely serve one county and others function as regional partnerships that cover multiple counties. Smart Start funds are used to improve the quality of child care, make child care more affordable and accessible, provide access to health services and offer family support programs. The development of the early childhood programs implemented in each county is decided upon locally. Smart Start is funded through public/private partnerships. The majority of funding comes from the North Carolina General Assembly each year. For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, Smart Start was funded at 30% of its need statewide and received $203.6 million (www.smartstart.org, accessed 12/4/09).

The Randolph County Partnership for Children is Randolph County's local Smart Start agency. Randolph County was the last county in the state of North Carolina to accept Smart Start funding and the Randolph County Partnership for Children officially incorporated in 1999. In FY 2009-2010, the Randolph County Partnership received $4,350,000 in funding from multiple funding streams including Smart Start, More at

Four, United Way of Randolph County, United Way of Greater High Point, and community, civic, and individual contributions. Currently, the Randolph County Partnership funds thirty-two programs in the areas of family support, health, early care and education, and program support.

While other Partnerships in North Carolina have used strategic planning for countywide initiatives, the Randolph Partnership is unique in that it uses *community-based* strategic planning for initiatives that will be delivered in specific municipalities. The Randolph County Partnership for Children through its School Readiness Community-Based Initiative assists individual municipalities in examining their strengths and weaknesses. The main focus of this initiative is to build the capacity of the community and not on creating services. The School Readiness Community-Based Initiative builds on the uniqueness within each community and uses a step-by-step core planning process to enable community teams to develop strategic plans.

Through the Randolph County Partnership for Children's School Readiness Community-Based Initiative, community-specific collaboration and strategic planning was initiated in areas where large numbers of children, with the potential for developmental delays, were entering kindergarten as indicated on the Dial-3 (Asheboro City School System) or the LAP-D (Randolph County School System) kindergarten screening tools. The goal of the School Readiness Community-Based Initiative in Randolph County is to educate the community on the critical needs of young children and to serve as a catalyst for bringing together diverse service sectors and interests including health, social services, mental health, K-12 education, county and city government, child

care, business, faith-based organizations, and parents to help develop solutions. In 2001, a local advisory committee named Celebrate Liberty's Children was formed in Liberty. After a six month strategic planning process, Celebrate Liberty's children began the process of renovating the old Liberty Elementary School building to become the Liberty Early Childhood Center, now a hub for early childhood development services.

The Research Problem, Research Questions and Key Terms

This dissertation seeks to explore what can be learned about leadership, resource development, and community collaboration from the work of a specific Smart Start initiative in Randolph County called Celebrate Liberty's Children. Celebrate Liberty's Children is a local advisory committee that planned an early childhood initiative to enhance school readiness in a rural area where high numbers of children were entering school with potential delays. The effort is unique because Celebrate Liberty's Children is comprised of community volunteers from the municipality of Liberty who worked collaboratively and strategically to address the challenges that negatively affect school readiness and children's ability to enter school healthy and ready to succeed. The significance of this study is to demonstrate how one rural municipality worked to address the multiple interacting factors which contributed to a large number of children entering kindergarten with delays in their community and to share lessons learned in the areas of leadership, resource development, and community collaboration. There are rural communities across the United States facing similar school readiness challenges. This study serves to highlight the unique approach used by one community based group to

meet the needs of families with young children with the intent of enhancing school readiness. The intended audiences of this study are rural, limited resource communities with an interest in increasing opportunities for children's experiences and access to services prior to school to enhance school readiness. Further significance of this dissertation research is that it will provide the Randolph County Partnership for Children, Randolph County Schools, and interested parties wishing to plan early childhood programs in rural areas with evaluative information that can be used for future program planning in rural areas or continuous program improvement within Randolph County.

The school readiness initiative investigated is the Liberty Early Childhood Center and the array of programs and services provided within the center. The Liberty Early Childhood Center is located in Liberty which is a rural limited resource municipality in Randolph County, North Carolina. This dissertation uses a case study approach to answer the following research questions: (1) Has Celebrate Liberty's Children's implementation of community programs been successful in increasing community awareness of early childhood education issues in Liberty? (2) What can be learned about leadership, resource development, and community collaboration from the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children?

The purpose of answering these questions is two fold. First, examining the effectiveness of a locally planned school readiness initiative can have future implications for policymakers, schools, families, and communities alike in finding ways to close the achievement gap and improve the school readiness of children in rural areas. The second

is to contribute to an understanding of what makes local advisory committees successful by shedding light on promising practices.

Definitions

School Readiness- As defined in the *School Readiness in North Carolina: Strategies for Defining, Measuring, and Promoting Success for All Children* (2000) report, school readiness is the condition of children when they enter school, based on the following five domains of development: health and physical development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning, language development and communication; and cognition and general knowledge.

School Readiness Community-Based Initiative – An initiative of the Randolph County Partnership for Children that serves to educate municipalities on the critical needs of young children and to serve as a catalyst for bringing together diverse sectors and interests to help develop solutions through collaboration and strategic planning.

Celebrate Liberty's Children Local Advisory Committee - A team composed of individuals who are key stakeholders in the community that have an interest in and care about families with young children, and who serve as members of a local school readiness community-based initiative.

Potential delay – Randolph County School kindergarten students with a score of 10 or below on the Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic Edition (LAP-D) are

identified as having a potential delay within the Randolph County School System. The measure of a score of 10 or below has been set by the Randolph County School system. The LAP-D is a norm-referenced assessment used to assist teachers in determining whether an in-depth evaluation is needed.

Leadership – Bass and Stogdill (1990) define leadership in the *Handbook of Leadership: Theory Research and Managerial Application. (3rd ed.)* as the behavioral process of influencing individuals or groups toward set goals. For the purposes of this study, leadership is both transformative in that it infuses others with a high level of commitment to the vision and participative in that it takes into account the input of others while working towards the group's goals.

Resource Development – Includes all revenue generation, volunteerism, and marketing necessary for successful implementation of the local advisory committee's plan.

Collaboration – As defined in *Collaboration: What Makes It Work* (2001) from The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, collaboration is as a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations/partners/members to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

Overview of the Methodology

The case study method allows for a detailed examination of a group (Celebrate Liberty's Children) during a restricted period of time (initial six month planning process and subsequent events that have occurred since the planning process). This method was chosen as the design for this dissertation as it allows for in-depth study of a case and utilizes multiple sources of information. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected adding to the validity of the findings by searching for facts through different sources of data – data triangulation. Validity was also strengthened by using the different methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection – methodological triangulation. I collected qualitative data from documentation review of meeting minutes, memos, community team produced strategic plans, local media reports of the community team's activities, and interviews with Celebrate Liberty's Children local advisory committee members. I also collected quantitative data through the use of a survey. I then developed a conceptual framework to integrate, analyze, display, and interpret the findings.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of study were both practical and conceptual. Due to researcher resources, there were practical limitations that restricted data collection to a limited number of participants who had participated on the Celebrate Liberty's Children local advisory committee, and prevented longitudinal collection of data. Instead the data

represents a snapshot of the impressions of the selected participants about the past and present functioning of the local advisory committee. No follow up study is planned.

Although the research is a blend of qualitative and quantitative data, it relies on rich description that emphasizes depth rather than breadth. A total of eight current and former members of Celebrate Liberty's Children who lived in Randolph County were interviewed. Interviewing a greater number of people who participated in Celebrate Liberty's Children would add to the validity and results by providing for comparison of additional individual accounts of the events of Celebrate Liberty's Children.

In-person interview data obtained in this study is based on interviewee recall data of events that have taken place over the past nine years. Recall bias is the tendency of subjects to report past events in a manner that is different from the actual events. Interviewees may report events in a more positive light than they occurred. Recall bias is a limitation of this case study as this study uses self-reported data from interviewees.

Succeeding Chapters

Chapter II reviews literature on the topics relevant to the study including leadership, resource development, and community collaboration. Chapter III provides a detailed explanation of the methodology used in this study. Chapter IV presents the story of Celebrate Liberty's Children from its inception through current day programs and activities. Chapter V presents the survey data results from parents of children enrolled in programming at the Liberty Early Childhood Center and Liberty Elementary School as

well as community citizens in the Liberty area. Chapter VI shares the themes and concepts from the qualitative interviews with current and past member of Celebrate Liberty's Children. Chapter VII presents a discussion of the study's results and the direction they imply for others wanting to engage in community based school readiness initiatives.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II presents a review of literature regarding the concepts of leadership, community collaboration, and resource development as they relate to the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The general concept of leadership is presented covering the evolution of the study of leadership and a summary of eight major theories of leadership. The study of leadership in early childhood is a newer field of leadership research and lacks both a definition of leadership and school readiness. A brief summary of leadership in early childhood is presented. A conceptual framework is provided which utilizes the Transformational and Participative Leadership Theories, the Wilder Collaboration Factor Inventory, and elements of resource development to theorize how the concepts of leadership, community collaboration, and resource development led to the creation of the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

Evolution of the Study of Leadership

A search for literature on the topic of leadership spans a wide array of fields and includes philosophies of leadership and formal studies written primarily after the development of the social sciences. R.M. Stogdill (1974) and later B. M. Bass (2008) have produced the most widely used and cited reference on leadership with the *Handbook of Leadership*. Now in its 4th edition, the *Handbook of Leadership* is the most significant

and important work reflecting the growth and change in the study of leadership. Studies have emerged from every discipline with an interest in the subject of leadership including anthropology, business, education, history, military science, nursing, organizational behavior, philosophy, political science, public administration, psychology, sociology, and theology. Social scientists have primarily studied leadership from the context of their own fields which provides numerous definitions of leadership. Political scientists define leadership politically, education researchers see it as educational administration, and business researchers see it as management. The essence of leadership is complex and deeper than just one field of study. A commonly accepted definition of leadership is a process used by an individual to influence a group of members toward a common goal (Bass, 1990; Howell & Costley, 2001).

Leadership studies historically focused on political, financial, military, aristocratic, or cultural elites. Leadership was considered an art, for which some people had an innate genius. During the Great Depression, United States social psychologists studying groups found that democratic leadership was not only possible, it was more effective. During World War II, leadership research focused on what traits leaders needed to win the war. Research was unable to produce a consensus on key traits productive of effective leadership. In the 1950's, Stogdill compared results of various traits studies, finding them contradictory and inconclusive. Consequently, in the 1950's and 1960's Stogdill and others tried to conceptualize leadership as behavior, but could not isolate key behavioral patterns that made a difference.

In the 1960's and 1970's, a number of scholars attempted to define leadership in terms of influence, but it proved too difficult to do an empirical study of influence. Unable to determine which particular behavior patterns consistently resulted in effective leadership, researchers then attempted to match behavior patterns that worked best in specific contexts or situations. An infinite array of situations existed which researchers would be unable to study, so producing a definitive compendium matching behaviors with situations would be impossible. In the 1980s, having tried and discarded a variety of fragmentary approaches, leadership researchers determined that leadership is simply doing the right thing to achieve excellence. In an effort to define the right thing, researchers studied excellent companies and CEOs, and developed lists of traits, behavior patterns, group facilitation strategies, and culture-shaping practices for would-be leaders (Rost, 1991).

Leadership Theories

Early leadership theories focused on what qualities distinguished leaders and followers, while subsequent theories looked at other variables such as situational factors and skill levels. These studies shifted the emphasis from personality characteristics to the study of what the leader actually does, resulting in an increased understanding of the process of leadership. While many different leadership theories have emerged, most can be classified into one of eight major types.

The Great Man Theory of leadership makes the assumption that leaders are born and not made. Early research on leadership was based on the study of people (men) who

were already great leaders. These people were often from the aristocracy which contributed to the notion that leadership had something to do with breeding. The Great Man Theory is associated most often with Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle was a 19th-century distinguished Scottish writer, essayist and historian of his time who focused on the lives of such men as Oliver Cromwell, William Shakespeare, Jesus of Nazareth and the Prophet Mohammed (Kunitz & Haycraft, 1973). In his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1888), Carlyle provides a detailed analysis of the influence of six types of men including divinities, prophets, poets, priests, intellectuals, and rulers. The Great Man Theory was popular in the 19th century through World War II.

The Trait Theory of leadership makes the assumption that people are born with inherited traits and good leaders have a combination of traits suited to leadership. By studying successful leaders, researchers seek to identify common traits of great leaders and determine if people's leadership potential could be predicted based on the presence of these traits. Research on these traits dominated leadership research for around fifty years. The research was pioneered by Binet and Simon and reached its climax with Ralph Stogdill in 1948 (Berndt, 2003). Stogdill's extensive trait study research from 1949 through 1970 helped him develop the main key traits and skills that are found in leaders including intelligence, self-confidence, initiative, and persistence (Liu & Liu, 2006). The following table illustrates key leadership traits and skills identified from Stogdill's studies from 1949 through 1970.

Table 1

Key Leadership Traits and Skills

Traits	Skills
Adaptable to situations	Intelligent
Alert to social environment	Conceptually skilled
Ambitious	Creative
Achievement orientated	Diplomatic and tactful
Assertive	Fluent in speaking
Cooperative	Knowledgeable about group task
Decisive	Organized
Dependable	Persuasive
Desire to influence others	Socially Skilled
Energetic	
Persistent	
Self Confident	
Tolerant of Stress	
Willing to assume responsibility	

Leadership Skills and Traits (Stogdill, 1974)

The lists of traits or qualities associated with leadership exist in abundance and continue to be produced. In the 4th edition of *The Handbook on Leadership*, Ruth Bass stated the following, "Leaders may be born as well as made, as we can see if we examine research of the past 30 years on genes, heritability, and leadership. Leadership theory and research from 1975 to 2005 have turned us back again to considering the importance of traits" (Bass, 2008, p. 104).

The Behavioral Theory of leadership assumes that leadership is based on definable, learnable behavior. Unlike the Trait Theory, the Behavioral Theory assumes that leadership behavior can be learned rather than a set of inherited traits. This theoretical approach to understanding leaders creates categories of styles that are aligned

with the actions the leader take to reach their goals. This theory assumes that outward behavior is enough to establish leadership. In the 1970s, research found most of the Behavior Theory research to be invalid (Howell & Costley, 2001; Yaverbaum & Sherman, 2008); however, leadership behavior is still frequently discussed. Behavioral leadership places emphasis on the actions of the leader. As such, this area of leadership is most appealing to managers in that they concentrate on what leaders actually do versus their qualities.

Participative Leadership theory assumes that the ideal leadership style is one that takes into account the input of others. This theory invites participation from the persons responsible for carrying out the work including subordinates, peers, superiors, or stakeholders. Participative leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members. This makes the group less competitive and more collaborative and helps group members feel more relevant and committed to the decision-making process. It is assumed with this theory that the input of several people will lead to better decision making that the judgment of a single individual. In participative theories, however, the leader retains the right to allow the input of others. The leader may outline the goals and objectives and allow the team to decide how they can be achieved or the leader may allow a joint decision to be made with respect to objectives and its method of achievement.

Situational Leadership Theory assumes the best action of the leader depends on a range of situational factors. Factors such as external relationships, acquisition of resources, managing demands on the group and managing the structures and culture of

the group calls for the leader to change their style to the abilities of their followers. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) identified three forces that led to the leader's action: the forces in the situation, the forces in then follower, and also forces in the leader. This recognizes that the leader's style is highly variable. Maier (1963) noted that leaders not only consider the likelihood of a follower accepting a suggestion, but also the overall importance of getting things done. Thus in critical situations, a leader is more likely to be directive in style simply because of the implications of failure. Situational leadership theories are focused on the application and effectiveness of leadership styles to the different operating environments that can be found in the workplace. The study of situational leadership examines how different styles can be effective under different workplace conditions.

Contingency Leadership Theory assumes there is no one best way of leading and that a leadership style that is effective in some situations may not be successful in others. Contingency theory takes a broader view than Situational Leadership and includes contingent factors about leader capability and other variables within the situation. This theory focuses on predicting the most appropriate or effective leadership style to fit the particular circumstances. Both Contingency Theory and Situational Theory function with the assumption that there is not a single right way. The main difference between the two theories is that Situational Theory tends to focus more on the behaviors that the leader should adopt, given situational factors usually related to follower behavior. Contingency Theory differs in that it takes a broader view that includes contingent factors about a leader's preferred style and the capabilities and behaviors of followers.

James Macgregor Burns introduced a Theory of Moral, Transactional, and Transformational leadership in his book *Leadership* (1978). Burns' bases his theory of Moral, Transactional, and Transformational leadership on Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development and Max Weber's theory of leadership and authority. Burns studied the historical, social, economic, and political context of the stories of great leaders to develop subcategories of both transactional and transformational leaders. Burns defines transactional leadership as occurring when, "one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things. " (p. 19). He defines transformational leadership as occurring when, "one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20).

Burns reasoned that moral values were important to leadership. For Burns, the transforming leaders focused on ends, while the transactional leaders negotiated and bargained over the means. Bernard M. Bass extended the work of James MacGregor Burns by explaining how transformational leadership could be measured, as well as how it impacts follower motivation and performance. Bass introduced four elements of transformational leadership including individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

Transactional Leadership Theory assumes people only complete tasks when there are external rewards. This theory bases leadership on a system of rewards and punishments. This approach emphasizes the importance of the relationship between leader and followers. The leader delivers such things as rewards or recognition in return

for the commitment or loyalty of the followers. Transactional Leadership is a popular approach with many managers.

Transformational Leadership Theory assumes a leader's ability to create a vision is related to a goal that has meaning for both the leader and follower. Transformational Leadership starts with the development of a vision, a view of the future that will excite and recruit potential followers. The Transformational Leader thus takes every opportunity and will use whatever works to convince others to climb on board the bandwagon. It is their commitment as much as anything else that keeps people going, particularly through questionable times when some may question whether the vision can ever be achieved. If the people do not believe that they can succeed, then their efforts will fail. The Transformational Leader seeks to infuse their followers with a high level of commitment to the vision.

Another school of though with regards to leadership is that of dispersed leadership. This approach views leadership as a process that is diffused throughout an organization rather than lying solely with the formally designated leader. The emphasis is shifted away from developing leaders to developing organizations with a collective responsibility for leadership. Dispersed leadership is often used interchangeably with other leadership terms including shared leadership, team leadership, and democratic leadership. Still others use distributed leadership to define a way of thinking about the practice of school leadership (Gronn 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond 2001, 2004).

Distributed Leadership Theory is an educational leadership perspective that acknowledges the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice, whether

or not they are formally designated or defined as leaders. Distributed leadership recognizes that school leadership involves multiple leaders, both administrators and teacher leaders. A distributed model of leadership focuses upon the interactions, rather than the actions, of those in formal and informal leadership roles. It is primarily concerned with leadership practice and how leadership influences organizational and instructional improvement (Spillane, 2006).

Leadership in Early Childhood

Leadership is an essential ingredient in any thriving organization and one of the strongest predictors of high-quality early childhood programs. Much has been done to improve the quality of early childhood education in recent decades. A factor often identified as contributing to quality in early childhood education settings is effective leadership (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Grey, 2004; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Rodd, 2006). Despite recent attention to leadership in early childhood education, the field does not have a commonly accepted national definition of leadership or school readiness. This suggests leadership in early childhood is still evolving and thus the focus of this dissertation is timely in its examination of what can be learned about leadership for the developmental of early childhood programming in rural areas.

Rodd (2006) sees leadership in early childhood education as being: about the experiences and environment provided for children, the relationships between adults and children, meeting and protecting the rights of adults and children and working collaboratively, crossing existing artificial boundaries to meet the concerns of all

concerned with the care and education of young children. Although Rodd (2006) does not provide a succinct definition of leadership, she describes the key elements of effective leadership as the leader's ability to: "provide vision and communicate it; develop a team culture; set goals and objectives; monitor and communicate achievements; and facilitate and encourage the development of individuals" (p. 3).

Rodd (2006) notes that even the definitions of the core elements of early childhood practitioners' work (National Association for the Education of Young Children) fail to clearly differentiate leadership as a distinctive role and responsibility with specific skills that are different from those of management (p. 21). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) uses the notion of a children's champion (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2003, as cited in Rodd 2006) to describe the key role leaders play in the public arena. The NAEYC (1996) asserts that every early childhood practitioner can make a difference to the quality of children's lives by: speaking out on behalf of children at every opportunity; doing something to improve the life of one child beyond their own family; and holding public officials accountable for making children's wellbeing and learning a national commitment in terms.

Regarding leaders in early childhood, Crompton (1997) states that "In the early care and education arena, a real leader is an agent of change" (p. 49). An effective leader transforms a vision of what should be into a reality. For the early care and education professional, this means helping the community to understand – on both an intellectual and visceral level – why early care is crucial to the health and welfare of children and

families (Crompton, 1997). According to Crompton (1997) the best leaders in the early care field:

- Demonstrates to the community that early care and education is a watershed issue that determines to a great extent the future success of children in school and in life
- Persuades local power brokers to put improved early care at or near the top of the community's agenda
- Functions as the community's early care and education expert in a way that influences early care policymaking on a community wide basis. (ex. Securing increased resources and creating early care and education programs that give children the care and support they need to thrive)
- Plays a key role in securing or leveraging the kind of substantial public and private human and financial resources required to improve early care and education programming in all parts of the community

Community Collaboration

Collaboration among human services, government, and community organizations has intensified in recent decades due to organizations making a commitment to address social issues in new ways. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation is one of the largest and oldest endowed human service and community development organizations in America. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation published the 2nd edition of *Collaboration: What Makes It Work* in 2001. This publication is a review of research literature on factors

influencing successful collaboration. The Wilder Foundation defines collaboration as "A mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations/partners/members to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards (p. 4)". The Wilder Foundation also distinguishes collaboration from cooperation and coordination. The chart below compares cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

Table 2

Comparison of Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration

Cooperation	Characterized by informal relationships that exist without any commonly defined mission, structure, or planning effort. Information is shared as needed, and authority is retained by each organization so there is virtually no risk.
Coordination	Characterized by more formal relationships and un understanding of compatible missions. Some planning and division of roles are required, and communication channels are established. Authority still rests with the individual organizations, but there is some increased risk to all participants. Resources are available to participants and rewards are mutually acknowledged.

Collaboration	Connotes a more durable and pervasive relationship. Collaborations bring previously separated organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels operating on may levels. Authority is determined by the collaborative structure. Risk is much greater because each member of the collaboration contributes its own resources and reputation. Resources are pooled or jointly secured, and the products are shared.

The Wilder Foundation conducted a review and summary of research related to collaboration. The precise research question The Wilder Foundation used for the identification and assessment of research studies was as follows "What factors influence the success of collaborative efforts among organizations in the human services, government, and other nonprofit fields?" The research included in the review must focus on collaboration, have relevance for the collaboration that occurs among human services, government, and other nonprofit organizations, and relate to the success of a collaboration endeavor (measured in terms of outcomes) – not merely to the reasons for collaboration, the process, or other features. The review and summary of research related to collaboration had three major stages including identification and assessment of research studies, systematic codification of findings from each study, and synthesis of findings from individual studies. Collection of potentially relevant studies came from the

following sources: computerized bibliographic searches in the areas of social research, health, education, and public affairs; personal inquiries into researchers known for their interest in the topic to obtain both their work and references to the work of others; tracking down bibliographic references appearing in materials as they were gathered; and a search of the internet for relevant references. These activities led to the acquisition of references to 133 studies in 1992 for the 1st edition and an additional 281 studies in 2001 for the 2nd edition. After the initial screening of studies and critical assessment of studies the number was reduced to eighteen in 1992 and twenty-two in 2000, for a total of forty valid and relevant studies. The Wilder Foundation has concluded from the research that twenty factors appear to strongly influence the success of collaborations. The twenty factors are grouped into six categories including environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources.

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation reviewed research literature on factors that influence successful collaboration. The three most important factors, cited in order of importance, were: mutual trust, respect, and understanding; broad cross-section of individuals and organizations; and frequent and open communication. Members of the collaborative group share an understanding and respect for each other and their respective organizations including how they operate, their cultural norms and values, and limitations and expectations. The community group will include representation from each segment of the community that will be affected by its activities. Community group members interact often, update one another, discuss issues openly, and convey all necessary information to one another and to people outside the group. Broad participation alone is

not enough for successful collaboration. Creating processes and structures that help to build trust and mutual respect and provide opportunities for meaningful input and sharing of information are essential factors.

Resource Development

Three specific areas of resource development that were essential for Celebrate Liberty's Children were revenue generation, volunteerism, and marketing. In Peggy Klein's article *The Ten Most Important Things You Can Know About Fundraising* (2004), she indicates that a good fundraiser requires three character traits as much as any set of skills. These traits are (1) A belief in the cause for which you are raising money and the ability to maintain that belief during defeats, tedious tasks, and financial insecurity; (2) The ability to have high hopes and low expectations, allowing you to be often pleased but rarely disappointed; and (3) Faith in the basic goodness of people.

Joanne Carman in an article titled *Community Foundations A Growing Resource for Community Development* (2001), indicates three reasons why community foundations are uniquely positioned to promote community development including: (1) There is a natural fit between the purpose of community foundations and the purpose of community development corporations in that both are place-based in nature, and each is accountable to groups of people living in specific geographic areas. (2) Community foundations and community development corporations are both dedicated to increasing community capacity for solving local community problems. (3) Community foundations and

community development corporations are both interested in bringing people together to work toward the collective good.

Essential to resource development are volunteers who will commit their time to the cause. Jennifer Woodill (2008) states that the principal of resource development views volunteers like money - as resources or assets and as such they provide much needed support and services at the community level. Another aspect of resource development was marketing the message. Mandeville (2007) states that, "An organization that can promote information through many outlets has the flexibility to selectively exert influence where it is most needed. One-on-one access with elected officials may be of importance in one situation, while the capacity to mobilize large numbers of constituents may be of importance in another situation" (p 285).

Dean (1995) uses the analogy of the *Little Engine that Could* to demonstrate the seemingly impossible task of fund raising. Dean (1995) states that effective development and leadership requires determined application of the four T's related to volunteerism which include: (1) Time – Individuals who give their time to a cause they believe in and which they commit. (2) Talent – When individuals give their time they are giving their talent. Their talent is that of an articulate ability to explain the cause and create a contagious environment that enlists the listener. (3) Treasures – money, property, etc. (4) Tendons – connections others have with individuals in the community of contact and influence.

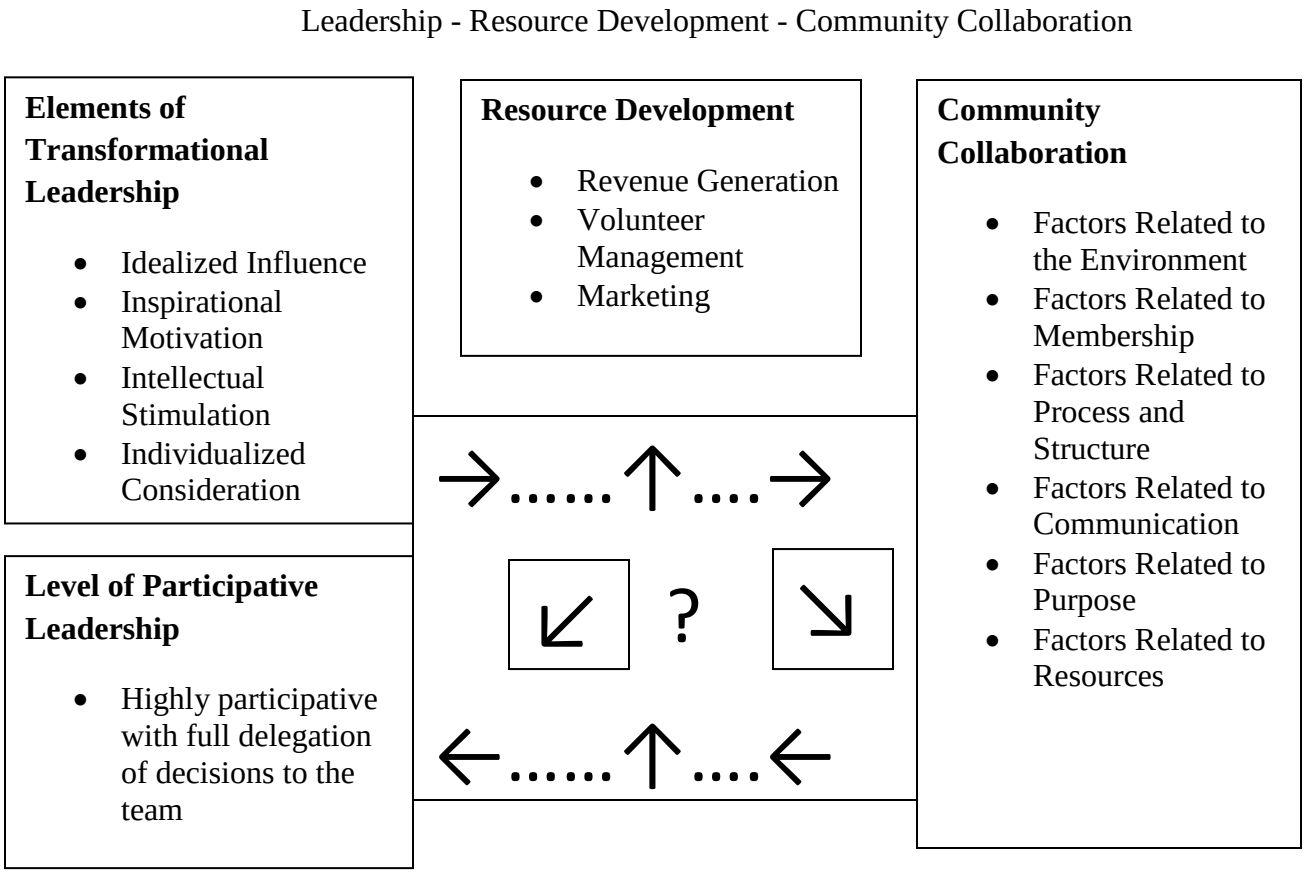
Conceptual Framework

Local Advisory Councils act as a core group of community volunteers for the Randolph County Partnership for Children. Their most basic functions include data collection and needs assessments and developing written plans for services in their respective communities with the goal of increasing the number of children entering kindergarten prepared to succeed. There are three broad theoretical approaches to understanding leadership in which leadership is understood either as a function of the individual, as a function of the interaction between individuals or as a function of the situation which may or may not be located within a formal organization. The work of Celebrate Liberty's Children will be examined using a conceptual framework seeking to understand the function of the interaction between individuals using both the Participative Leadership Theory and the Transformation Leadership Theory. In addition the Wilder Foundation's Factors for Successful Collaboration along with elements of resource development will be used to assess which factors were most influential for Celebrate Liberty's Children in creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

I will explore the relationship between leadership, community collaboration, and resource development in the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the conceptual framework.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in and includes assumptions, expectations, and beliefs of two leadership theories including the Participative Leadership Theory and the Transformational Leadership Theory. The reason for selecting these two theories is that they center on the interaction between individuals as opposed to focusing on a single individual (ex. Great Man Theory) or the function of a situation (ex. Situational or Contingency Theory). Transformational leadership requires both the leader and followers to commit to the vision. It reflects an interaction of individuals in that it

requires the leader and followers to problem solve in an attempt to accomplish the vision. Transformational leadership is powerful because the followers are motivated internally and not externally. Bernard Bass (1990) has noted that authentic transformational leadership is grounded in moral foundations that are based on four components: 1) Idealized Influence; 2) Inspirational Motivation; 3) Intellectual Stimulation; and 4) Individualized Consideration. Below is a description of each.

Idealized Influence

Transformational leadership is characterized by high moral and ethical standards. Trust for both leader and follower is built on a solid moral and ethical foundation. Idealized influence is linked to charisma. Charismatic leadership includes vision and behavior that inspires others to follow and depends on leaders as well as followers for its expression.

Inspirational Motivation

Transformational leaders have the capacity to motivate others to commit to the vision. They make clear an appealing view of the future, offer followers the opportunity to see meaning in their work, and challenge them with high standards. The leader's appeal to what is right and needs to be done provides the momentum for all to move forward.

Intellectual Stimulation

Transformational leaders encourage innovation and creativity by arousing followers' awareness of problems and their capacity to solve those problems. Transformational leaders encourage followers to be innovative and approach problems in new ways.

Individualized Consideration

Transformational leaders respond to the specific, unique needs of followers to ensure they are included in the transformation process of the organization. Individual's knowledge and talents are utilized with the intention of allowing them to reach higher levels of achievement than might otherwise have been achieved.

The following table summarizes the effects of these four components of transformational leadership.

Table 3

The Additive Effect of Transformational Leadership.

Idealized Influence +
Inspirational Motivation +
Intellectual Stimulation +
Individualized Consideration
= Performance Beyond Expectations

(Hall, Johnson, Wysocki and Kepner, 2002)

These factors have been confirmed by empirical work in the area (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003). In 1985 Bernard Bass devised the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), an instrument intended to measure transformational and transactional leader behaviors. Over the past two decades, and following application in scores of research studies involving military, educational, and commercial organizations (see, for example, Gellis, 2001), the MLQ has emerged as the primary means of

quantitatively assessing transformational leadership (Bryant, 2003; Griffin, 2003). An outcome of this work is the isolation of four factors now accepted as being exhibited by effective transformational leaders. Benefits associated with Transformational Leadership include 1) High morale; 2) High performance; 3) High commitment to the organization; 4) High levels of trust in management; and 5) High satisfaction with leadership.

Participatory Leadership focuses on a leader reaching a good decision by involving all individuals who have some insight into the problem. In 1939, a group of researchers led by psychologist Kurt Lewin set out to identify different styles of leadership. Kurt Lewin coined three participative leadership styles including autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. In the autocratic approach, the leader makes the decision in isolation. The democratic style promotes groups decision, and the laissez-faire management lets others decide what needs to be done. Lewin's study found that participative (democratic) leadership is generally the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members. Participative leaders encourage group members to participate, but retain the final say over the decision-making process. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative.

Assumptions of Participative Leadership include the belief that involvement of all group members in decision-making improves the understanding of the issues involved by those who must carry out the decisions. In addition, people are more committed to actions where they have been involved in the relevant decision-making. People tend to be less competitive and more collaborative when they are working on joint goals. When

working in the Participative Leadership style, people make decisions together. This enhances their social commitment to one another and thus increases their commitment to the decision. Participative Leadership assumes that several people deciding together make better decisions than one person alone.

Participative leadership reflects the extent to which members of a group contribute to important decisions for the group and/or organization. Group member contribution exists on a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the members of the organization may make no contribution to the decisions making process. Their ideas are not utilized or considered when making decisions. When leaders ask for opinions and then ignore them it can lead to cynicism and feelings of betrayal within the group. Leaders or managers may make the decisions without any consultation with the members or employees. On the other end of the continuum, the leaders or managers may consult with members or employees for every important decision. They are asked for their advice, and each idea that is presented by a member or employee is carefully considered for each important decision. The figure below represents the participative leadership continuum.

Figure 2

Participative Leadership Continuum

Not Participative Highly Participative

←----------→

Autocratic decision by leader	Leader proposes decision, listens to feedback, then decides	Team proposes decision, leader has final decision	Joint decision with team as equals	Full delegation of decision to team

(Participative Leadership, 2010)

As the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation has conducted an exhaustive review of literature and through their research identified six categories of factors leading to successful collaborations, this will provide the framework for analyzing the collaboration efforts of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The work of the Wilder Foundation is specific to collaboration that occurs among human services, government, and other nonprofit organizations. The Randolph County Partnership for Children is a non-profit organization and Celebrate Liberty's Children (CLC) is its local grassroots advisory committee. As such, this provides a fit for assessing if these factors were essential to Celebrate Liberty's Children's collaborative efforts or if additional and/or different factors were evident in their work related to collaboration.

The table below presents the results of the Wilder Foundations review of research literature on factors influencing successful collaboration specifically among organizations in the human services, government, and other nonprofit fields.

Table 4

Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration

1. Factors Related to the Environment a. History of collaboration in the community b. Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community c. Favorable political and social climate
2. Factors Related to Membership Characteristics a. Mutual respect, understanding, and trust b. Appropriate cross section of members c. Members see collaboration as in their self-interest d. Ability to compromise
3. Factors Related to Process and Structure a. Members share a stake in both process and outcome b. Multiple layers of participation c. Flexibility d. Development of clear roles and policy guidelines e. Adaptability f. Appropriate pace of development
4. Factors Related to Communication a. Open and frequent communication b. Established informal relationships and communication links
5. Factors Related to Purpose a. Concrete, attainable goals and objectives b. Shared vision c. Unique purpose
6. Factors Related to Resources a. Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time b. Skilled leadership

In summary, the conceptual framework for this study uses Transformational and Participative Leadership theories as a basis for understand the work of Celebrate

Liberty's Children. A conceptual framework grounded in Transformational and Participative Leadership provides a lens to examine what kind of person the leader is (attitude, values, and motives), how the leader relates to others (development of human resources), leader task orientation (vision, goal setting, etc.), and how the leader impacts organizational processes (team building and decision making).

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's six categories of factors influencing successful collaboration will provide a lens to examine if these factors were present in the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children or if additional and/or different factors were present in their collaborative work. Elements of resource development including fundraising, volunteer management, and marketing used by Celebrate Liberty's Children will be discussed in Chapter VI. The following chapter, Chapter III describes in detail the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Design

To tell the story of Celebrate Liberty's Children, I chose a qualitative approach and the use of the case study method. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as, "An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p.15). Qualitative analysis uses methods such as interviews, observation of individuals or groups, description of process, and controlled subjectivity. A strength of qualitative research is that it provides an understanding of the meaning for participants of events, situations, or actions in which the participants are involved. By studying a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserving the individuality of each of these in the researcher's analysis allows for an understanding of how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur. The advantage of using qualitative methods is that they generate rich, detailed data that leave the participants' perspectives intact and provide a context for behavior. The focus upon processes differs from that of quantitative research, which addresses correlations between variables.

A case study focuses on developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases. Data collection methods include multiple sources such as documents, archival records, interviews, observations, and physical artifacts. Data analysis with this method involves descriptions, themes, and assertions. The strength of the narrative form of a case study is that it provides an in-depth study of a case or cases. Challenges include determining how many cases when the researcher choose multiple cases, and having enough information to present an in-depth picture of the cases limits the value of some case studies.

The purpose of this research study is to describe in-depth a community-based school readiness initiative that was launched in a rural area where high numbers of children were entering school with potential delays and to explore what can be learned about leadership, resource development, and community collaboration from this initiative. The case study method allows for a detailed examination of a group (Celebrate Liberty's Children) during a restricted period of time (initial six month planning process and subsequent events that have occurred since the planning process). This is an appropriate research method as the case study method aims to trace the inner dynamics of the group including the roles people played, problems that arose, and strategies that were adopted to resolve problems. This method allows for in-depth study of a case and utilizes multiple sources of information. This is an appropriate form of qualitative research as the purpose of case study research is to completely describe a case as it pertains to a particular focus. The particular focus of this study is an assessment of a Smart Start Local Advisory Committee's initiatives to enhance school readiness within

the municipality of Liberty in rural Randolph County and the resulting effects of such initiatives. The focus was on developing a thick description of the case in order to understand how this rural, limited resource community increased opportunities for children's experiences and access to services prior to school to enhance school readiness and to analyze what can be learned about leadership, resource development, and community collaboration from this initiative.

Data Collection

Letters of support for this dissertation research were obtained from the Randolph County Schools as well as the Randolph County Partnership for Children. The Randolph County Schools assisted with recruitment and access to survey participants. The Randolph County Partnership for Children provided access to historical records regarding the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children (CLC) as well as contact information for current and former members of CLC. Data collection procedures included documentation review of meetings minutes, memos, local media reports, and strategic plans for the community team to recreate a historical account of the work of the community team to date. Individuals in the Liberty community who have participated in the Celebrate Liberty's Children community team were asked to participate in an in-person interview. The semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with eight members of Celebrate Liberty's Children (three current members and five former members), and were recorded and transcribed. Survey participation was open to all parents/guardians of children enrolled at Liberty Elementary School. Parents/guardians of students at Liberty

Elementary received the survey (via students taking the survey home) and were asked to complete it. Survey participation was also open to all parents/guardians of children enrolled at the Liberty Early Childhood Center (preschool age children). Pre-K parents/guardians received the survey and were asked to complete it at the first monthly Pre-K parent education session of the 2009-2010 school year. Parents who participate in the monthly Parents as Teacher's Early Learning Group received the survey and were asked to complete it during summer meeting dates. Survey participation was also open to all individuals on the Liberty Early Childhood Center mailing list who have a Liberty address. Surveys were mailed along with a return postage paid envelope. The results of the surveys were recorded into an Excel database created to track information for all survey participants. In-person interviews and surveys were conducted in the fall of 2009. The purpose of the survey was to gauge if Celebrate Liberty's Children's implementation of community programs been successful in increasing community awareness of early childhood education issues, programs, and services in the Liberty area.

Document Review

Historical documents related to Celebrate Liberty's Children (CLC) provided valuable data especially CLC capital campaign materials. The capital campaign documents highlighted the array of activities that were launched to raise funds and the level of commitment that was needed to achieve this ambitious effort over multiple years. I also examined Randolph County Partnership for Children yearly evaluation reports as well as fiscal year programmatic binders which outlined the yearly progress of

creating and relocating all of the programs to the Liberty Early Childhood Center. These documents provided background information and helped to define the timeline of events in creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

Newspaper articles highlighted significant achievements of Celebrate Liberty's Children including securing large grants during the capital campaign, gaining the attention of a national out of state foundation after a presentation at the National Smart Start Conference, and two former chairs of Celebrate Liberty's Children receiving awards for their leadership and volunteerism with CLC. Data gathered through the examination of documents were an integral part of the data collection process. The following table contains a list of all documents reviewed for the study.

Table 5

Documents Reviewed

Randolph County Partnership for Children School Readiness Community Based Initiative Grant Information
Liberty Early Childhood Center Program Proposals submitted to the Randolph County Partnership for Children
Proposed Renovation Plan for the Liberty Early Childhood Center Building
Liberty Early Childhood Center Start Up Expenditures and Program Budgets submitted to the Randolph County Partnership for Children
Randolph County Partnership for Children Yearly Evaluation Reports (fiscal years 1999 - 2009)
Liberty Early Childhood Center quarterly reports submitted to the Randolph County Partnership for Children
Liberty Early Childhood Center mid year and end of year reports submitted to the Randolph County Partnership for Children.
Pre-Kindergarten and Liberty Early Childhood Center Programmatic Binders (fiscal years 2001-2009)
Celebrate Liberty Children's Member Lists
Celebrate Liberty's Children Newsletters

Celebrate Liberty's Children Meeting Memos
Celebrate Liberty's Children Meeting Minutes
Celebrate Liberty's Children Strategic Plan
Celebrate Liberty's Children Capital Campaign Documents
Photos of the renovation of the Old Liberty School into the Liberty Early Childhood Center
Celebrate Liberty's Children Team Annual Evaluation Form
Conference presentation handouts and PowerPoint slideshow presented by Celebrate Liberty's Children Chair at the National Smart Start Conference presentation in 2007
Various newspaper articles regarding the work/activities of Celebrate Liberty's Children from The Courier-Tribune, The Greensboro News and Record, and the Liberty Leader
Liberty Voices from a Community, Randolph County Primary Data Document Community Diagnosis 1995, compiled by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health Department of Health Behavior and Health Education Students

In-Depth Interviews

A total of thirteen individuals were identified for in-person interviews. After review of CLC membership lists and consultation with both the longtime chair of Celebrate Liberty's Children and the Executive Director of the Randolph County Partnership for Children these individuals were identified as having substantial knowledge of CLC and still resided within close proximity to conduct an in-person interview. Of the thirteen people identified for interviews, eight people actually participated in an in-person interview. One of the proposed interviewees who had been very involved in the CLC capital campaign passed away before IRB approval was obtained for this study. Another proposed interviewee who was involved in the initial planning and continues to collaborate with CLC through the county agency they are employed with declined to be interviewed. This individual was very hesitant upon initial contact that they would not have enough information to share about CLC. While this person did initially schedule an interview time with me, she called to cancel before the

interview was conducted and expressed a desire not to reschedule. While this person declined to be formally interviewed, she did tell me that the people she worked with from Celebrate Liberty's Children were the most dedicated and wonderful people to work with. Attempts were made to reach an additional two people to be interviewed but e-mails and phone calls to these individuals were not returned. Table 6 provides a brief bio of each person who was interviewed for this study. The names of all participants are pseudonyms.

Table 6

Celebrate Liberty's Children Members Interviewed

Interviewee Pseudonym	Role in the Community
Charlie Brown	Member of the Business Community
Violet Gray	Early Intervention Practitioner
Linus Van Pelt	Public School Educator/Administrator
Peggy Jean	Early Childhood Professional
Dr. Joe Shlabotnik	Medical Professional
Charlotte Braun	Parent
Molly Volley	Public School Educator/Administrator
Joe Agate	Member of the Business Community

All interviewees were interviewed once and the in-person interviews averaged between 60-90 minutes. Interviews were conducted at a time and location that was most

convenient to the interviewees. All interviews were conducted in the fall of 2009 and occurred either at the Randolph County Partnership for Children, the Liberty Early Childhood Center, or the individual office of the person being interviewed. All interview participants reviewed, signed, and received a copy of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board Consent to Act as a Human Participant: Long Form (Appendix A). The eight individuals who agreed to be interviewed in-person were very enthusiastic about the project and willing to share their knowledge of and experiences with CLC. The interview guide used in the interviews is found in Appendix B. Questions were designed to allow for a semi-structured conversational interview. The conversational approach yields flexibility in that an interviewee's answer to one question may influence the next question asked. All interviews were recorded with the interviewee's consent and I took notes on each interview guide during the interviews. Following the interviews I reviewed my notes and transcribed each interview session. I thanked the interviewees for their time and assistance by sending each a thank you note. In addition, interviewees were asked to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy.

At the beginning of each interview, I asked the interviewee to tell me about their involvement and participation with CLC. As each individual served in varying capacities and at varying times, this allowed me to clarify their roles. In addition this allowed me to find factors that have contributed to sustaining the success of CLC over a number of years. The advantages of the in-person interviews are that they allowed me to understand each individual's reason for participating in CLC, gather information on what

each person saw as the challenges and success in the planning process, and provide the interviewees an opportunity to share with me what they felt were the critical elements to this group's success. The concluding question of each interviewed allowed the interviewee to share any additional information that had not been discussed. The results from the in-person interviews are shared in Chapter VI.

Surveys

A survey was developed in collaboration with Celebrate Liberty's Children for this study. I met with Celebrate Liberty's Children community team members in the spring of 2009 to share the purpose of my research study and present them a draft of my survey. For my research purposes, the survey aimed to assess if parents and key community leaders demonstrated awareness and/or usage of early childhood resources in the community and knowledge of the importance of early childhood education. As I was planning on conducting a school wide survey, I asked for input from the community team on what information would be useful to them. A school wide survey had not been conducted by Celebrate Liberty's Children since the initial planning phase in 2001.

Celebrate Liberty's Children was very excited about the survey and had several ideas for information they wanted to gather. The community team requested adding a section of questions regarding interest in the use of health and social services if they were available locally. One of the goals has always been to relocate community and social service agencies to the Liberty Early Childhood Center building. Celebrate Liberty's Children used the survey as an opportunity to assess parent's need for specific services.

The community team also indicated a preference for wanting open ended questions allowing parents/guardians to indicate specific concerns and challenges regarding children and parenting in the Liberty area. The survey was revised to incorporate the suggestions of the community team.

I conducted surveys of parents/guardians of students enrolled at the Liberty Early Childhood Center and Liberty Elementary School in early fall 2009. In addition, Liberty area residents who were on the CLC newsletter mailing list were sent a survey in late summer 2009. The survey had an overall 51% return rate (359/704). Surveys were entered into an Excel database for data tracking. The results from the surveys are shared in Chapter V.

Data Analysis

Data analysis methods included description, identifying themes, and making assertions. Descriptions were used to provide a detailed view of Celebrate Liberty's Children community team. The case study method allowed for the description of the community team's initial formation, the types of members who participated (race, vocation, gender, etc.), and the activities the community team members engaged in during the strategic planning process.

Categorical aggregation was used to seek a collection of themes from the data in an attempt to identify issue relevant meaning. To identify themes from the in-person interviews, I read through the interview transcripts and tagged key items (concepts, ideas, beliefs, incidents, and behaviors). I tagged each key item in the interview transcripts by

using the highlighting feature in Microsoft Word. I then used hard copies of the interview transcripts to cut out the text and paste the materials onto index cards. I cut out each highlighted idea/concept and pasted the material on small index cards. On the back of each card, I then wrote down the concept/idea's reference. I then laid out the index cards with the concept/ideas and sorted them into piles of similar concepts/ideas. I also coded and sorted the documents and information obtained from the survey results. I organized and combined related themes into categories with a brief description of each category. After analyzing the data, I developed naturalistic generalizations. These generalizations will be useful for those working with rural community teams interested in developing early childhood initiatives and the effects of such initiatives. I created a data matrix which served as a data analysis tool highlighting which themes emerged from which sources.

Table 7

Matrix of Themes Generated from Data Sources

Themes:	Data Sources:		
	Document Review	In-person Interviews	Surveys
1. Leadership/supportive resources	X	X	
2. Commitment to the vision	X	X	
3. Strategic Planning	X	X	
4. Ability to express the need of the project	X	X	X

5. Resourceful fundraising for the capital campaign	X	X	
6. Collaboration	X	X	
7. Use of existing resources	X	X	X
8. Shared decision making		X	
9. Continually moving ahead with goal (not stagnant)	X	X	
10. Individual's personal connection and reasons for participating in CLC		X	

Researcher Subjectivity

Researchers should be attentive to their subjectivity as it may shape their inquiry and outcomes. From January 2006- January 2010, I was employed by the Randolph County Partnership (local Smart Start agency) as the Program and Evaluation Coordinator and as such work directly with the Partnership's health, family support, and select early care and education activities. The Liberty Early Childhood Center is one of the activities for which I conducted program monitoring (of the Parents as Teachers program only) and reviewed yearly evaluation results (of both the Parents as Teachers program and the More at Four Pre-kindergarten classrooms).

Monitoring of one's self is needed to know when the researcher's subjectivity is engaged. Monitoring of one's self includes being aware of positive and negative experiences and thus those experiences in which the researcher feels drawn to (positive)

and those in which the research tends to avoid (negative). A strategy I employed for negotiating research subjectivities was appreciating alternate realities by checking my interpretation of events, situations, and phenomena. In an attempt to protect against having a favorable bias, I worked to find out how those within the group being studied (community team members) understood the situation, which helped illuminate my own personal researcher biases. I monitored my subjectivity through note taking, transcribing, member checks, and analysis. My notes during each interview provided a record of my thoughts, reactions, and reflections. I worked to remain objective as I gathered and interpreted data throughout the study.

Trustworthiness

The standards of quality and verification that were employed in this case study included triangulation of information and member checking. Guion (2002) defines the term as, "Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies and includes data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, and environmental triangulation". Triangulation involves the use of multiple and different sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective. A variety of data sources were employed in this case study including surveys, and review of meeting minutes and memos, as well as newspaper reports of community team activities. Triangulation serves to ensure the accuracy of data. One way to ensure the weight of evidence supports your conclusions is to use triangulation.

Triangulation involves multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence to give your conclusions more credibility than if you limit your self to one source or method. Triangulation reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the limitations of a specific method and allows you a better assessment of the validity and generality of explanations you develop.

Member checking involves the researcher asking participants to examine rough drafts of writing after the data collection stage in an effort to solicit the informants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations. Member checks were employed and participants were asked to examine rough drafts of the dissertation research to provide critical observation and interpretations. Member checking serves to ensure the credibility of the research. Stake as cited in Creswell (1998) recommends a critique checklist for a case study report that includes twenty criteria for a good case study report (p.214). Stake's critique checklist was also employed in verification of the case study data. The checklist is found in the table below.

Table 8

Stake's Critique Checklist

1. Is the report easy to read?
2. Does it fit together, each sentence contributing as a whole?
3. Does the report have a conceptual structure?
4. Are its issues developed in a serious and scholarly way?
5. Is the case adequately defined?
6. Is there a sense of story to the presentation?
7. Is the reader provided some vicarious experience?
8. Have quotations been used effectively?

9. Are headings, figures, artifacts, appendixes, and indexes used effectively?
10. Was it edited well, then again with a last-minute polish?
11. Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over- nor under-interpreting?
12. Has adequate attention been paid to various contexts?
13. Were sufficient raw data presented?
14. Were data sources well chosen and in sufficient number?
15. Do observations and interpretations appear to have been triangulated?
16. Is the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent?
17. Is the nature of the audience apparent?
18. Is empathy shown for all sides?
19. Are personal intentions examined?
20. Does it appear that individuals were put at risk?

For those interested in transferability of this study, a rich description has been provided of the setting, participants, and processes involved with Celebrate Liberty's Children. This case study provides an opportunity to share lessons learned related to rural school readiness initiatives and the impact community based leadership can have on creating and expanding school readiness opportunities for children prior to school entry. The work of Celebrate Liberty's Children can serve as a model for other rural limited resource communities wanting to replicate such an initiative.

Benefits and Risk of Study

There were no expected risks or discomforts from participation in this study. All but one of the individuals contacted for in person interviews expressed great interest and enthusiasm for participating in the study. The one individual who declined to participate in an in person interview stated they felt like that did not have enough information to share about Celebrate Liberty's Children due to the amount of time that had lapsed since

their participation. There were not any perceived risks for study participants who completed the anonymous survey as this research involved the use of survey procedures that did not place the respondents at risk of criminal or civil liability, or were damaging to the participant's financial standing, employability, or reputation. All participants were provided the consent to act as a human participant long form from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and allowed the choice of participating or declining. I personally transcribed all audio recordings of the interviews and maintained sole possession of all documents related to this research, which are stored in a locked file in my home. All procedures and protocols of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board were followed.

While the participants did not receive any personal benefit from participating in the study, it is anticipated that the information they provided will help advance the field of educational leadership. The contribution of this study to the field of educational leadership include the contribution of knowledge regarding leadership, resource development, and community collaboration as they relate to early childhood initiatives in rural areas. The results of the study will first and foremost be shared with members of Celebrate Liberty's Children to allow them to reflect on their many success and lesson learned in the process of creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center. The results of the study will also be shared with the Randolph County Schools and the Randolph County Partnership for Children for the purposes of program evaluation and continual program enhancement. In addition, the study results will be shared with the North Carolina Partnership for Children (Smart Start) in hopes this work can serve as a resource for other

rural communities interested in expanding opportunities and access to early childhood experiences. The story of Celebrate Liberty's Children is unique and can serve as a model for others interested in grassroots community based efforts to increase school readiness access and opportunities in rural areas.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF CELEBRATE LIBERTY'S CHILDREN

The Setting (Randolph County)

A rural county in North Carolina that faces challenges that can potentially affect children's school readiness is Randolph County. Located in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina, Randolph County has a population of 141,186 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 Population Estimates). Randolph County has nine municipalities including: Archdale, Asheboro, Franklinville, Liberty, Ramseur, Randleman, Seagrove, Staley, and Trinity. Today, several of the county's towns are home to industries that produce furniture, plastics, tools, containers, hosiery, batteries, canoes, and a variety of other products. Randolph County has retained a strong foothold in agriculture with more than 1,300 farms generating $200 million+ in annual agricultural income. It is the number one county in North Carolina for both dairy and beef cattle operations (North Carolina Department of Transportation, 2003).

The State Center for Health Statistics (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), 2006) produces trend data for key health indicators at both the county and state levels. Statewide and county trend key health indicator data for 2000-2004 reveal that Randolph County exceeds the state average on a number of indicators pertaining to the health of families with young children ages 0-5 (NCDHHS,

2006). The percentage of resident live births where mothers smoked during pregnancy is 17% exceeding the state average of 13.2% (NCDHHS, 2006). Resident teen pregnancies (ages 15-19) per 1,000 females population is 73.6 as compared to the state average of 66.3 (NCDHHS, 2006). According to the Randolph Health Improvement Partnership (RHIP) 2005 Community Assessment report, for the period of 1999-2003 the overall infant mortality rate in Randolph County (9.1) was 7% higher than the state rate of 8.5, and 30% higher than the national rate of 7.0. The infant mortality rate among non-white women in the county was 26% higher than the state rate for minorities and twice the rate among white Randolph County residents (RHIP, 2005). The number of primary care physicians available per 10,000 population in Randolph County is 4.8, which is lower compared to 9.0 statewide (NCDHHS, 2006). The number of dentists per 10,000 population available in Randolph County is 2.5, which is much lower than the state average of 4.4 (NCDHHS, 2006).

There are 65,724 employed individuals within the county with an unemployment rate of 11.4% compared to the North Carolina state average of 10.7% (Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, 2010). In 2002, the median per capita income in Randolph County was $23,629, 15% lower than the state median (Randolph County Community Health Assessment Report, 2005). The North Carolina Department of Commerce Report (2006) for Randolph County indicates that seventy percent of residents in Randolph County are high school graduates, which is less than the state average of 78.1%. The Commerce Report (2006) also indicates a total of 11.1% of the Randolph County population has a bachelor's degree or higher which is half the statewide rate of

22.5%. The 2003 Frank Porter Graham Early Childhood Needs and Resources Report reveals 58.8% of children age 0-5 in Randolph County have all available parents in the labor force exceeding the state rate of 58.2%.

The Community (Municipality of Liberty)

Prior to the implementation of Smart Start programming in the Liberty area, there were 40+% of children entering school with delays compared to the county average of 24% and the state average of 24% (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The percent of children with both parents in the workforce in the Liberty area was 73% as compared to 69% for the county and 63% for the state (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The poverty rate of preschoolers in Liberty area was 19.3% as compared to 11.7% for the county and 19.1% for the state (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The percent of household in poverty was also higher in Liberty area with 23.4% as compared to 19.2% for the county and 22.4% for the state (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). Another challenged faced by the Liberty area included a significant decrease in the number of licensed child care slots from approximately 160 in 1997-1998 to 125 in 2001-2002. Additionally, at-risk children were unable to access care locally, and faced a forty minute bus ride to attend Head Start in Asheboro.

Within Randolph County, the municipality of Liberty faces challenges due to its distance (40 minutes) from the county seat of Asheboro which limits accessibility of

resources located there. The 2008 census population estimate for Liberty is 2,731. Data from the 1990 and 2000 census indicate that for the Liberty area educational attainment for those aged 25+ increased in this ten-year time span. Those with less than a high school diploma decreased from 35.5% in 1990 to 30.6% in 2000. Those having a high school diploma or equivalent increased from 33% to 35% (although still considerable less than the county average of 70% and the state average of 78%) and those with some college or an associate's degree increased from 20.6% to 22.6% between 1990 and 2000. Those having a college degree or higher increased from 10.9% to 11.8% (still considerable less than the state rate of 22.5%) and the population of those 25 or older increased from 1,558 to 1,980 in the ten-year census time span.

Comparing 1990 and 2000 census data the ethnic make-up of the community changed with the percentage of whites dropping from 75.2% to 62.8% and the percentage of African Americans dropping from 23.6% to 21.5% during this ten year span. There has been an increase in the number of Hispanics from 0.6% in 1990 to 13.7% in 2000. There was an increase in American Indian from 0.4% to 0.8%, but a decrease for Asian's from 0.2% to 0.1%.

According to the Randolph County Schools, in 2009-2010 62.22% of students at Liberty Elementary received free or reduced lunch. Of the 17 elementary schools in the Randolph County School system, Liberty ranked 4th highest in the percent of students in the county schools who receive free/reduced lunch. For the 2008-2009 school year, Liberty Elementary made Adequate Yearly Progress. The school met 17 (or 100%) out of 17 target goals. The ethnic breakdown of kindergarten students at Liberty Elementary

for 2009-210 is as follows: Caucasian 61%, Hispanic 19%, African American 11%, Multi-Racial 8%, and American Indian 1%. During 2009-2010, 12% of the kindergarten class was classified as English Language Learners. The Pre-kindergarten class for 2009-2010 at Liberty Elementary was 39% Hispanic. For the 2009-2010 school year, there are four kindergarten classrooms serving 81 children and a total school enrollment of 604 in Pre-kindergarten through 5th grade in Liberty Elementary School.

Children's school readiness is correlated with families' poverty status, parents' educational levels or ethnic backgrounds, and children's health and living environments. As a rural municipality, the Liberty area faces challenges including its distance from the county seat, higher than county average poverty rates, lower educational attainment rates, and a shift in the ethnic make-up of the community. The Liberty community has worked collaboratively and strategically to enhance school readiness opportunities and reduce the number of children who enter school with potentially delays.

The Roots of Celebrate Liberty's Children Local Advisory Committee

In 2000, the Liberty community held its first ever Celebrate Liberty's Children festival. A former Liberty mayor visited an area that had a children's parade and this sparked the idea to have one in Liberty. In two short months, Liberty community members made a similar parade a reality. Celebrate Liberty's Children community team member Charlie Brown reflects,

> At that very first parade children arrived in everything from decorated bikes to homemade box cars. I even remember a group of dogs outfitted

> in red, white, and blue. The colorful parade rounded the block and finished with free ice cream for all from the Liberty Oil Company. Aside from the parade, the festival had everything from karate demonstrations to cheerleading, live music, a bubble blowing contest, a watermelon roll, a watermelon eating contest, and free balloons and food (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

This festival was actually the spark that started the Celebrate Liberty's Children community team. By putting a festival on for the children, the town of Liberty and its volunteers showed that when something is needed for children, no one holds back. In 2001, the Executive Director of the Randolph County Partnership for Children contacted the Director of the Liberty Chamber of Commerce to assess if the town of Liberty had an interest in applying for a grant from the Partnership to increase school readiness. Charlie Brown recalled, "I was involved with the Chamber of Commerce that year so we sort of took the lead pulling everyone together**"** (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

A group of community members including town leaders, town business owners, principals, teachers, child care workers, parents, and members of the faith community came together at Liberty school for a meeting. The Partnership's Executive Director addressed the group with data compiled by the Partnership. Charlie Brown stated,

> It was overwhelming to see the gap that needed to be filled to help children enter school healthy and ready to learn. Other community members agreed that this was a need the community desired to address. Thus an advisory board was formed. The group needed a name and the Executive Director of the Randolph County Partnership for Children mentioned that she loved the festival name of Celebrate Liberty's Children Festival. The new advisory board adopted the name Celebrate Liberty's Children and took action (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

The School Readiness Grant

In 2001, the Randolph County Partnership for Children awarded a school readiness planning grant to the municipality of Liberty through the Partnership's School Readiness Community-Based Initiative. The School Readiness Community-Based Initiative utilizes community-specific collaboration and strategic planning in areas where large numbers of children are entering kindergarten with the potential for developmental delay. Developmental delay is identified using the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (Dial-3) screening tool within the Asheboro City School System or the Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP-D) screening tool within the Randolph County School System. The goal of the School Readiness Community-Based Initiative in Randolph County is to educate the community on the critical needs of young children and to serve as a catalyst for bringing together diverse service sectors and interests including health, social services, mental health, K-12 education, county and city government, child care, business, faith-based organizations, and parents to help develop solutions.

According to Randolph County School Lap-D screening results, more than 40% of children in the Liberty Elementary School area entered school with potential delays in 2000. In response to this problem, the Liberty Chamber of Commerce formed a local Smart Start planning committee of concerned citizens called Celebrate Liberty's Children. Joe Agate, a longtime Liberty resident and member of the business

community, has been very involved in coordinating the community initiatives of the Chamber. Joe explains the uniqueness of the Liberty Chamber, "We have four chambers in Randolph County which is exceptionally unusual. Randolph is a big county but volunteers started the chamber several years ago in Liberty. There is also a chamber in Randleman, one in Asheboro, and one in Archdale- Trinity. You won't find that anywhere else in the state, where they have four chambers within one county." When asked what he felt were the benefits of Liberty having its own Chamber of Commerce, Joe replied, "We are kind of isolated in a sense from the rest of Randolph County; we are just as near Greensboro as we are Asheboro. The Chamber provides a sense of connection for the community" (J. Agate, personal communication, September 14, 2009). The Chamber's grassroots history of being started by volunteers and its connection to the community proved to be an asset in the initial leadership of Celebrate Liberty's Children.

Community Based Strategic Planning Process

The local Smart Start planning committee undertook a six month intensive planning process during which they developed a strategic plan for a project designed to provide a continuum of programs and services to support families and children from birth until the child enters school. The first step in the strategic planning process was information sharing and developing a clear understanding of why the committee had come together as a group. The Liberty area comprises the town of Liberty as well as the town of Staley as children from both areas attend Liberty Elementary School. In

response to the high percentage of Liberty area children entering school with delays (40%), Celebrate Liberty's Children was formed to address the local municipality issues of the 0-5 population.

The second step in the strategic planning process involved continuing to build the group by identify other key stakeholders and individuals who should be represented in the group to truly reflect community diversity. Without all the key stakeholders and groups represented, the community team would miss key information vital to identifying and addressing the needs of the population in question. The Chamber of Commerce provided leadership through its president serving as chair of the planning process. Committee members included the principal of the elementary school, a third grade teacher, private citizens, parents, a minister, a school bus driver, representatives from local businesses, local library personnel, and the Liberty Association of Churches.

The third step in the strategic planning process involved creating a vision of what the group would like to see happen. Celebrate Liberty's Children's vision was to devise a continuum of services delivered locally in an effort to increase school readiness opportunities for families with young children. Step four in the strategic planning process involved gathering information on what was actually happening within the local municipality. The group examined such questions as: Who are the children and families we are talking about?; What are some of the trends that are causing what is currently happening?; What are some of the resources already available?

To gain information about families and children in the Liberty area, the group reviewed several types of data. Data examined included the total population of children

0-5, household arrangements of children, the number of preschoolers with working parents, number of families with young children in poverty, quality of existing child care, social and economic characteristics, educational attainment of the population, school readiness profiles for area schools, and area health statistics. The Local Advisory Committee examined what the existing resources for young children were in the area. In addition, the committee examined how distance and transportation issues affect parent's ability to access services from the Health Department, Department of Social Services, and a variety of other community and health organizations.

In reviewing data for Liberty and the broader Liberty area, the committee found that the Liberty area had a high number of indicators that negatively affected school readiness and children's ability to enter school healthy and ready to succeed. The Liberty area had 40% of children entering school with potential delays compared to the county average of 24% and the state average of 24% (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The percent of children with both parents in the workforce in the Liberty area was 73% as compared to 69% for the county and 63% for the state (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The poverty rate of preschoolers in Liberty area was 19.3% as compared to 11.7% for the county and 19.1% for the state (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The percent of household in poverty was also higher in Liberty area with 23.4% as compared to 19.2% for the county and 22.4% for the state (Randolph County Partnership for Children Liberty Data Report, 2000). The data revealed that Liberty area children and

families experienced higher rates of poverty, number of children with potential delays, and number of children with working parents than their counterparts in Randolph County.

The committee discovered that the Liberty area had experienced a significant decrease in the number of licensed child care slots from approximately 160 in 1997-1998 to 125 in 2001-2002. Quality of child care was a concern as one of the area's two licensed child care centers was on probation and later closed which resulted in fewer child care slots in the Liberty area. The other child care center had a one-star rated license which only met the minimum requirements by the state. Additionally, at-risk children were unable to access care locally, and faced a forty minute bus ride to attend Head Start in Asheboro. Based on this review of data, the committee decided to collect additional information from parents. Celebrate Liberty's Children disseminated a survey to all parents of children in grades K-4 at Liberty Elementary School. More than 48% of surveys were returned (296 surveys). Key findings of the survey were: preschool siblings of at-risk students were least likely to be in a preschool program, parents of at-risk students had lower educational levels, parents of at-risk students spend less time assisting their children with homework, and all parents reported the cost of child care was a major barrier (Celebrate Liberty's Children Survey Results Report, 2000).

In addition to the survey, the community team also sought in person feedback and input from preschool parents. A conversation with a mom that worked at a local mill, helped steer the community team towards securing county services locally in Liberty. Charlie Brown recalls,

> A mother who worked at the mill reported that the county offers many services to help assist children and families. Although it is great to have these services, it is hard to access them. It takes thirty minutes to get to Asheboro to access the service, at least thirty minutes to receive the service, and another thirty minutes to get back to Liberty. On a good day that is one and a half hours, and for many that means leaving their jobs without pay to get these services. Seeing what people actually had to work with and their limitations was a big eye opener for us. This sort of let us step over into their world and let us look at accessibility with a different set of eyes (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

This type of input helped shape the focus of brining services to the Liberty area versus having parent commute to the county seat of Asheboro to access services.

Step five of the strategic planning process involved defining the priority areas. In light of the current reality in the Liberty area, the committee decided an early childhood center with appropriate programs and services for children and their families would reduce the number of children entering Liberty Elementary School with potential delays. The group examined what changes would make a significant difference and what changes the group will hold itself accountable for achieving. One of the priority areas identified by the Celebrate Liberty's Children Local Advisory Committee was to provide a continuum of programs and services locally in the Liberty area to support families and children from birth until the child enters school.

To address the many factors effecting school readiness, the team identified the need for a functional and cost effective facility that offers ease of access to programs and services. The plan included researching models and conducting focus groups/interviews with parents to determine an appropriate home visitation model (e.g. Parents as Teachers, David Olds Nurse Home -Visitation Model, Early Head Start). Based on a review of

relevant research and site visits to several program models (e.g. Even Start-Asheboro City Schools and Head Start-Regional Consolidated Services), the committee developed a two-phased, multi-pronged approach with appropriate programs to meet the needs of children and families in their community.

Phase one of the plan included programming for children, parents, and the community. Programming for children included establishing a high quality early childhood pre-kindergarten program for children identified at risk, delayed, or limited English proficient. For preschool parents a Liberty-Staley chapter of the Moms Offering Moms Support (MOMS) club was established. MOMS is an international support group for stay at home mothers. The group provides an opportunity for mothers to meet, share ideas, and receive educational information to help them have a more positive impact in their homes and in their communities. Community projects are an important part of the MOMS group.

Charlotte Braun, a Celebrate Liberty Children's advisory committee member, recalls her interest in starting a Liberty-Staley chapter, "The MOMS club was something that I had gone to in Asheboro and it was a very well coordinated support group for mothers. It was a long drive to Asheboro to participate, so I initiated starting a chapter in Liberty" (C. Braun, personal communication, August 31, 2009). The MOMS club in Liberty met monthly at a local church and child care for the meetings was provided by nursing and/or early childhood development students from Randolph Community College. The MOMS meetings provided an opportunity for mothers to get information on child development and to learn ways to better prepare their children for school. In

addition, the meetings allowed Charlotte to glean information from the mothers regarding their preschool children's needs that was beneficial for Celebrate Liberty's Children.

For the community, Celebrate Liberty's Children worked to engage the community, businesses, and parents on the advisory board to provide guidance and on-going community support for this initiative. Phase two of the plan expanded the focus to 0-3 year old children by implementing an appropriate home visitation model for families. Families would also be linked up with the MOMS club for additional family support. The community team's plan also involved collaborative work with county agencies such as the health department, mental health, Cooperative Extension, public library, and Randolph Community College to deliver an array of family support, family literacy, adult education, and parent education activities for families with children 0-5. The community team also wanted to expand the Chamber of Commerce's annual Celebrate Liberty's Children parade into Celebrate Liberty's Children's Day, a family orientated festival having the goal of familiarizing families with community resources, provide onsite health screenings, promote family literacy, and provide an opportunity for recruitment of Pre-Kindergarten students. Additionally, there was a Celebrate Liberty's Children facilities subcommittee which visited several potential sites to house the programs and services.

In step six the group developed a feedback system to determine how they would know if they are achieving the results they committed to. Celebrate Liberty's Children was aware that more than 40% of children in the Liberty area were entering school with learning delays as compared to 24% for the county average. The Local Advisory Committee identified one of the feedback measures as Pre-kindergarten student's pre and

post scores on the Dial R-3. Progress of participants in the program would be assessed through post-testing of children in the Pre-K program. Other measures would be tracking the attainment of higher levels of parental education through the on-site classes offered by the local community college. In addition, increased literacy levels would be measured for families participating in the Parents as Teachers home visitation program. A long-term assessment of each child and their parents would be conducted to determine the number of children who are at grade level by the end of third grade. These feedback measures were put in place to identify which activities were impacting school readiness in the Liberty area.

In step seven the group identified other people and resources that could support their plan. Celebrate Liberty's Children had an ambitious plan for providing a continuum of services locally that involved renovating a building to house the services. After Celebrate Liberty's Children facilities subcommittee's assessment of what was available in the community, the community team approached the local school board about the possibility of remodeling the old Liberty School to become the Liberty Early Childhood Center, a comprehensive early childhood program. The old Liberty School was at that time being used for storage by the school system. Constructed in 1942, the old Liberty School is located on the original site of Liberty Academy and Liberty Normal College. The school board gave the community team their approval to renovate the school into an early childhood facility. Charlie Brown recalls,

> I remember we went and talked to the superintendent and he said we'll put you on the docket to come talk to the school board. One of the things that has been key to the whole process of Celebrate Liberty's Children is

> everyone has had a passion for it and I guess that's been contagious. Four of us went and presented to the school board. I told them before I can show you the building, I got to show you the vision and we just threw it all out there. The school board voted unanimously (7-0 vote) and said they'd never seen that much passion, enthusiasm and purposeful involvement (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

In a Greensboro News and Record article Worth Hatley, Randolph County Schools Superintendent, stated about the building renovation, "This will be the first time the county school has entered into a construction partnership with a group. I think this is very exciting." (Jeffries, 2001).

Engaging an architect was the critical first step in the renovation process. The Board of Directors for the Randolph County Partnership for Children approved a grant to Randolph County Schools to fund the cost of hiring an architect. During the renovation process all bids, contracts and project supervision was managed by Randolph County Schools. Initial estimates to renovate the old school building topped out at half a million dollars.

Table 9

Initial Estimate Cost Break Down:

Cost Estimate	
Mobilization	$5,000
Bond, Insurance, and Permits	$6,000
General Conditions	$53,000
Site Concrete/Walks/Ramps	$8,000
Footings/Foundations	$2,000
Reinforcing	$1,000
Masonry	$5,000

Rough Carpentry	$4,000
Cabinetry	$15,000
Roofing	$52,000
Caulking	$1,000
Glass and Glazing	$2,800
Hollow Metal Door/Finish Hardware	$15,000
Drywall and Acoustical	$27,200
VCT Base in New Toilets/Kitchen	$3,500
Carpet in New Offices	$2,000
Painting of Walls, Doors, Etc.	$25,000
Toilet Accessories	$2,500
Plumbing	$30,000
Mechanical	$40,000
Electrical	$50,000
Contingency	$50,000
Total	$400,000

A $400,000 capital campaign to raise funds for the renovation was launched by Celebrate Liberty's Children with the theme of "Bridging Our Past to Our Future". Several local advisory committee members attended Duke nonprofit training to learn how to do a capital campaign. The PTO of Liberty Elementary School set a goal of raising $15,000 to contribute to the campaign. The principal and vocational trades instructor at Eastern Randolph High School toured the building and agreed to have their students participate in carpentry, framing, and masonry on the project.

In 2001 the Liberty team received its first grant from First Union (now Wachovia) in the amount of $50,000 to kick-off the capital campaign. The Local Advisory Committee identified corporations offering grants as well as local businesses and individuals for fundraisers. Regional companies were evaluated, prioritized and placed in

tiers. The Celebrate Liberty's Children Campaign Cabinet began relationship-building with each tier of regional employers. This relationship building from the first tier companies alone resulted in twenty-three new volunteers for Celebrate Liberty's Children Day. Employees wrote letters of support for funding requests to each organization. In addition, letters of support from the community were obtained from the Town of Liberty, South Corr Packaging, Liberty Elementary School Principal and Assistant Principal, Liberty Chief of Police, First United Methodist Church, a local dentist, and the Liberty Chamber of Commerce in support of the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

In step eight the group determined strategies that would create the change they were seeking. In Liberty the strategies were to offer Pre-K education in two classrooms serving thirty-six children, a Parents as Teachers home visitation program, on-site classes offered by the local community college, parent education and early learning groups for parents with young children, a parent resource room, and a satellite Women Infants and Children (WIC) clinic office. The community team felt that this continuum of services offered locally would improve the health and well-being of parents with young children in the Liberty area.

Step nine involved creating an action plan that identified who would do what and when. It took the Liberty community team five years to obtain funding and completely renovate the building. The community team had an action plan that laid out month by month the capital campaign activities, program activities and parties responsible for each activity. In step ten the plan is implemented. The community team held its first Celebrate Liberty's Children's Day festival in 2001. While the capital campaign was launched in

2001, it took several years after the six month strategic planning process for the funds to be raised for the renovations. The time required to create CLC campaign documents and databases along with the research and relationship building was more than anticipated. In addition, a stagnant economy and downturns in regional and local manufacturing made fundraising more of a challenge than anticipated. Local small business support was also less than the team had anticipated. Nevertheless, Celebrate Liberty's Children slowly began implementing additional programming to enhance children's school readiness opportunities.

In 2002, the first Pre-K classroom opened at Liberty Elementary, parent education classes were offered, and the community team received additional funding from the Cannon Foundation, Mary Stedman Covington, and an anonymous family foundation grant to assist in the renovation of the old Liberty School. The Pre-K classroom, which was housed in the main Liberty Elementary school building, was to be relocated to the Liberty Early Childhood Center after the renovation was completed. In 2002, the Randolph County Partnership for Children became the first organization in Randolph County to be awarded a grant from The Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro. The grant in the amount of $5,000 was designated for family support programs to be offered by the Liberty Early Childhood Center. Walker Sanders, Foundation President of The Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro, stated, "The Celebrate Liberty's Children project is a wonderful example of a community led initiative that uses regional bridge building to solve community needs. Our $5,000 grant comes from a fund

specifically designed to encourage regional problem solving and collaborative effort" ("Celebrate Liberty's Children to Receive Grant," 2002, p. 2A).

The community team also began a fundraiser selling an artist's print of the old Liberty School to obtain funds for the renovation. One of Celebrate Liberty's Children's most dedicated advisory committee members was Eudora Marcie. Eudora met local artist Frieda Maynard while she was painting the Heritage Wall at Liberty Public Library. The Heritage Wall is a tile mural that was sculpted and painted by Liberty residents and features landmarks from the town's history. Impressed with Frieda's work, Eudora suggested the idea of producing a drawing of the old Liberty Elementary School that could be developed as a fundraiser for the renovation. Although she had never done that kind of rendering before, Maynard decided to give it a try.

The result was a pen and ink rendering of the Liberty Elementary School building as it appeared upon completion in 1942. Celebrate Liberty's Children volunteers created a database and mailed a letter describing the project to alumni of the old school. Small 8 ½ X 11 prints were sold for $20 and large 12 X 18 prints were sold for $50. Sales of the print raised over $14,000 towards the renovations. Hundreds responded to the appeal for the Liberty Early Childhood Center, some living as far away as California, Colorado, and Florida. The most senior alumnus to purchase the print was Faron Floyd. At the time he bought the print, Faron was 93 years old. Faron was a graduate of the class of 1931, which was housed in an earlier school building that burned in 1941.

In 2003, the community team launched additional capital campaign activities including local small business solicitations, corporate and major donor solicitations, and

approaching current teachers and alumni of the school for donations. Other events to raise funds were a raffle that raised $2,500 with another $2,500 in matching funds from Modern Woodmen of the World, a Christmas plant sale, and a dinner/auction event. In 2004 renovation officially began on the old Liberty School. In 2005, the Parents as Teachers family literacy program was implemented providing home visits for parents with children ages birth to five. A family resource room was completed offering books, materials/manipulatives, and information for families with young children. In addition, wiring was installed for computer classes that would be offered from the local community college.

In August of 2005, the Liberty Early Childhood Center become home to the Liberty Women Infant Children (WIC) Clinic. The Liberty WIC clinic is a satellite clinic of the Randolph County Health Department and offers services two days a month in a classroom renovated for this purpose. The WIC clinic serves income eligible women and their children from ages 0-5. It provides a supplemental food program with information about a healthy diet for both mothers and children. Food vouchers are provided to families to purchase WIC approved foods. In 2006, the Liberty Early Childhood Center renovation was officially completed and the two pre-kindergarten classrooms were relocated to the early childhood center. The center is now a central hub for early childhood resources and services in the community to meet the needs of families with young children. The center now offers Pre-K education for thirty-six children, a Parents as Teachers program that serves 30-35 families with children 0-5, on-site GED/ESL and computer classes, a parent resource room, and a satellite WIC clinic office. There is an

additional empty classroom that could in the future house an additional Pre-Kindergarten classroom or a classroom specifically for three-year-old children, allowing the most at-risk children two years of preschool before entering kindergarten.

The total renovation cost was only a fraction of the initial estimate and totaled $150,000. The community team was able to get the building licensed under occupied licensing codes rather than vacant building codes which greatly reduced the amount of money needed for renovations. A challenge was planning and implementing the capital campaign. The community team found the capital campaign moved slower than expected. After select members of the committee attended Duke nonprofit training for capital campaign training, the cabinet developed a plan with the following goals: 1) Build relationships with major employers in the region as a source of funding for the capital campaign, and increase and diversify the volunteer base in order to expand potential sources of future program funding. 2) Implement grassroots fundraising campaign over a three year period. 3) Target foundations and submit grant proposals for capital campaign funding. The total raised from all sources for the capital campaign to renovate the old Liberty School into the Liberty early Childhood Center was $153,382.35. The following table presents a break down of the funding sources for the renovation of the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

Table 10

Sources of Funding for the Capital Campaign

Foundation Grants	**Business/ Individual/ Organization Donations**	**Fundraisers**	**Artist Print of Old Liberty School**	**Randolph County Partnership for Children More at Four funds**
First Union Bank (now Wachovia) - $50,000 Cannon Foundation - $25,000 Marion Stedman Covington Foundation - $15,000 Anonymous - $20,000		Raffles Auctions Modern Wooden of America Matching Grant	Prints - $14,390.37	More at Four funds - $4,375.24 *Funds used for building renovations
Total - $110,000	**Total - $12,371.59**	**Total - $12,245.15**	**Total - $14,390.37**	**Total - $4,375.24**

Another challenge Celebrate Liberty's Children experienced was the loss of having a local newspaper. The local weekly newspaper was consolidated into the newspaper in the next county. The Liberty area was then covered by two regional newspapers and there was not a concentrated local readership. While Celebrate Liberty's Children continues to get coverage in the regional papers, they also developed a quarterly newsletter to distribute locally.

Step eleven involves looking at the results of the plan and identifying what is and is not working and changes that need to be made. The plan incorporated ongoing input and participation from the community, and involved collaboration between numerous agencies across the county. This municipality now has on-site GED/ESL and

computer classes, early learning groups, parent support groups, and the Liberty Early Childhood Center Program Coordinator serves as the point person in the community who can assist parents in applying for DSS child care scholarships, Health Check/Health Choice the children's health insurance program, or referring them to a variety of other agencies and services the parent might otherwise not know about.

The Celebrate Liberty's Children Community Team has now moved towards identifying additional needs of families with young children and is working to secure more resources and services to be offered locally in the Liberty Early Childhood Center. In fiscal year 07-08, the Liberty WIC clinic served about 10% of all WIC clients in the County (430 clients per month served at the Liberty WIC clinic). Due to the large volume of individuals seen at the WIC clinic in Liberty, the health department is considering adding an additional day of service at this site making services offered three days a month at the on-site Liberty WIC clinic. The Celebrate Liberty's Children Community Team continues to meet monthly and serves as the advisory committee approving all services and programs offered at that site.

Recent Community Initiatives of Celebrate Liberty's Children

Many of the events Celebrate Liberty's Children sponsors in the community to increase awareness of early childhood issues are low cost or no cost activities. A yearly event for the community team is participating in the town's Christmas tree lightening and parades in both the Liberty and Staley communities. At the Christmas tree lightening,

children can get their picture taken with Santa for free and families are treated to free hotdogs, popcorn, and hot chocolate. Pre-K students from the Liberty Early Childhood Center and their parents decorate the parade float during a Pre-K parent meeting. At the parade the Pre-K children ride the float and sing holiday songs. Celebrate Liberty's Children community team members walk alongside the float and pass out 1,000 children's books and pencils to young children to promote literacy. The books are donated by the Liberty Rotary Club and the Ambassador Book Club annually for this event. In 2008, Celebrate Liberty's Children and the Downtown Revitalization Committee sponsored a craft day and movie night to be held after the Liberty parade. Children were able to decorate a free Christmas ornament, have refreshments, and watch The Charlie Brown Christmas movie.

An event held annually in April is the Week of the Young Child. Week of the Young Child is a time to recognize the needs of young children and to thank the adults involved in their education and care. In conjunction with the Week of the Young Child, the Liberty Early Childhood Center celebrates Art Explosion. The idea behind Art Explosion is to encourage young children's creativity through a public display of original art. Celebrate Liberty's Children community team members hang up the art work at local businesses.

Celebrate Liberty's Children spearheaded an effort to provide placemats featuring activities for young children under 5 eating at Liberty and Staley area restaurants. The placemats were originally designed to celebrate April's Week of the Young Child, but the idea took off, and the placemats were produced and shared across the community for one

year. Charlie Brown, chair of Celebrate Liberty's Children, said various community members developed the content and designed the placemat each month, such as Liberty's Faith Community Nurse, who chose a nutrition theme. The black and white placemats were produced by the Liberty Leader newspaper and then delivered to area restaurants by volunteers with Celebrate Liberty's Children. Several of the participating restaurants started providing the replacement crayons which were initially provided by the local advisory committee. Brown said. "We think it is a great way to provide some fun, early education activities for our local children and get the word out about Celebrate Liberty's Children and Smart Start" (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009). The Liberty Public Library also made the placemats available during story times and for other visitors in the library.

The Celebrate Liberty's Children Festival occurred yearly from 2001 to 2007 and served to promote awareness of the needs of young children and the services available to them. The day combined fun for children as well as information about young children and free health screenings for them. Children enjoyed free carnival type games, face painting, and screenings (spinal, dental, vision, and hearing) free of charge. The Celebrate Liberty's Children Festival was the community team's biggest event of the year for several years and was the spark that first brought together a group of committed individuals to address the needs of children. Dr. Joe Shlabotnik who has had a medical office in Liberty since 1998, participated in the Celebrate Children's Festival yearly. Dr. Shlabotnik describes the importance of the Celebrate Liberty's Children's Festival as, "I think that day was critical, we would have about 300-400 families with children show up.

The venue helped educate parents and make them aware of the services" (J. Shlabotnik, personal communication, October 5, 2009). The Celebrate Liberty's Children Festival has not been held since 2007. In recent years, the local advisory committee has partnered with the community faith nurse for a community health fair which offered free health screenings for children.

Celebrate Liberty's Children also participates in Liberty's Fun Fourth of July event. The Fun Fourth event is held in collaboration with the Town of Liberty and other community partners. Celebrate Liberty's Children came up with the idea to provide children with a play area to express their creativity. The Play Place attracts children to the area by giving out free balloons donated by Randolph Telephone Company. The Play Place includes a sidewalk chalk area and an area for coloring and connecting the dots with crayons and markers. Children are also invited to express their creativity and celebrate Independence Day by making a hat, banner, or flag with various red, white, and blue craft materials. There is also a patriotic painting area where children can paint with their fingers, paintbrushes, stamps, or sponges on a child sized easel or on a long roll of paper.

A community garden at the Liberty Early Childhood Center began in 2007 and was created and sponsored by the Rose Garden Club. The garden sprouted from an idea to create a spot of beauty for the children and the community to enjoy. Community members volunteered their time to level the ground, stack stones, plant and mulch the garden, and even lend machinery to move dirt. Monetary gifts, supplies, equipment, and plants were all provided by local community members and businesses. To encourage an

interest in beautification and gardening, the Rose Club involved a local Girl Scout troop and the center's Pre-K students in planning bulbs and pansies. Families from the Parents as Teachers program also planted flowers in the community garden learning the importance of gardening and being active outside. The community garden at the Liberty Early Childhood Center won the Rose Garden Club two awards from the North Carolina Garden Council. The first award, the Public School Beautification awards, is given to gardens involving schools and communities, while the second award was a landscape design award.

In fall 2008, Celebrate Liberty Children along with Millstone Creek Orchard, and the Liberty Leader Newspaper began sponsoring a movie night with a showing of It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown. Continuing for the 2009 year, Millstone Creek Orchard opened its doors early so families could spend time outside enjoying the fall weather and pick out pumpkins at a reduced rate. Celebrate Liberty's Children set up an art area where children could bring their pumpkins and decorate them. Other family activities that were offered were old fashion tires swings and hay bales for children to climb and play on. In addition to the showing of the Charlie Brown movie, families also viewed a slide show that gave tips of the importance of investing in family time.

In 2009, Celebrate Liberty's Children collaborated with the Liberty Public Library to sponsor an art contest in conjunction with the Randolph Reads Program. The book, *A Home on the Field,* was chosen by Randolph Reads and has a sports related theme. Children were asked to turn in a drawing with a sports related theme. The drawings were posted around the Liberty library to promote the book. Each child that

turned in a drawing received a raffle ticket for a change to win a free gift basket of outdoor activity games donated by the Liberty Leader Newspaper.

Celebrate Liberty's Children Comes Full Circle

Celebrate Liberty's Children is unique in that assessment of local needs and resources drives how the advisory committee functions and how the local community moves towards the goal of ensuring that all students enter school healthy and prepared to succeed. With high levels of collaboration from a number of public and private sector partners, the staff and advisory committee have been successful in funding and launching two Pre-K classrooms, expanding a parade into a daylong family event promoting wellness and family literacy, educating key community leaders about the needs of young children and their families, launching a capital campaign to renovate a building that is a significant landmark in the community, and utilizing significant numbers of volunteers.

Several of the Randolph County Partnership for Children¹s grassroots efforts to help children enter school healthy and ready to succeed attracted the attention of a multi-million dollar, out-of-state foundation. Two representatives of The Dekko Foundation headquartered in Kendallville, Indiana, visited Randolph County in the fall of 2004 to learn more about the school readiness initiatives and how they can be replicated in the states served by this foundation.

The Dekko Foundation is a private, family foundation, which provides about $13 million in grants annually for projects in select counties in Indiana, Iowa, Alabama,

Florida, and Minnesota. These locations are where the founder of Dekko Technologies Inc., the late Chester E. "Chet" Dekko, did business or had interests during his lifetime. The company is an industry leader for custom-designed heating components, wiring systems and specialty molded connectors. The foundation¹s mission is to "foster economic freedom through education" (http://www.dekkofoundation.org/history.php, accessed 1/28/2010).

Dekko Foundation representatives learned about the Randolph County Partnership for Children when they attended the National Smart Start Conference in Greensboro. At that conference the Randolph County Partnership for Children showcased local school readiness initiatives including Success By 6® in Randleman, Celebrate Liberty¹s Children in Liberty, and Parents as Teachers in Franklinville. It was these programs which Dekko Foundation representatives found out more about from the Executive Director of the Randolph County Partnership for Children, and community representatives involved with the initiatives from the beginning. Dekko Foundation representatives learned about Celebrate Liberty's Children from Charlie Brown of the Liberty Chamber of Commerce about the Celebrate Liberty¹s Children local advisory council. The discussions centered on the value of the involvement of the community in determining what is best for their children. The Dekko Foundation may have incorporated some of what it learned in Randolph County into its future programming. In 2006, the Dekko Foundation started Before5, a program designed to support parents in their role as their children's first teachers. Before5 is available across the Dekko Foundation's grant making areas. As Before5 continues to develop, the Dekko

Foundation hopes to partner with community organizations such as libraries, churches and county extension offices to educate parents about the important role they play in their child's development.

Two of Celebrate Liberty's Children's former committee chairs have been honored with awards for their work to improve school readiness opportunities in the Liberty area. Roy Ace, a member of law enforcement, served as Chair of Celebrate Liberty's Children and was nominated by the Randolph County Partnership for Children for the Piedmont Triad's "40 Leaders Under Forty" in 2003. Ace received this award for investing his time, talents, and energy toward improving the future of the Liberty community. Charlie Brown another community volunteer who served as chair of Celebrate Liberty's Children was honored with Randolph County Partnership for Children's Champions for Children award in 2005 for his outstanding volunteer efforts for Liberty's young children and their families. Brown also received the Governor's Award for Volunteer Service in 2005 which honors individuals, groups, teams and/or businesses that make significant contributions to their communities through volunteer service.

Celebrate Liberty's Children continues to pursue grants to enhance the Liberty Early Childhood Center and in 2007 received a Grassroots Art Grant from the North Carolina Arts Council. The grant was used to hire painters to paint colorful murals in the center's hallways with the theme of "Bridging the Past to the Future". Franklin Schroeder, one of the mural artists, was the first African American to graduate from Liberty High School and painted the old Liberty School building along with other local

landmarks. Shermy Shultz focused on elements of Liberty's history in his mural with the main focus painting the old tree in front of the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

While the Liberty Early Childhood Center is filled with young children starting out their educational careers by day, it is often filled with adults continuing their lifelong pursuit of education by night. Offering classes in Liberty makes it easier for adults who want to continue their education while still being close to home. Providing adult education classes is something that Celebrate Liberty's Children feels is worthwhile and will not only benefit the children and adults but also the whole community. A collaboration between Randolph Community College, Randolph Telephone, and the Randolph Program for the Rural Carolinas allowed for computer skill classes to begin in 2006. General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes have also been held at the center since 2006.

The work of Celebrate Liberty's Children has truly bridged the past to the future. In 1885, the first students entered Liberty Academy and the sole teacher had 21 students for a two month term. In the intervening 124 years, the site has served as grounds for the area's first public school in 1895 and the first institution of higher education with Liberty Normal College in 1896. The first public school burned in 1941, which led to the construction of the existing old Liberty Elementary School building. Thousands of local residents have spent their first day of school here and the tradition will continue with the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

CHAPTER V

SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter presents the survey data results from parents of children enrolled in programming at the Liberty Early Childhood Center and Liberty Elementary School as well as community citizens in the Liberty area. A survey was developed in collaboration with Celebrate Liberty's Children's (CLC) local advisory committee members to assess if parents and key community leaders demonstrate awareness and/or usage of early childhood resources in the community and knowledge of the importance of early childhood education. The survey tool can be found in Appendix C. The survey (available in English and Spanish) was sent home to all parents of students currently enrolled at Liberty Elementary as well as community citizens on the mailing list for the CLC newsletter. The survey was also distributed to families who participate in programming at the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

At the time the surveys were distributed to individuals on the CLC mailing list (July 2009); there were 113 Liberty residents and 154 non-Liberty residents on the mailing list. Surveys were only mailed to individuals on the CLC mailing list who had a Liberty address. As the main intent of the survey was to identify if Celebrate Liberty's Children's implementation of community programs has been successful in increasing community awareness of early childhood education issues in Liberty, those individuals

without Liberty address were excluded. In addition current members of the CLC local advisory committee as well as individuals who I planned to interview in-person were excluded from receiving the survey. A total of 94 surveys were mailed to individuals on the CLC mailing list with Liberty address. The survey was mailed with a brief letter indicating the individual had been selected to receive the survey because they were a Liberty resident on the CLC newsletter mailing list. The Consent to Act As A Human Participant: Long Form (survey consent form) and a self address postage paid envelope were also included. The survey consent form indicated voluntary consent by participation and was not required to be returned to the student researcher.

In August I met with an administrator of Liberty Elementary School, to discuss survey distribution at the school. A letter of support for this dissertation research had previously been obtained from the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services, with the Randolph County Schools and was submitted with the IRB proposal. The administration of Liberty Elementary was extremely cooperative and provided a list indicating how many surveys would be needed in English and Spanish for each teacher's classroom within the school. A total of 568 surveys were distributed at Liberty Elementary School (459 English and 109 Spanish). The surveys were sent home to parents of all students enrolled at Liberty Elementary. A brief coversheet explaining the purpose of the survey as well as the Consent to Act As A Human Participant: Long Form (survey consent form) was attached to the survey. The survey consent form indicated voluntary consent by participation and was not required to be returned to the student researcher.

I met with the Liberty Early Childhood Center program coordinator to discuss survey distribution at Pre-K parent nights, and with parents who participate in the Parents as Teachers program. Pre-K parents were asked to complete the survey on-site during the August 2009 Pre-K parent meeting. Most participants in the Parents as Teachers program would either receive the survey through the survey distribution at Liberty Elementary School (i.e. the parent had an older child enrolled in Kindergarten through 5th grade) or at the Pre-K parent nights (i.e. the parent had an older child enrolled in the Pre-kindergarten program). For the families who participated in the Parents as Teachers program that did not have older children enrolled in the Pre-K or K-5th grade, surveys were available for the parents to complete on-site during summer 2009 Early Learning Group meetings (a component of the Parents as Teachers program).

Table 11

Total Number of Surveys Received and Sources of Received Surveys

Survey Source	**Number of Surveys Distributed**	**Number of Surveys Returned**	**% of Survey Return Rate**
Celebrate Liberty's Children Newsletter Mailing List	94	14	15%
K-5 population at Liberty Elementary School	568	311	55%
Liberty Early Childhood Center Pre-K	36	28	78%
Parents as Teacher's Early Learning	6	6	100%
Total Surveys Distributed/Returned	**704**	**359**	**51%**

Table 12

Number of Surveys Returned in English and Spanish

Survey Language	Number of Surveys Completed	% of Surveys Completed
English	279	78%
Spanish	80	22%

For the K-5 population which was the largest source of surveys, 65 of the 109 (60%) Spanish surveys distributed were returned and 247 of the 459 (54%) of the English surveys distributed were returned. The majority of surveys (85%) were completed by mothers followed by 7% of fathers. Three percent of the survey respondents were Liberty area resident without a child enrolled at the Liberty Early Childhood Center or Liberty Elementary. The remaining surveys were completed by grandparents (1%), or other relatives including aunt and sister (1%). The remaining 3% of survey respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

Individuals completing the survey were asked to indicate their child's ethnicity. The following chart indicates the ethnicity of the children represented by the survey.

Table 13

Ethnicity of Child

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Caucasian	192	53%
Hispanic	91	25%
African American	40	11%
Multi-Ethnic	19	5%
American Indian	1	>1%
No Answer	16	5%
Total	359	100%

Other demographic data collected from survey respondents included marital status, family income, parental education level, and number of children in the home.

Table 14

Marital Status of Parent/Guardian

Marital Status	Number	Percent
Married	229	64%
Single	69	19%
Separated	26	7%

Divorced	23	6%
No Answer	12	3%

Table 15

Family Income

Income	**Number**	**Percent**
Less than $30,000	178	49%
$30,000- $50,000	78	22%
More than $50,000	77	21%
No Answer	26	7%

Table 16

Education Level of Parent/Guardian

Education Level	**Number**	**Percent**
Graduate School	11	3%
Bachelor Degree	31	9%
Associate Degree	38	10%
Some College	83	23%
Trade School	3	>1%

High School	64	18%
GED	18	5%
10-13 years (some high school)	24	7%
7-9 years (middle school 6th – 8th grade)	50	14%
1-6 years (elementary school)	27	7%
No Answer	10	2%

One of the survey questions specifically asked about the number of preschool children (birth to age 5) within the home. Forty-three percent of survey respondents indicated that they did not have any preschool age children in their home. Thirty-six percent of survey respondents indicated that they had one preschool age child in their home. Fifteen percent indicated that they had two preschool age children. One percent had three preschool age children and 1 individual reported having four preschool children in their home. A total of 14 survey respondents (4%) did not answer this question.

A separate question asked about the number of children aged six to eighteen that lived in the home. Twelve percent indicated that they did not have a child between the ages of 6-18. Thirty-three percent indicated that they had one child in this age category, 36% indicated two children, 13% indicated three children, 3% indicated 4 children, and two survey respondents indicated six children. A total of 11 survey respondents (3%) did not answer the question.

The first question on the survey after the demographic questions served to assess whether or not the survey respondent was aware that Celebrate Liberty's Children is a local advisory committee composed of community volunteers that identifies and secures resources for programs and services for young children (ages birth to five) and their families - with the goal that every child enters school healthy and ready to succeed. Answer choices included: I knew this, I may have heard something about this, or I was not aware of this.

Table 17

Awareness Level Responses

Awareness Level	Number	Percent
I knew this	117	32%
I may have heard something about this	92	26%
I was not aware of this	140	39%
No answer	10	3%

Slightly less than a third of survey respondents (32%) indicated that they were aware of Celebrate Liberty's Children and their purpose as a local advisory committee. More than half of all survey responses (58%) indicated they either knew about or may have heard something about Celebrate Liberty's Children. As one of the purposes of the survey was to assess whether or not the Liberty community demonstrated awareness

and/or usage of early childhood resources, it is important to know if the community is familiar with the group that specifically focuses on this issue within the Liberty municipality. While the survey results do indicate that there is awareness in the community, there is also a large percent of the survey population (39%) who indicated that they had not heard of Celebrate Liberty's Children.

To assess survey respondent's awareness and usage of early childhood programming, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were highly aware, had heard of, had never heard of, or had used a program/service. All of the programs and services listed in the chart below are offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center and/or supported by Celebrate Liberty's Children local advisory council.

Table 18

Knowledge of Program/Services

Community Programs supported by Celebrate Liberty's Children Local Advisory Committee	A. Highly Aware of Service	B. Have Heard of It	C. Have Never Heard of It	D. Have Used this Service	No Answer
Celebrate Liberty's Children Day Festival that includes games, entertainment and screenings for children.	30%	31%	29%	6%	3%
Pre-Kindergarten Program Classes for 4-year-old children.	43%	25%	7%	22%	2%
Parents as Teachers Program Parent educator who educates parents on each stage of child development.	20%	27%	43%	6%	3%
Monthly Early Learning Groups Families of preschool age children engage in parent/child activities and socialize with other parents and children.	16%	27%	42%	12%	3%
Randolph Community College	28%	36%	28%	6%	3%

Courses GED, English as a Second Language (ESL), and basic skills computer classes offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center.					
Women Infant Children (WIC) Clinic A satellite office of the Randolph County Health Department WIC clinic.	36%	30%	11%	21%	3%
Parent Resource Room Educational materials/parent resource bulletin board.	13%	23%	55%	2%	8%
Distribution of free children's books Children's books distributed at Christmas parades and community fairs.	25%	28%	35%	11%	2%

The most recognized and accessed program based on survey responses is the Pre-Kindergarten program. A combined 90% of survey respondents indicated they either were highly aware, had heard of, or had their child(ren) participate in the Pre-K program. The second most recognized and accessed program is the Liberty Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinic. A combined 87% of survey respondents indicated that they were highly aware, had heard of, or had used the services provided by the Liberty WIC clinic. 70% of survey respondents indicated that they were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in courses offered by Randolph Community College at the Liberty Early Childhood Center. For the Celebrate Liberty's Children Day Festival a combined 65% of survey respondents indicated they either were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in the festival. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that they were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in monthly early learning groups. Sixty-four percent of survey respondents indicated that they were highly aware, had heard of, or had received a children's book at one of CLC's book distribution events.

Fifty-three percent of survey respondents indicated that they were highly aware, had heard of, or their family had participate in the Parents as Teachers program. Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents indicated that they were highly aware, had heard of, or had used the parent resource room.

Survey results clearly indicated community awareness and usage of seven out of the eight programs/services. With the exception of the parent resource room, all of the programs and services had a 50+% or greater combined awareness and usage. Three of the eights programs/services had a 70+% or greater combined awareness and usage. Almost all survey respondents had heard of both the Pre-kindergarten program and the Liberty WIC clinic. The one program with the lowest awareness and usage level was the parent resource room with 38% of survey respondents indicating usage and or awareness.

To assess knowledge of the importance of early childhood education, survey respondents were asked whether or not they agreed, disagreed, or were unsure about nine statements related to the impact of early childhood education. The statements regarding early childhood are from BornLearning.org public education materials. United Way of America partnered with the Ad Council, Civitas, and the Families and Work Institute to create *Born Learning*, an innovative public engagement campaign that helps parents, caregivers and communities create quality early learning opportunities for young children (www.BornLearning.org, accessed 1/28/10). As indicated in the chart of survey results below, survey respondents overwhelming agreed that the statements reflected positive benefits of early childhood education.

Table 19

Impact of Early Childhood Education Statements

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know	No Answer
The first five years of a child's life are the foundation for future growth and development.	96%	>1%	1%	2%
What children learn during their first five years depends on the experiences they have each and every day.	94%	2%	2%	2%
The newborn brain is especially interested in sounds.	86%	2%	7%	5%
Sounds are the building blocks of speech and language.	90%	2%	4%	4%
A caregiver should let a baby hear their voice as much as possible to facilitate language development.	95%	1%	2%	2%
Early childhood education is vital to strong schools and a strong economy.	89%	1%	7%	4%
The return on the investment in high quality child care includes (please check all you agree with): □ Higher graduation rates □ Better job skills □ Increased home ownership □ Less chance of criminal activity	 86% 80% 55% 70%	>1%	3%	 11% 16% 42% 27%
A child's capacity for learning is not set from birth and can be significantly increased or decreased based on how the child's caregiver interacts with him.	76%	6%	8%	11%
Childcare teachers with degrees in early childhood education provide the children in their care with activities that are both stimulating and appropriate to their levels of development; as a result, the children are better prepared when they enter school.	83%	3%	5%	9%

Four of the nine statements had 90+% of survey responders indicating that they agreed. Ninety-six percent of survey respondents believed that the preschool years (birth to age five) are the foundation for future growth and development. Ninety-five percent believed that babies hearing their caregiver's voice as often as possible facilitates

language development. Ninety-four percent believe what children learn during their first five years depends on the experiences they have each and every day. Ninety percent of survey respondents indicated that sounds are the building blocks of speech and language.

As the survey was designed in collaboration with members of Celebrate Liberty's Children local advisory committee, CLC was interested in knowing what additional resources parents believe are needed in the Liberty community. This was assessed both through an open ended question and a question that asked if parents would access specific services if available.

Table 20

Services and Utilization Interest

Service	Would Use	Would Not Use	No Answer
Immunization Clinic for Children	65%	28%	7%
Well Child Clinic	67%	26%	7%
Food Stamp Application/Recertification Assistance	54%	36%	10%
Dental Clinic for Children	64%	9%	7%
Volunteer Services to assist families in finding information and match eligible families to services.	65%	28%	8%

Survey respondents ranked all of the health services (dental, immunization, and well child clinic) as 60+% would use if available locally. In response to an open ended

question on the survey asking respondents what other services they have a hard time accessing and believe are needed in the Liberty area, responses could be categorized into five main areas including: child care, health, recreation/physical activity, social/community services, and specific child issues. Major themes in regards to child care included more child care options for parents as well as more affordable child care options. Health issues predominately centered on having additional providers who offer medical services, with a specific emphasis on providers who accept Medicaid. Recreation and physical activity responses emphasized a need for extracurricular activities for children and a recreation center for the community. Suggestions for social/community services included homeless shelter, driver's license office, license plates/tags office, social security administration, Work First, Department of Social Services, and job resources. In regards to specific child issues there were request for tutoring services for all children and not just income based tutoring provided by the school as well as services for children who have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and autism.

One of the elements of programming at the Liberty Early Childhood Center is parent education. Monthly parent education sessions are offered to parents of children enrolled in the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten program. One of the opened ended questions asked survey respondents what specific workshops or parenting group topics would be helpful to them in raising their children. Responses could be grouped into four main categories including health, education, discipline/behavior, and miscellaneous. Several health related responses specifically requested resources to assist with parenting

children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Information on balanced nutrition and physical activity for children workshops were also requested. In addition, issues affecting families due to the economic downturn including how to cope with unemployment issues and associated stressors on the family were noted.

Educational related responses centered on the need for summer activities for children, parents learning how to assist their child with homework, and parental understanding of what children need to know prior to entering school. A common theme was a request for sessions on discipline, behavior issues, and how to communicate with children. Other miscellaneous responses included a workshop that educates parents on exactly what services they are eligible to receive based on income (Medicaid, etc.) and a need for a recreational facility for children and families.

The final survey question asked parents if there was anything else they would like to share about Celebrate Liberty's Children. Answers included praise for the group's efforts in the community including "I think they do a great job", "The Partnership is doing a fine job in Liberty". "I think this program is a great service for the Liberty community." "I think Celebrate Liberty's Children is great for our community and is greatly appreciated by many of us". "I only want to tell them that CLC is very good". "I don't remember how long I used it, maybe 2 or 3 years, but it was good for my daughter".

Results from the surveys were shared with Celebrate Liberty's Children at their January 11, 2010 meeting. CLC members were not surprised to find that 39% of survey respondents had not heard of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The group readily admits that

self promotion has never been a focus of the group. The group often collaborates with other community agencies and groups for events, therefore the name Celebrate Liberty's Children has often gone unnoticed and unrecognized within the community. While community members may not recognize the name Celebrate Liberty's Children, they clearly recognize the programs and services offered within the Liberty Early Childhood Center that are supported by CLC. Celebrate Liberty's Children members reported that community awareness of programs and community recognition of the importance of early childhood education is more important to them than recognition of the group name Celebrate Liberty's Children. CLC members were content with 58% of survey respondents indicating awareness or some awareness of Celebrate Liberty's Children. CLC plans to use the survey data to guide them in developing a new three year strategic plan as well as developing new community awareness activities.

After seeing the survey results, CLC requested a further analysis to include only results for individuals who indicated that their family income was less than $30,000. Of the 359 surveys returned, 178 (49%) indicated the lowest income level. Of those who indicated the lowest income level there were 114 (64%) English surveys returned and 64 (36%) Spanish surveys returned.

Compared to the overall survey population, the low income survey results differed in that there was a higher percent of ethic minorities including African American (15% in low income vs. 11% in overall survey population), Hispanic (38% vs. 25%), and Multi-Ethnic (7% vs. 5%). There was a higher percent of family composition issues including a higher percent of single parents (33% vs. 19%), separated parents (11% vs. 7%), and

divorced parents (9% vs. 6%). There was a higher percent whose highest education level includes elementary (12% vs. 7%), middle school (19% vs. 14%), some high school (11% vs. 7%), and GED (7% vs. 5%). The low income survey results indicated a higher percent who report having 1 (38% vs. 36%) or 2 (33% vs. 15%) preschool age children in the home and a higher percent who report having 1 (36% vs. 33%) child aged 6-18 living in the home.

When examining awareness of Celebrate Liberty's Children, the low income results indicated less awareness of CLC and its purpose (29% vs. 32%) than the overall survey population. The low income survey results also indicated less survey respondents who indicated they were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in the CLC Day (60% vs. 65%). Less survey respondents who indicated they were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in the Pre-K program (88% vs. 90%). Less survey respondents who indicated they were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in the Randolph Community College classes offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center (66% vs. 70%). There were also less survey respondents who indicated they were highly aware, had heard of, or had received a children's book from CLC at Christmas parade/community events (60% vs. 65%).

There were several programs and services in which the low income survey respondents indicated higher levels of awareness than the overall survey population. The low income surveys indicated more survey respondents who were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in the Parents as Teachers program (56% vs. 53%). More survey respondents who indicated they were highly aware, had heard of, or had

participated in the WIC program (91% vs. 87%). More survey respondents who indicated they were highly aware, had heard of, or had participated in the Parent Resource Room (45% vs. 38%). WIC is an income eligible program in which a person who currently receives Medicaid, Work First, or Food and Nutrition Services (Food Stamps) automatically meets the income eligibility guidelines for WIC. It is not surprising that the low income results indicate higher awareness of this program as these families may participate and be eligible for services that automatically qualify them for WIC. In addition qualifying risk factors for participation in the Parents as Teacher program include low income, limited English proficient, family composition issues, and low parental educational attainment. All of these potential risk factors were higher in the low income group as compared to the overall survey population. The parent resource room is located in a renovated classroom that serves as the lobby/waiting room for the satellite WIC clinic held in Liberty twice a month. As such, the low income survey respondents may have visited this location more often than the overall survey population accounting for their heightened awareness of this service.

In terms of interest and potential service utilization, the low income survey respondents indicated higher interest in all of the service areas. There were a higher percent who reported they would use an immunization clinic for children (75% vs. 65%). Higher percent who report they would use a well child clinic (80% vs. 67%). Higher percent who report they would use food stamp application/recertification assistance (77% vs. 54%). Higher percent who report they would use a dental clinic for children (79% vs.

64%). Higher percent who report they would use a service to match eligible families to services (83% vs. 65%).

In regards to knowledge about the importance of early childhood education, there was a minimal increase among the low income survey respondents in several areas. There was a higher percent who believe the first five years of life are the foundation for future growth and development (97% vs. 96%). Higher percent who believe the newborn brain is especially interested in sounds (89% vs. 86%). Higher percent who believe high quality education leads to less change of criminal activity (71% vs. 70%). Higher percent that believe a child's capacity for learning is not set from birth and can be significantly increased or decreased based on how the child's caregiver interacts with him (77% vs. 76%). Higher percent who believe that childcare teachers with degrees in early childhood education provide the children in their care with activities that are both stimulating and appropriate to their levels of development; as a result, the children are better prepared when they enter school (86% vs. 83%).

A high survey return rate (combined 51% from all sources) was attributed to the fact that the survey was sent home at the beginning of the school year. Parents may be more aware and pay more attention to the materials that are sent home at the beginning of the school year. No rewards or incentives were offered to parents for returning completed survey's to their child's school. In answering the research question of whether or not Celebrate Liberty's Children's implementation of community programs been successful in increasing community awareness of early childhood education issues in Liberty, the high survey response rate provides clear evidence. Survey results indicate

both high levels of community awareness of the majority of program/services offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center as well as high levels of knowledge about the benefits of early childhood education.

Results from this survey have also been shared with another group in Liberty who are working to identify and address community needs. In 2009, Liberty was selected as a Small Town Main Street Community by the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The Main Street program helps small towns to recognize and preserve their historic fabric, and, using local resources, build on their unique characteristics to create vibrant central business districts that meet the needs of today's communities (http://www.nccommerce.com/en/CommunityServices/CommunityPlanningAssistance/NCMainStreetCenter/, accessed 1/28/10). The Small Town Main Street program is specifically for communities with a population under 7,500 that do not have town managers. The purpose of this program is to address the growing number of small, rural towns that need downtown development assistance. As a selected community for this program, Liberty will receive on-site technical assistance from the Small Town Main Street staff in the areas of organizational development, market analysis, business assistance, promotions, and design. Members of the Celebrate Liberty's Children local advisory council who also sit on the Liberty Main Street group shared the survey results. The Liberty Main Street group found the survey comment data useful specifically for the parent and community feedback regarding what programs and services are needed in the Liberty area.

CHAPTER VI

THEMES AND CONCEPTS

This chapter will address my findings regarding the themes and concepts that emerged from the eight in-person interviews conducted with current and former members of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The research questions this dissertation serves to address include: (1) Has Celebrate Liberty's Children's implementation of community programs been successful in increasing community awareness of early childhood education issues in Liberty? This research question was addressed in the previous chapter, Survey Results (Chapter V). (2) What can be learned about leadership, community collaboration, and resource development from the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children? A total of ten themes and concepts were most prevalent from the in-person interviews. The ten themes and concepts are discussed below and connected to elements in the conceptual framework as appropriate. The conceptual framework outlined in Chapter II is revised in this chapter to identify the relationship of leadership, community collaboration, and resource development that were unique to CLC and can inform the work of others seeking to create early childhood opportunities and services in rural areas.

Leadership/Supportive Resources

Celebrate Liberty's Children was launched with strong leadership in that the Liberty Chamber of Commerce provided initial leadership through its President serving as Chair of the planning process. The Chamber in Liberty has a grassroots history of being started by volunteer and provided an instant connection to the community. Two of the former chairs of CLC have been honored by outside organizations for their leadership and commitment. Recognition included one former chair receiving the Governor's Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service and another being chosen as one of the Piedmont Triad's "Top 40 Leaders Under Forty". From the onset, Celebrate Liberty's Children was comprised of a group of people who were involved in a variety of social and civic groups and thus had connections to the power brokers in the community. While working on community projects, members of Celebrate Liberty's Children had the opportunity to talk about early care and education to people who might be in a position (ex. elected officials and civic leaders) to help increase access to early care and education services in the community. The launch of CLC with support by the Chamber was ideal in that it provided enhanced access to community leaders who make decisions.

Supportive resources that proved to be essential for CLC's success were those provided by the Randolph County Partnership for Children through the School Readiness Community- Based Initiative Planning Grant along with access to a variety of community based social and civic groups willing to support the initiative. The Randolph County Partnership for Children facilitated the planning process aspect of the School Readiness Community-Based Initiative Grant, gathered data requested by Celebrate Liberty's

Children, arranged visits with other model programs, and assisted with the development of a survey that was distributed school wide at Liberty Elementary. Regarding the supportive resources provided by the Partnership, Peggy Jean stated,

> We knew they were in the background if we needed them. Staff from the Partnership attended a lot of the meetings and supported and really listened to what we were talking about and what we were doing. We knew that the Partnership was there when we needed information (P. Jean, personal communication, September 28, 2009).

The supportive resources provided by the Randolph County Partnership for Children allowed Celebrate Liberty's Children to clarify their future direction by adding to their knowledge base about best practice in early childhood education and the current status of the preschool population in Liberty.

Supportive resources provided by businesses, local government, the faith community, and the school have been a significant factor in the sustainability of the initiative. Molly Volley, an administrator with the Randolph County Schools, reflects on the community engagement in Liberty,

> They have a lot of community involvement in every aspect. They have more civic groups to buy into it such as Ruritan, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Lions Club. They have more civic involvement period. We were already linked to the community through a former principal who had gotten the different civic organizations to buy into a reading program. Since that was already established once we started other campaigns we could just tap back into that resource depending on what we needed (M. Volley, personal communication, August 11, 2009).

Bowman and Kagan (1997) point out that the field of early childhood does not have a commonly accepted definition of leadership, nor has it engaged in a systematic debate about the properties of, opportunities for, and barriers to leadership. Ebbeck and

Wanigangyake (2003) support this view, and also assert that there are few publicly acknowledged leaders and no set of common expectations for leaders in early childhood. Even the definitions of the core elements of early childhood practitioners' work from the National Association for the Education of Young Children fails to clearly differentiate leadership as a distinctive role and responsibility with specific skills that are different from those of management. The combination of strong initial leadership, supportive resources, and access to a variety of community based social and civic groups proved to be an effective foundation for Celebrate Liberty's Children.

Strategic Planning

All in person interviewees reflected on the strategic planning process used by the group and how the planning process was vital to laying the foundation for the center they have now. Allison and Kaye in their book *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* (1997) define strategic planning as, "A systematic process through which an organization agrees on and builds commitment among key stakeholders to priorities which are essential to its mission and responsive to the operating environment" (p.1). The Randolph County Partnership for Children has always operated under the assumption that a local Partnership's success is rooted in the soil of the community. While other Partnerships have used strategic planning for countywide initiatives, the Randolph Partnership is unique in that it uses community-based strategic planning for initiatives that will be delivered in specific municipalities. As the nine municipalities in Randolph County are quiet different, there is a firm belief that services should be planned, housed, and delivered locally. As such, the Randolph

County Partnership for Children has used community-based strategic planning to determine the results they want for families and children and decide how to allocate resources to achieve those results.

The eleven step method used by the Randolph County Partnership for Children to assist Celebrate Liberty's Children in planning is presented in Table 21. The Randolph County Partnership for Children uses a modified version of the Smart Start step-by-step strategic planning process found in the *Smart Start Planning Tool Kit*. The *Smart Start Planning Tool Kit* was published in 2000 by the North Carolina Partnership for Children (Smart Start) and serves as a compilation of resources that have been used in local partnerships for planning and delivering programs. The Smart Start Tool Kit version of strategic planning includes nine steps. The Randolph County Partnership for Children revised the Smart Start Tool Kit version of the strategic planning process to include eleven steps. The additional two steps include detailed information sharing and plan implementation.

Table 21

Steps in the Strategic Planning Process used by CLC

Step 1	Information Sharing • Developing a Clear Understanding of the Groups Purpose
Step 2	Continue to Build the Group • Identifying Key Stakeholders • Diversity of the community reflected

Step 3	Creating a Vision • What would the group like to see happen?
Step 4	Information Gathering • Data on Families with Young Children • Current Trends • Resources Available
Step 5	Defining Priority Areas • What changes will make a significant difference? • What changes will the group hold itself accountable to achieving?
Step 6	Develop a Feedback System • How will you know your achieving the changes you committed to?
Step 7	Identify People/Resources that can support the plan • How can you increase support for the plan?
Step 8	Determine Strategies (Programs/Services) • How will you create the change you seek?
Step 9	Create an action plan • Who will do what and when?
Step 10	Implement the Plan
Step 11	Look at the results of the plan • What is working and what is not? • What changes need to be made?

While the planning process looks linear and sequential on paper, in reality CLC engaged in several steps at one time. As the process progressed, the community team

could revisit steps in deeper levels of detail. As CLC conducted an in-depth assessment of needs and resources in their community, this spurred the team to want to collect more in-depth information from parents via a school wide parent survey. As a result of new information or data that emerged, the community team would rethink its activities and program priorities. The community team was also able discover additional individuals or groups who needed to be at the table.

A strategic plan is a roadmap to lead a community team from where it is now to where it desires to be in the future. Strategic planning includes the ability identify opportunities, analyze problems, establish priorities and needs, and allocate available resources. The Liberty community team's roadmap required five years of work to obtain the facility it desired. With strategic planning the group was able to identify existing resources in the community (ex. the building that was renovated) and also to analyze problems that occurred (ex. securing the large amount of money needed for the project and overcoming building code issues).

Strategic planning allows for broad based commitment for a shared vision through involvement of a variety of stakeholders. By involving stakeholders you create buy in for the program and services. While broad participation is important, it alone is not enough for successful collaboration. Creating processes and structures that help to build trust and mutual respect and provide opportunities for meaningful input and sharing of information are essential factors. A group's chance for success is greater if the group has a strategic plan providing them a format to be intentional and strategic about the work of the community team. With their strategic plan, CLC committed to building a vision of

success, which was shared among CLC members. It is with this deep commitment that CLC was able to accomplish great things.

Commitment to the Vision

Bernard Bass (1990) notes that the first moral foundation of transformational leadership is idealized influence. This first moral foundation is characterized by charismatic leadership including a vision that inspires others to follow. In regards to creating the vision of the Liberty Early Childhood Center, Linus Van Pelt, a Randolph County Schools administrator explained, "I think that vision was co-created, but I think that a large part of that vision was due to the Partnership" (L. Van Pelt, personal communication, August 5, 2009). The Partnership encouraged CLC to think on a large scale with respect to the vision that all children in Liberty would enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Nothing was off limits in the initial planning stage which is one of the reasons initial estimates topped out at half a million dollars.

Rodd (2006) states that effective leaders in early childhood display leadership in vision behavior where they create a vision and take appropriate risk to bring about change. Celebrate Liberty's Children was able to mobilize people together around an issue that was of concern to them. Linus Van Pelt, an administrator with the Randolph County Schools, explains Celebrate Liberty's Children's priority,

> I think the most important thing was that we were thinking of the children in the community. That was always at the forefront of what we were trying to do and nobody was trying to make a name for their self. It was all about providing for the needs of the children in that community and everything that we did was a direct result of having that as a priority (L. Van Pelt, personal communication, August 5, 2009).

Charlotte Braun further explains,

> There was a commitment in Liberty to see children more prepared for school. Putting it all together was just something that we felt like we needed to do. We were fortunate in a lot of ways that we had the resources we had. The building was a big part of it, but I think more so than anything was the people. The citizens of the community that were involved really wanted to see it happen (C. Braun, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

Crompton (1997) explains that leadership in early care and education entails transforming a vision of what should be into a reality by helping the community to understand – on both an intellectual and visceral level – why early care is crucial to the health and welfare of children and families. The Liberty community seemed to take on the attitude of it takes a village to raise a child in their commitment to the vision of creating a hub for early childhood services locally. The town of Liberty with a population of less than 3,000 people never doubted that they could achieve the initial goal of raising $500,000 to renovate a building to house early childhood services. The community identified with the vision and determined that this was needed and would benefit the youngest citizens of Liberty which reflects the component of idealized influence in the conceptual framework.

Individual Reasons for Participating in CLC

Bernard Bass (1990) notes that the second moral foundation of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. With inspirational motivation followers can see meaning in their work and commit to the vision through this motivation. Each of the eight individuals interviewed for this study were unique in their drive and motivation for participation in Celebrate Liberty's Children. This section examines the self reported motivating factors that lead these individuals to commit their time and energy to this project and reflects the component of inspirational motivation. Joe Agate, a member of the Liberty business community, provided invaluable information regarding the Chamber's unique grassroots history of being started by volunteers. In addition, Joe provided insight into CLC's participation in Chamber sponsored events (ex. Christmas parade) as well as the longstanding connection between the Chamber and CLC through a Chamber member serving on the CLC advisory committee. Joe has been very involved in coordinating the community initiatives of the Chamber. As such, Joe's connection to CLC is that the Chamber pursued the School Readiness Community Based Initiative Grant from the Randolph County Partnership for Children.

Charlie Brown former chair of Celebrate Liberty's Children had a combination of reasons for wanting to participate in CLC. Charlie's wife was a kindergarten assistant teacher at Liberty Elementary and his own children had entered elementary school within the past few years. Hearing his wife share her experiences working with the kindergarten students and personally wishing he had greater knowledge of what he could have done to

enhance his own children's readiness for kindergarten spurred his interest in participating in this community based initiative.

Charlotte Braun who founded a Liberty chapter of the MOM's club felt a connection to the project as both a parent and a Liberty resident. As a Liberty resident, Charlotte wanted to see a brighter future for Liberty's children. In addition, Charlotte had children of her own including one child who needed special services. Charlotte wanted herself and other parents to have increased access to local services for children without having to travel outside of the Liberty community.

Violet Gray who served on CLC during its early years chose to serve on the local advisory committee because she is a Liberty resident and also because of her extensive work experience with the preschool population. Violet has worked in early intervention in both the public and private sector. Violet wanted to works towards enhancing programs and services for the youngest children birth to age three in the Liberty area.

Peggy Jean who is an early childhood professional in Liberty chose to participate in CLC because she saw this as an opportunity to become involved in a community project. Peggy is a lifelong resident of Liberty and saw the potential and opportunity for growth in programming and services for the preschool population. Dr. Joe Shlabotnik has been a health care provider in Liberty for twelve years. He was approached about participating in Celebrate Liberty's Children's festival and agreed to lend his support because of his interest in child health. Dr. Shlabotnik has a large pediatric practice and the CLC festival provided him the opportunity to provide screenings for children and families.

Molly Volley who has served as an administrator for the Randolph County Schools chose to become involved in CLC because she realized the group's true purpose. She understood the need for services for early childhood education and was motivated to enhance opportunities for school readiness. Linus Van Pelt also serves as an administrator for the Randolph County Schools. Mr. Van Pelt chose to serve on CLC rather than delegate this to another school staff member because he understood the significance of what CLC was trying to accomplish. He knew it was needed in the community and he wanted to be a part of it.

Continually Moving Ahead with the Goal

Bernard Bass (1990) notes that the third moral foundation of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. With intellectual stimulation, Transformational leaders encourage followers to be innovative and approach problems in new ways. The purpose of Celebrate Liberty's Children local advisory committee is to promote the needs of young children in the Liberty area, review data and trends impacting young children, make recommendations for programs and services, initiate special projects, raise funds to support programs, and increase awareness of the importance of birth to age five as a critical time for growth and development. As volunteers CLC members are asked to regularly attend CLC meetings, actively participate in the functioning of the community team, promote the mission of the Randolph County Partnership for Children that all children will enter school healthy and prepared to succeed, and to be actively involved in activities and special events sponsored by Celebrate Liberty's Children.

Intellectual stimulation is an on-going process whereby volunteers learn about developmentally appropriate programs and services for the birth to five population, best practices in program delivery to serve this population, and how to design, evaluate, and enhance services for the birth to five population that would address the specific needs of the Liberty community. One theme that emerged from the in-person interviews was CLC members felt they were making progress even though the process of creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center took five years. This reflects intellectual stimulation in that CLC had to continually approach problems in new ways and be resourceful in how they would target parents with young children. When asked what accounts for CLC's success, Violet Gray replied, "Everything constantly was moving forward, there was always some progression. In the time I was involved, it wasn't stagnant" (V. Gray, personal communication, September 28, 2009).

Once the vision had been determined to renovate the old Liberty School into a Liberty Early Childhood Center, fundraising and the Capital Campaign were launched. While fundraising to renovate the building, CLC displayed innovation and problem solving by moving ahead with implementing some programming in the community. Within the first year Charlotte Braun started a Liberty chapter of the MOM's Club and the first Celebrate Liberty's Children Festival was held. Other programmatic elements that soon followed were the opening of the first Pre-Kindergarten classroom in the main school building, and Pre-K children participating in the town's Christmas parade and tree lightening.

Linus Van Pelt, a Randolph County Schools administrator, explains how seeing these changes created another round of momentum,

> We saw a roof put on, we saw the power company come out and put in the new electrical and the county came and hauled off literally rooms full of junk piled to the ceiling in some of the rooms. Once all that happened, it created momentum that enabled us to get going with the programs we currently have (L. Van Pelt, personal communication, August 5, 2009).

Over the course of Celebrate Liberty's Children's journey to create the Liberty Early Childhood Center there have been many local advisory committee members and volunteers who have contributed to the intellectual stimulation of the group. New CLC members infuse the group with new energy and new ideas, which furthers the groups ability to be innovative and problem solve. CLC has also continually reestablishing their purpose and talked about the needs of families with young children in the Liberty area.

CLC followed through on their initial purpose of creating a hub for early childhood services in the Liberty area and they continue to work towards increasing resources and opportunities for families with young children. By continuing to create new opportunities for families with young children, CLC is able to keep people interested in and aware of early childhood issues. Below is a table that outlines the year by year progress of CLC efforts and highlights the milestones/progress as a result of the group's innovation and problem solving.

Table 22

CLC Timeline

Year	Progress
2001	• Randolph County Partnership for Children awards a school readiness planning grant to Liberty. • Celebrate Liberty's Children (CLC) is formed and serves as a Smart Start community team. • CLC's planning results in creating the vision for renovating the Old Liberty School into a Liberty Early Childhood Center to serve as a hub for early childhood services. • First Celebrate Liberty's Children Festival held • Liberty Chapter of MOM's Club started • Grant of $50,000 received from First Union (Wachovia) to kick-off Capital Campaign
2002	• Pre-Kindergarten program begins at Liberty Elementary School (Pre-K to be relocated to the Liberty Early Childhood Center once renovations are complete) • Capital Campaign begins • Local artist produces print for fundraiser • Additional grants received from Cannon Foundation, Mary Stedman Covington Foundation, and an anonymous family foundation
2003	• CLC Chair receives Piedmont Triad "Top 40 Leaders Under Forty" award • Local businesses, civic groups, PTO, and individuals make contributions

	to the campaign
2004	• Renovations begin on the old Liberty Elementary School
2005	• CLC Chair receives North Carolina Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service • Randolph County Partnership for Children provides the Liberty Early Childhood Center with a grant to implement a Parents as Teachers program • Randolph Health Department opens a WIC Clinic at the Liberty Early Childhood Center in a classroom renovated for this purpose • A family room is completed and wiring installed for computer classes at the Liberty Early Childhood Center • Computer classes are offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center by Randolph Community College (RCC) • Plans are developed for a GED class to be offered by RCC at the Liberty Early Childhood Center
2006	• All renovations are completed on the Liberty Early Childhood Center and the Pre-kindergarten classes are relocated from Liberty Elementary the new renovated space
2007 – Present	• Community garden started at the Liberty Early Childhood Center with the Rose Garden Club • CLC received a grassroots art grant from the North Carolina Arts Council to paint murals relating to the theme “Bridging the Past to the Future” at the Liberty Early Childhood Center

Use of Existing Resources

Bernard Bass (1990) notes that the fourth moral foundation of transformational leadership is individualized consideration. With individualized consideration, knowledge and talents are used to ensure followers are included in the transformation. This also allows for greater achievement by responding to specific talents of followers and their needs. Celebrate Liberty's Children was able to maximize the knowledge and talents of individuals in the group as well as the capacities and assets of citizen's associations and local institutions. In terms of maximizing the knowledge and talents of individuals in the group, CLC offered sub-committees (ex. Capital Campaign, Facilities Committee, Special Events, etc). Sub-committees allowed group members to pursue their interests and were aligned with individual's self determined skill set allowing them to make their greatest contribution to the goal of creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center.

Going a step beyond individualized consideration, CLC carefully identified and listed outside individuals, associations, and institutional resources that could help the group solve its problems. Individual assets in Liberty were the many people who expressed a deep sense of investment in the community and a desire to see the town develop resources and programming for families with young children. Association assets were the large number of civic organizations providing active volunteers within the community. Institutional assets included many local businesses who were engaged in local issues of the community and Liberty School which had active support form parents.

A physical asset to Liberty is its convenient location to economic centers such as Greensboro. News of the process was disseminated at Chamber of Commerce meetings, events, and their newsletter and through local, county, regional and Hispanic newspapers.

The most significant asset to the whole project turned out to be closer than Celebrate Liberty's Children ever imagined. CLC had a facilities sub-committee that looked at potential sites for the Liberty Early Childhood Center including other facilities and vacant land. They not only looked at other sites and locations but they also talked to Head Start about a potential collaboration with Head Start and Smart Start. Once the sub-committee had looked at all the options, they prioritized them and presented the options to CLC. The first choice was always to renovate the old Liberty School building into the Liberty Early Childhood Center if the county schools would agree to give them the building. Second choice for the group was actually a section of the land next to the football field on the school property. The group's back up plan included space still housed on the school grounds but would have required constructing something new on that spot. The group's third choice was actually a piece of vacant land that a person in the community said they would donate. The third option would have required matching funds from and collaboration with Head Start.

When asked what he thinks accounts for Liberty's success with the Liberty Early Childhood Center project, Joe Agate from the Liberty Chamber stated,

> I think it was good organizational skills, and people could communicate what the need was. Also the fact that the building is somewhat historical rather than tear it down, they put it to use. I think it would have been more difficult if they would have had to go to another commercial building of some sort that didn't have the playground space available. The outdoor facilities plus the building could be

> adapted for young kids because it is the original school building were key factors (J. Agate, personal communication, September 14, 2009).

Shared Decision Making

Participation and involvement in shared decision making and problem solving ensured a high level of commitment from Celebrate Liberty's Children. The community team owned the changes they were creating and did not feel as if the changes had been imposed from above or from any outside group. A variety of individuals with diverse skills worked to create solutions. Included on the committee were: the principal of the elementary school, a third grade teacher, private citizens, parents, a school bus driver, representatives from local businesses, the Liberty Association of Churches, and the local library. Supporting broad based community participation on the advisory committee is critical to the success of replicating this initiative. Meetings were scheduled in the evening and childcare and meals are provided so that parents can attend.

Another area Rodd (2006) states that effective leaders in early childhood display leadership is through values behavior where they build trust and openness and through people behavior where they provide care and respect for individual differences. The following comments from CLC members reflect that leadership was highly participative and decisions were made by the group as a whole. Violet Gray, who served on the local advisory committee for two years, reflects on why she thinks the group's efforts were successful,

> I think why we came together had a lot to do with the group's success it, but I can also remember everybody's opinion was valued and we were good listeners. I

> think that is an important part of why it was successful (V. Gray, personal communication, September 28, 2009).

Peggy Jean, an early childhood professional, served on the local advisory committee. Peggy recalls the sense of community of those serving on the local advisory committee, "It was all for one. I guess at the time we were just so excited about doing it that we all wanted to make a go of it. We just all somehow clicked and could all work together." (P. Jean, personal communication, September 28, 2009). Charlotte Braun who at the time she joined CLC was the parent of preschool aged children stated,

> I think we had a comradery and openness amongst our group. You could express your feelings, you could share your concerns, and it wasn't falling on deaf ears. A lot of ideas we suggested or we talked about, we made it happen. It wasn't just oh yea that's a good idea, but we made them come to pass. (C. Braun, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

Collaboration

Once the community team had identified their plan, the next step was to build relationships and connections between the different assets in the community to help them achieve that plan. The group worked to build relationships among local assets for problem solving in the community. The group mobilized the community's assets for economic development and information sharing. Jillian Rodd (2006) in her book *Leadership in Early Childhood* states the following about the collaborative nature of early childhood, "Leadership in the early childhood field appears to be more a result of groups of people who work together to influence and inspire each other rather than then

efforts of one single person who focuses on getting the job done" (p. 17). The work of Celebrate Liberty's Children also falls in line with the factors for successful collaboration identified by The Wilder Foundation. Evidence of each of the factors is provided below in the section labeled Wilder Foundation Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration.

Working Collaboratively for Asset Building

Celebrate Liberty's Children provides an excellent example of engaging a diverse cross section of citizens to build a community vision and plan. The group also worked to leverage resources from outside the community to support the community's vision. One of the four behaviors that Rodd (2006) believes leaders in early childhood demonstrate is that of influence behavior where they act collaboratively. Charlie Brown believes that community support of Celebrate Liberty's Children is what helped them land many of the grants needed to renovate the building. CLC shared information with potential funders about the various community events (ex. Children's Festival, Christmas tree lightening, etc) and the number of people participating in them. Charlie reflects,

> It's the whole community participating in CLC events and that's been a good thing. We've always kept it as joint ownership. If others community members feel like they are tied into CLC, then they feel like they've got just as much ownership of it as we do. That was one of the big reasons why corporations and businesses were willing to give money. They saw that the community was invested in the project (C. Brown, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

From the beginning Celebrate Liberty's Children has worked closely with the Liberty Chamber of Commerce, and the Liberty Early Childhood Center is designed to play a key role in maintaining the economic vitality of the Liberty area. In addition to early childhood education

classrooms, the Liberty Early Childhood Center collaborates with countywide organizations to offer a continuum of programs and services to promote health and wellness, literacy, and workforce development. A characteristic that Crompton (1997) states is essential for leaders in early childhood education is the ability to function as the community's early care and education expert in a way that influences early care policymaking on a community wide basis. Celebrate Liberty's Children influenced early care and education policymaking by securing increased resources and creating early care and education programs that provide Liberty area children the care and support they need to thrive.

When asked about the benefits of having on site classes offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center, Andy Olaf, President of the local community college stated,

> We realize that people in the outlying areas of our county need the educational and literacy training that the community college offers just as much as the people in Asheboro do. We offer GED and ESL classes at the Liberty Early Childhood Center because we believe that such training will enhance the opportunity for adults in Liberty to attain additional training and education, and consequently, will provide a more supportive learning environment in the homes for the children. Literacy and educational attainment of parents is a key factor in the eventual educational potential and aspirations of the children in those homes. By taking our classes to the Liberty Early Childhood Center, we are serving the entire community -- both parents and children (A. Olaf, personal communication, December 30, 2009).

Wilder Foundation Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration

The Wilder Foundation indentified twenty factors grouped into six categories that relate to the success of collaborations in their 2001 book *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*. Elements of CLC's work can be positively associated with each of the six categories. The first category includes the environment and a history of collaboration

within the community. The Liberty Chamber has a grassroots history of being started by volunteers and provided initial leadership for Celebrate Liberty's Children. In addition, the Chamber was viewed as a legitimate group within the community and its support of CLC provided creditability.

The second category includes factors related to membership characteristics and includes items such as a cross section of representatives and mutual trust, respect, and understanding. CLC worked to ensure all sectors of the community were represented during the planning process and in-person interviewees reflected on the diversity of the group as well as the group's ability to speak open and honestly about the issues. The third category of factors relates to the process and structure. As each CLC member has their own personal reasons for participating in the process of creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center they shared a stake in both the process and the outcome. CLC developed subcommittees that afforded each local advisory committee member the opportunity to participate and contribute to the vision in a manner that best suited their interest and talents and provided multiple layers of participation. Examples of the different opportunities for involvement included volunteering to staff events such as the CLC Children's Festival, working on the Capital Campaign, or the facilities committee that worked on identification of a site and later renovation of the identified site.

The fourth category includes factors related to communication and involves open and frequent communication and established informal relationships and communication links. CLC met on at least a monthly basis and more frequently as needed during the planning process. Each subcommittee would report back to the larger CLC group the

progress to date on their assigned tasks. CLC continues to meet present day on a monthly basis to plan local events and discuss the needs of families with young children. CLC has worked to establish communication links. When the area lost its local paper, CLC created its own newsletter to keep community members and alumni of Liberty Elementary informed of their work.

The fifth category includes factors related to purpose including a unique purpose, shared vision, and attainable goals and objectives. CLC was formed around the unique purpose of enhancing children's school readiness and enabling children to enter school healthy and ready to succeed. The vision of creating a local hub of early childhood services was seen as a way to achieve the goal of reducing the number of children entering school with potential delays. The sixth category of factors is that of resources and includes skilled leadership and sufficient materials. Celebrate Liberty's Children has been methodological in their use of strategic planning and their approach for raising funds through the capital campaign. The Randolph County Partnership for Children provided supportive resources and materials as well as guidance when needed by the local advisory committee. The table below outlines all twenty-two factors of the Wilder Foundation Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration as evident in the work of Celebrate Liberty's.

Table 23

Wilder Collaboration 22 Factors/6 Categories

Wilder Collaboration 22 Factors/6 Categories	**Present in the work of CLC**	**Examples from CLC**
1. **Environment**		
a. History of collaboration in the community	X	Previous collaboration from the Chamber with the town for events (parades/festivals, etc) Previous collaboration from the elementary school with civic/social groups.
b. Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	X	Linking the launch of CLC with the Chamber of Commerce and having the president of the Chamber serving as the first chair of CLC helped establish the group as legitimate.
c. Favorable political and social climate	X	Support for the project from the Mayor, Police Chief, local civic and social organizations, etc.
2. **Membership Characteristics**		
a. Mutual respect, understanding, and trust	X	Members report an open forum to share ideas and everyone's opinions are valued.
b. Appropriate cross section of members	X	Members include a cross-section of the community.
c. Members see collaboration as in their self-interest		Members report a connection and interest in the group's mission/vision that relates to their self interest.

d. Ability to compromise	X	CLC was able to amicably negotiate major decisions in creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center
3. **Process and Structure**		
a. Members share a stake in both process and outcome	X	Local Advisory Committee reported feeling ownership of the decisions they made.
b. Multiple layers of participation	X	Participation and support from Randolph County School District Administration, Liberty Elementary School, and the local Partnership for Children (Smart Start)
c. Flexibility	X	Creatively found ways to accomplish goals
d. Development of clear roles and policy guidelines	X	Local Advisory Committee are asked each year to renew their commitment to serving on the group.
e. Adaptability	X	Group able to sustain itself with funding and building coding challenges
f. Appropriate pace of development	X	Not stagnant/constant growth
4. Communication		
a. Open and frequent communication	X	Regular meetings (at least monthly) with issues openly discussed
b. Established informal relationships and communication links	X	Subcommittees created that report back to the larger group (building committee/capital campaign committee/etc)

5. Purpose		
a. Concrete, attainable goals and objectives	X	Plan implemented in phases with specific goals (programmatic and financial with each)
b. Shared vision	X	Vision of creating a hub for early childhood services locally (Liberty Early Childhood Center)
c. Unique purpose	X	Specific mission of working towards increasing school readiness opportunities for preschool children.
6. Factors Related to Resources		
a. Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time	X	Local Advisory Committee moved at its own pace for developing a strategic plan. Provided support from the Randolph County Partnership for Children (School Readiness Planning Grant)
b. Skilled leadership	X	Strategic planning process guidance provided by RCPC. Duke Non-profit training (capital campaign)

Resource Development

Resource development for Celebrate Liberty's Children started with a strong strategic plan that allowed them to analyze people and resources in the community that could support their vision. A factor that enabled them to successfully lobby for financial support for this initiative was the ability of the local advisory committee to express the need of the project. Drawing on both local resources

and cultivating relationships with outside organizations helped to build a volunteer base and secure financial contributions. One of the most important resources was the old Liberty School and its historical connection to the community which sparked an idea for an extremely successful fundraiser.

Ability to Express the Need of the Project

Members of CLC were so passionate about early childhood issues, people in Liberty had to listen. The group worked to demonstrate how the idea of the Liberty Early Childhood Center coincided with the values of the community in an attempt to win their support. The group's vision was that all children in Liberty would enter school healthy and prepared to learn. The group worked to educate the community on the disconnect between the vision that all children in Liberty would enter school healthy and ready to learn and the reality that more than 40% of children were entering school with potential developmental delays. Once the community understood what the vision was and how far the community was from achieving that vision, it was able to rally around an action plan. This relates to the aspect of marking in the resource development component of the conceptual framework. To truly garner support and funds CLC had to effectively sell their vision for an early childhood center. CLC developed relevant information about the need for having access to early childhood programs and services locally and then communicated it to diverse audiences including parents, school board officials, community foundation representatives, and social and civic organizations.

The Liberty community understood that the proposed Liberty Early Childhood Center would ensure access to early care and education services to help children thrive. Crompton (1997) states that the best leaders in early childhood, "Demonstrate to the community that early care and education is a watershed issue that determines to a great extent the future success of children in school and in life" (p. 49). CLC knew it was essential that they communicate the vision as well as the need for the project in a manner that made sense to the average person.

Crompton (1997) states, "If what you are advocating about is part of your heart's desire, then people will instinctively know" (p. 53). When asked how CLC was able to rally support for this project, Peggy Jean shared,

> The people that were involved with Celebrate Liberty's Children were good promoters in making the community and potential donors understand what the money was for, the whole reason behind the project, and how desperately it was needed in a rural area like Liberty (P. Jean, personal communication, September 28, 2009).

Randolph County Schools administrator Molly Volley stated, "I think you have a group that is so proud of their town, that they want it to be such a success, they go ahead and do what needs to be done. (M. Volley, personal communication, August 11, 2009).

Resourceful Fundraising for the Capital Campaign

Another theme that emerged from the in person interviews was the resourcefulness needed to make the capital campaign successful which reflects the aspect

of revenue generation in the resource development component of the conceptual framework. One of the characteristic that Crompton (1997) states is essential for leaders in early childhood education is that they, "Play a key role in securing or leveraging the kind of substantial public and private human and financial resources required to improve early care and education programming in all parts of the community" (p. 49). One of the strongest keys to CLC's success was their fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts.

While commitment to and passion for the vision was readily available among CLC members there had to be funding sources to make the vision a reality. Resource development among CLC included financial support, recruitment of volunteers, and community awareness. Acquisition of these resources required CLC members to develop, nurture and monitor relationships with various stakeholders including funding bodies, elected officials, licensing and regulating institutions (Division of Child Development), government agencies, other nonprofits, community philanthropists, private corporations, media representatives, and the public-at-large.

CLC was able to raise $153,382.35 for the renovation of the old Liberty School. Sources of funding for the capital campaign were diverse. A total of $110,000 came from various foundation grants. Over $12,000 came from businesses, organizations, and individual donations. An additional $12,000+ came from various community based fundraisers. Over $14,000 was raised from alumni of Liberty School through selling an artist's print of the old Liberty School. The remaining funds of over $4,000+ came from More at Four funds specifically for building renovations.

Regarding the uniqueness of community foundations, Carman (2001) states, “All of the community foundations funded niche projects, that is, community development projects that arise from the unique character, flavor, and circumstance of the local communities that the community foundations serve” (p. 16). Celebrate Liberty’s Children was able to tap into a unique niche with the three foundations that provided them funding. The Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro provided funding from a fund specifically designed to encourage regional problem solving and collaborative effort. One of the priority service areas for the Cannon Foundation is the Piedmont Triad and also rural areas of North Carolina. The Cannon Foundation makes grants for capital purposes including new construction, renovation and expansion. The focuses of the grants are projects and programs targeted in the areas of health care and education. The Marion Stedman Covington Foundation focuses on historic preservation. As CLC was proposing renovate the old Liberty School which had historical significance in that community this met the requirements of funding for that foundation. In addition, the Covington Foundation prefers proposals in which Covington grants generate other resources and the projects may serve as models for other communities.

An example of a way that CLC was able to maximize their resources in terms of fundraising was through challenge grants. One of the local fundraising efforts by CLC was a raffle with various raffle prizes donated by local businesses. Ticket sales from the raffle netted CLC $2,500 and a matching grant from Modern Woodmen of America provided an additional $2,500 for a total of $5,000 towards the building renovations. Another strategy used by CLC was to tap back into their connection to the Chamber and

send a request to all Liberty Chamber members asking for donations for the Capital Campaign. The most unique fundraising effort tapped into the historical connection of the old Liberty School and the Capital Campaign theme of "Bridging Our Past to Our Future". An artist pen and ink drawing of the old Liberty School was sold to school alumni to raise funds. This fundraising strategy also subsequently served to educate school alumni of the project's purpose of providing a continuum of support services for children and families from birth until the child enters school.

Celebrate Liberty's Children worked to match its committee member's interest to available volunteer opportunities. Various subcommittees were formed to serve specific purposes and then report information back to the larger community team group. One of the sub-committees was the capital campaign team. This subgroup attended training from Duke University's Nonprofit Management program on how to conduct a capital campaign. One of the major projects for the Capital Campaign subcommittee was to research major employers in the region as a source of funding for the capital campaign as well as a way to expand and diversify the volunteer base for CLC. Offering volunteers the opportunity to participate in committees/ projects that were of the greatest interest to them, and reaching out to employers in the area to recruit new volunteers is reflective of the aspect of volunteer management in the resource development component of the conceptual framework.

Advice from Celebrate Liberty's Children Members

Each of the eight individuals interviewed for this study were asked what advice they would give to other rural areas that seek to replicate the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children. Table 24 includes a summary of each interviewee's response and how these responses related to the conceptual framework elements of leadership, community collaboration, and resource development.

Table 24

Advice for Those Interested in Replication

Name	Affiliation with CLC	Advice to Others Wanting to Replicate the Work of Celebrate Liberty's Children	Connection to Elements in the Conceptual Framework
Charlie Brown	Former Chair and current member of CLC	Create a passion for working for young children in your community. Everyone wants better for their children than they had. It's just getting the right people to the table and creating a passion for the project.	Transformational Leadership • Idealized Influence (inspire others to follow) Community Collaboration • Factors Related to Purpose (shared vision/unique purpose)
Violet Gray	Former CLC member	Using the planning model CLC used would be an excellent resource. Ensure the planning committee represents a cross section of the entire community.	Community Collaboration • Factors Related to Membership (appropriate cross section of members) • Factors Related to Process and Structure (members share a stake in both process and outcome)
Linus Van Pelt	Randolph County Schools administrator	Start with whatever resources you can at local level like the Partnership for Children or the school system. Try to create a partnership between different groups and interested in people in the community. Just start	Resource Development • Volunteer Management (connections others have with individuals in the community of contact and influence)

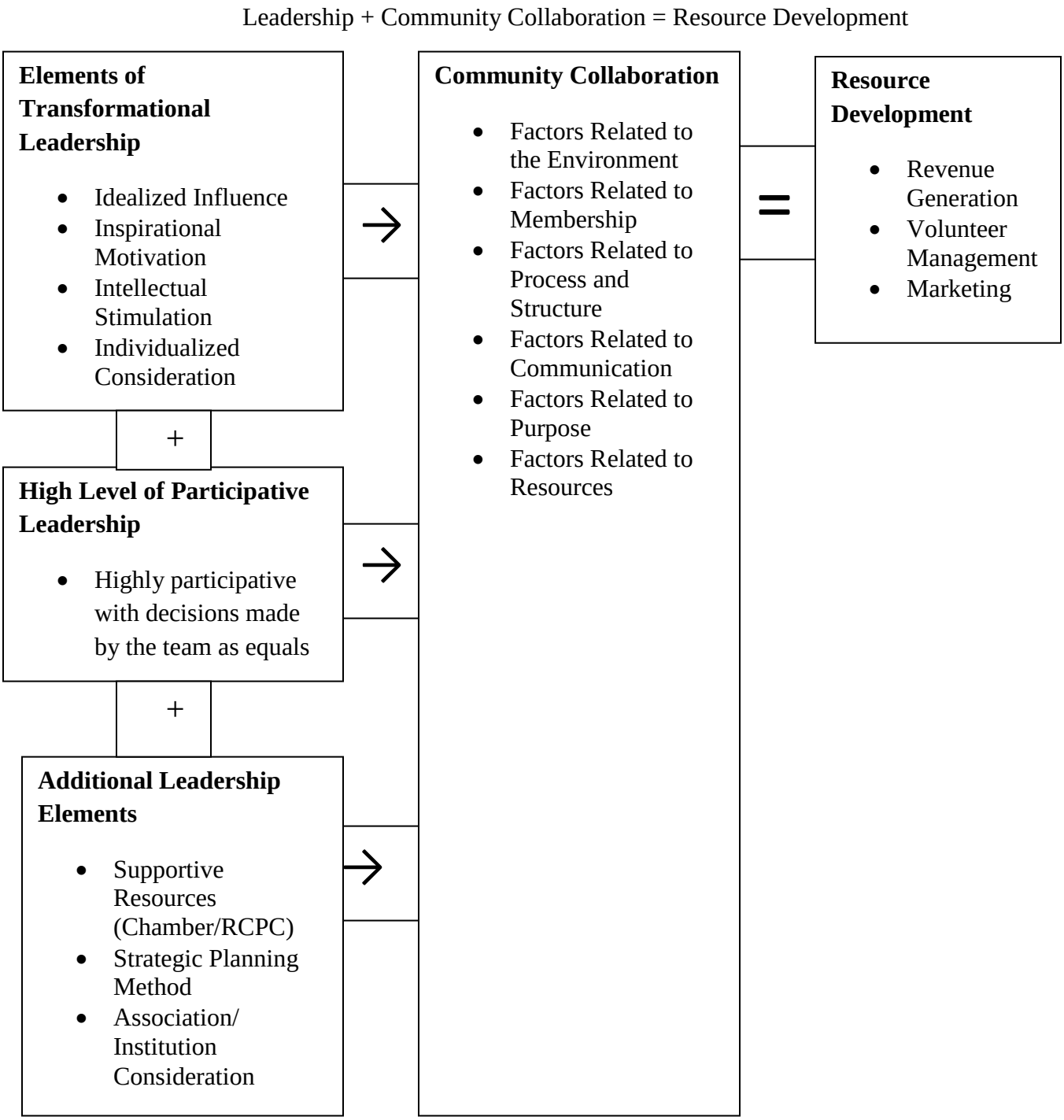
		talking and asking questions about what is needed and work towards building a vision.	Leadership • Participative (works with team as equals to build the vision)
Peggy Jean	Former CLC member, early childhood professional in Liberty	Help people to understand the background behind the project, and why the project is needed. It is essential you share knowledge about early childhood in order to promote the project and get people/funders to donate money in support of it.	Resource Development • Marketing (promote information through many outlets to selectively exert influence where it is most needed) • Revenue Generation (belief in the cause for which you are fundraising)
Dr. Joe Shlabotnik	Participated in CLC Children's Festivals, Chiropractor in Liberty	Marketing is essential. It is hard to promote when you don't have the mass media of the larger cities. Talk about it at every opportunity such as PTO meetings or anywhere in the community where you have access to families coming in.	Resource Development • Marketing (develop relevant information and then communicate it to diverse audiences)
Charlotte Braun	Longtime CLC member	Have an openness, commitment, and camaraderie within the group. Once you make the commitment to young children in your community, see it through.	Leadership • Participative (ideas presented by members are is carefully considered) Community Collaboration • Factors Related to Communication (open and frequent communication)
Molly Volley	Randolph County Schools administrator	Define your purpose and focus on collecting data from the school, the community, church, and the un-churched. You have to find the nucleus or the hub in the town and recruit people in each respective group who are interested.	Community Collaboration • Factors Related to Communication (establish informal relationships and communication links) Resource Development • Volunteer Management (recruit individuals to give their time and talents)

Joe Agate	Member of the Liberty business community	Review resources in your own community that can support the initiative. Look at what you already have in your community and how it can support what you are trying to achieve.	Resource Development • Revenue Generation (match interests with the funding priorities of local community foundations) Community Collaboration • Factors Related to Resources (sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time)

Information obtained from the in-person interviews, the document review, and the surveys reveal the relationship between leadership, community collaboration, and resource development to be one of sequential succession in the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The first step is the presence of leadership that is both transformational and highly participative. Additionally the presence of supportive resources, a defined strategic planning method, and the ability to maximize association and institution resources were key leadership elements. The actions of transformational and participative leadership along with the additional leadership elements set the foundation for the second step of community collaboration. A transformative/ participative leadership style plus the effective use of community collaboration equaled the resource development that was needed for the creation of the Liberty Early Childhood Center and its array of programs and services. Figure 3 presents a visual representation of the connection between the concepts of leadership, community collaboration, and resource development in the conceptual framework.

Figure 3

Relationship of Concepts in the Conceptual Framework



As reflected in Figure 3, I believe the leadership elements were additive and sequential with the community collaboration elements. The combination of leadership and community collaboration resulted in the actions needed to create the Liberty Early Childhood Center After Liberty was approached with the opportunity to apply for a School Readiness Community-Based Initiative Planning Grant, the Chamber took the lead on assembling a local advisory group. Once provided with information on the current status of school readiness of children in the Liberty area, citizens felt a connection to the vision of enhancing school readiness opportunities. They were motivated to increase programs and services for Liberty's youngest citizens and were provided opportunities through participation with CLC to use their time and individual talents which reflects transformational leadership.

With a vision of a brighter future for Liberty's Children, CLC began discussing how to make this vision a reality. From the onset CLC was a participative group with discussion of issues and decisions made by the team as a whole. While there is a formal chair of the local advisory committee, this person does not make decisions without the input and support of CLC committee members which is reflective of the Participatory Leadership style. While Transformational and Participative Leadership styles were present, there were also other leadership elements that were necessary for CLC. The Randolph County Partnership for Children and the Liberty Chamber of Commerce provided the opportunity for this type of community planning to exist. The Chamber agreed to take the lead on convening a group for the School Readiness Community-Based

Planning Grant and the Randolph County Partnership for Children provided guidance on strategic planning.

The relationship between leadership and collaboration in the work of CLC was both sequential and additive resulting in resource development needed for the project. A leadership environment that was transformational and participatory set the stage for collaboration to happen. Environmental collaboration factors help establish the legitimacy of the project by having support from town officials and launching the initiative by the Chamber which already had an established history of collaboration with businesses and other organizations in the town. The combination of a transformational and participative leadership style helped establish membership collaboration which facilitated an open process and structure within the group and effective communication. Each of the leadership and collaboration factors built upon each other to create a strong driving force in achieving the vision and unique purpose of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The combination of these leadership and community collaboration factors allowed CLC to be effective in the three main areas of resource development needed to achieve their vision.

With effective strategic planning, CLC was able to clearly define their goals and a timeline for creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center. With this clear vision, Celebrate Liberty's Children was able to market their message to specific groups in the community and outside of the community who could assist them in achieving their vision. This also resulted in additional volunteers to assist with CLC's community based activities such as the children's festival. By utilizing an existing resource within the

community (old Liberty School) CLC was able to leverage revenue generation from foundation grants specifically for historical buildings. In addition other fund raisers were tied to the historical significance of the building and were significant revenue generators. Thus effective resource development was a product of leadership and community collaboration in the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

Evaluating the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children's community based initiative for school readiness allows for the understanding of how the program works and how it produces results. This dissertation serves to accurately portray to outside parties how the programs and services were designed, how the program operates, and ideas for replication of the initiative elsewhere. Evaluating the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children helps to determine relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of locally planned early childhood initiative to enhance school readiness in rural areas. This final chapter serves to restate the research questions and the methods used in the study. The sections of this chapter summarize the results and discuss their implications.

Research Questions and Methodology

The research questions this dissertation serves to address include: (1) Has Celebrate Liberty's Children's implementation of community programs been successful in increasing community awareness of early childhood education issues in Liberty? (2) What can be learned about leadership, resource development, and community collaboration from the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children? I used the case study approach to answer these questions through a combination of both quantitative data and rich descriptive qualitative data.

As detailed in Chapter III, eight individuals who have knowledge of and experience with Celebrate Liberty's Children's were interviewed for this study. Surveys were distributed to parents of children enrolled at Liberty Elementary School, parents of children participating in programming at the Liberty Early Childhood Center, and Liberty citizens on the Celebrate Liberty's Children newsletter mailing list. The survey had an overall 51% return rate with 359 of 704 surveys returned. Data collection measures employed in this study included documentation review of meetings minutes, memos, local media reports, and strategic plans for the community team to recreate a historical account of the work of the community team to date.

Summary of the Findings

The results of this study imply that Celebrate Liberty's Children has unique strengths that were key to the successful creation of the Liberty Early Childhood Center. Factors related to leadership, resource development, and community collaboration were identified through the data collection methods employed in this study. The leadership style evident in CLC's work was reflective of Transformational and Participative Leadership. In addition, other factors including support from the Randolph County Partnership for Children and the Liberty Chamber were essential to their leadership. An effective strategic planning process was also key in the leadership of this initiative. The leadership style in addition to community collaboration on multiple levels yielded effective resource development for creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center. Key to CLC's success were leadership factors that included support from key leaders in all

sectors of the community, a strong commitment to the vision of creating a hub for early childhood services locally in Liberty, continual progress towards the goal, and a personal connection and interest in the project on behalf of all local advisory committee members. Essential to resource development for this project was a strategic plan that helped CLC prioritize needs and identify resources, the ability to effectively express the need for creating an early childhood center, resourceful fundraising, and use of existing resources available in the community. Factors that promoted collaboration among Celebrate Liberty's Children included shared decision making among the local advisory committee members and working collaboratively for asset building and leverage of resources.

Results from the survey, which had a high return rate (51%), clearly indicate that Celebrate Liberty's Children has been successful in increasing awareness of early childhood resources and the importance of early childhood education. The survey results indicate that parents were aware of the programs and services offered within the Liberty Early Childhood Center. For the eight programs and services offered, an average of 65% of survey respondents indicated they either were highly aware, had heard of, or had their child(ren) participate in the programs. The knowledge, awareness, and usage of programs and services scores ranged from a high of 90% for the Pre-K program to a low of 38% for the Parent Resource Room. In addition, parent respondents overwhelming agreed with the impact of early childhood education statements found on the survey. Four of the nine statements had 90+% of survey responders indicating that they agreed the statements reflected positive benefits of early childhood education. An additional three statements had 80+% of parents agreeing that the statements reflected positive

benefits of early childhood education. One statement had a 70+% agree rate and the final statement which had multiple options for parents to choose regarding the return on the investment in high quality child care had agreement rates that ranged from 55%-86%.

School Administrators Opinion of the Impact of the Liberty Early Childhood Center

The following responses summarize two of Randolph County Schools administrator's views on the impact of Celebrate Liberty's Children's work to help prepare children to enter school health and ready to succeed:

> The biggest benefits are the services provided to children on a continuum from birth all the way through to kindergarten. With the Parents as Teachers program, parents are supported and given the tools to be better parents and help enhance school readiness for their children. The kindergarten teachers from day one have said that they can see the difference with children in their class who were in the Pre-K program. That's more anecdotal evidence, but its observable by them. Seeing the services utilized, seeing education enhanced because of parents being able to come in and take classes, and having that as a center for the community to base activities from, all those things were just really important. The whole school and community have been enhanced by the program (L. Van Pelt, personal communication, August 9, 2009).

> I think parents see the Liberty Early Childhood Center as a resource to come to. I see a lot of parents who will go to that building and then if they have something to take care of in the regular school building they will come over. When before parents may not have wanted to come into the school building because they were scared, or afraid, or didn't fit in. The center makes parents feel more comfortable with the whole school. We are seeing parents who may have had a bad experience in school themselves, who ordinarily would not want to come in the school building for their children. I think the center has put the school in a new light for families. It may be something as simple as eating lunch with their child, but it helps them see our school in a more positive way (M. Volley, personal communication, August 11, 2009)

Linus Van Pelt said the opening of the Liberty Early Childhood Center ranks very high in terms of achievements in his educational career. Van Pelt describes seeing the plan come full circle,

> You know having a plan to take a building from literally the roof caving in to seeing it being used as it is today is pretty miraculous. I do take a lot of pride in what we as a group accomplished. I was very proud just to be part of it because when I came in that initiative had already begun. To actually do something that makes a big difference like this in your school and in your community it takes a whole lot of work. It takes vision and it takes the right people to make it happen, and the payoff is enormous as we have seen. As an educational leader, I think its part of what we do or what we are supposed to do. I think unfortunately a lot of educational leaders either feel like they can't do it or in some cases won't do it (L. Van Pelt, personal communication, August, 5, 2009).

Van Pelt further describes the impact of the Liberty Early Childhood Center,

> Seeing folks in the building, seeing classes at night, seeing facility use forms filled out and my signature on them because they are going to have computer classes or ESL classes or GED. Seeing these things actually happening. Seeing kids going up and down the hall, seeing the parents coming in with babies using the WIC program, seeing the murals, all those things. You just realize it is just so vital and such a part of what Liberty is now. I can't imagine it not being there now. In such a short time it has become such an integral part of what Liberty School and Liberty community is all about (L. Van Pelt, personal communication, August, 5, 2009).

Conclusions and Implications

Celebrate Liberty's Children Local Advisory Council conducted a community needs assessment, formulated a community plan using a combination of strategies directed at different segments of the community, and spearheaded the plan implementation. This community based program for enhancing school readiness in the

municipality of Liberty, North Carolina focused on the structure of community services for families with young children including their comprehensiveness, coordination, and linkages. The relevance of CLC's work is community based planning for increasing school readiness opportunities has shown to be effective in Liberty for reducing the number of children who enter kindergarten with potential developmental delays.

The logic of CLC's plan was to create an array of services locally that would address the needs of families with young children from birth until they enter kindergarten. Various parent education services have been offered from parent education sessions, MOM's Club parent support group, and the Parents as Teachers program which focuses on providing parenting support and information to parents on their child's development. In addition, the WIC Clinic serves to provide supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education. Randolph Community College provides the opportunity for parents to enhance their education through offering a variety of courses locally at the Liberty Early Childhood Center. With thirty-six Pre-Kindergarten slots at the Liberty Early Childhood Center, 44% of the incoming kindergarten class has had a public school based Pre-Kindergarten experience through the More at Four program.

Celebrate Liberty's Children wanted to reduce the number of children entering Liberty Elementary School with potential delays. When CLC convened in 2001, close to 40% of entering kindergarten students at Liberty Elementary entered school with potential delays. The table below depicts the percent of kindergarten students with potential delays for the two years prior to CLC implementing programming and the past three years in which all services have been offered and implemented at the Liberty Early

Childhood Center. The chart below indicates that the planned result of reducing the number of students entering Liberty Elementary School with potential delays has been successful. The percent of student receiving free and reduced lunch has increased from 45.23% in 1999 to 62.99% in 2009 which reflects a 39% increase in the past decade. While the free and reduced lunch percentage has increased, there has been a decrease in the percent of children entering kindergarten with potential delays from 45% in 1999 to 11.6% in 2009. This reflects a decrease of 74% over the past decade.

Table 25

Results of School Readiness Assessments

School Year	**% of children at risk based on Lap-D screenings**	**Liberty Elementary % of students receiving free and reduced lunch**	**Number of children served by Pre-Kindergarten programming**
1999-2000	45%	45.23%	0*
2000-2001	39%	43.80%	0*
2007-2008	22.8%	61.07%	36
2008-2009	18.9%	64.19%	36
2009-2010	11.6%	62.99%	36

*Pre-K programming was implemented in 2002

The number of children who score 10 or below on the LAP-D (potentially at-risk) is an example of trend data. Trend data are measures of community wide impact. These measures are community level indicators because they are aggregated data that reflect

social changes across the entire community. Trends examined over time help us explore whether the trends have changed in the desired direction after the implementation of CLC's community based initiatives. Trend analysis is a form of time triangulation, as trends are compared prior to the implementation of CLC's community initiatives with trends that occur after implementation is under way. A decrease in the number of children entering school with developmental delays is a durable community impact. The results from the community surveys which indicate local residents demonstrated awareness of early childhood resources in the community and knowledge of the importance of early childhood education is also a durable community impact.

Multiple interacting factors contributed to a large number of children entering kindergarten with delays in Liberty such as children's individual influences such as degree of coping skills, self-esteem, and communication skills; family influences such as family cohesiveness, parental modeling, and parenting skills; and community influences, such as the presence of supportive resources, sound economic conditions, and the limited availability of high quality preschool settings/experiences. These factors can interact, either to create a potential for developmental delays or to provide a protective factor for young children that fosters skill development. The Lap-D scores results are not intended to serve as a measure of change among all of these interacting factors. As the Lap-D scores were used as a reference of children's readiness for school at the initial launch of Celebrate Liberty's Children's work the most recent scores have been provided here for comparison.

Celebrate Liberty's Children's successful implementation of community programs has lead to an increase in community awareness, concern, and action regarding early childhood education issues. For those wanting to replicate such an initiative, key leader support is essential. Key leaders operate at a pivotal level in that they influence public opinion, resource allocation, programming, and policy development. Key leaders in Liberty, North Carolina including school administrators, business professionals, social and civic organization representatives, and town officials (mayor, police chief, etc.) displayed significant interest in awareness, concern, and action, thus the Liberty community has experience a greater number of early childhood promotive policies and programs. This increased involvement of community key leaders in the concerns of CLC has been a bellwether for organizational and policy change. I recommend to others wanting to replicate this initiative to educate key leaders in their community on the importance of investing in early childhood education in an attempt to gain their support.

The work of Celebrate Liberty's Children shows how efficiently resources can be used in rural areas for the development of school readiness programs and services. The work of Celebrate Liberty's Children also points to the sustainability and continued impacts of rural school readiness community based initiatives. The need for early childhood programming and the willingness of community residents to participate in this type of programming is evident in that there are typically waiting lists for the Pre-K and Parents as Teachers services in Liberty. In addition an average of 430 clients are seen each month at the Liberty WIC clinic. Since the first More at Four Pre-K classroom opened in Liberty in 2001, a total of 306 children have participated in the program. An

additional 63 families with young children have had the benefit of participating in the Parents as Teachers program in Liberty since the program was started in 2005.

Results from the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children imply to others wanting to engage in rural school readiness initiatives that community based support is essential. The broad spectrum of community members on the local advisory committee worked to ensure that the municipality specific needs of young children were addressed and that funding was invested in a manner that would have the maximum benefit for families with young children. A key in the planning strategy of the Randolph County Partnership for Children has been learning as much as possible about families and communities within the county. The input of families and communities means involving the people who will live with the decisions being made. Family involvement is essential in creating buy-in and support for activities before they are implemented. Without this input, programs would likely struggle as they are being operated for families rather than with families. For others who seek to develop a community specific array of early childhood programs and services, I recommend working diligently to ensure you have a cross representation of families who need access to early childhood services to provide input into the program planning and using a strategic planning method such as the one presented here.

Throughout the planning process CLC used conversations with and surveys of local parents help to identify needs and plan programming to meet the needs of families with young children. CLC also welcomed the opportunity to assist in the survey design for this dissertation allowing them to gather current information on the needs of families in the Liberty Elementary School district. Regular input from families keeps the

Partnership's work focused on the real needs of families with young children. Parents are regularly asked to evaluate the services they receive and are involved in assessing needs, and designing, and implement new programming. Therefore, it is recommended to others seeking to plan community based approaches to enhancing school readiness to continually provide consumers of early childhood programs and services the opportunity to provide feedback through surveys and focus groups. In addition it is recommended that panel discussions or other open forums are held to educate consumers on best practices in early childhood.

The Partnership does not enter communities with a preset agenda of programming. Community based programs have all developed from individual municipality community based strategic planning processes. Individual municipalities that have come to the Partnership seeking assistance essentially decide what would work best in their area. Partnership funded programs are not housed in Asheboro the county seat, rather programs and program staff are housed within existing organizations in each municipality. For rural communities interested in expanding early childhood education opportunities the work of Celebrate Liberty's Children proves it is possible to start small with low cost or no cost activities such as a children's parade or a local MOM's Club support group. From those small activities the momentum and funding increased until the vision for a local hub for early childhood services and programs was achieved. I recommend for others with an interest in developing community based school readiness opportunities to start small and pilot activities such as a preschool art day at the park.

Gather feedback from parents who attend and use that information to plan additional community based activities for preschoolers.

Further Investigation

The package of services Celebrate Liberty's Children has created for the Liberty Early Childhood Center serves to address parent education, family literacy, social support, access to health care, and other protective factors in an attempt to make a long term impact for children in the Liberty area. These early interventions and services are aimed at better preparing students to enter school with the necessary skills right from the beginning and preempt the achievement gap. While no follow-up to this study is planned, it would be interesting to examine the long term academic success of students who have participated in this combination of services locally. As the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program was started in fiscal year 2005-2006, children who were recruited during the PAT program's first year in Liberty under the age of twelve months would have been eligible for the More at Four Pre-kindegarten program in 2009-2010. A study tracking the school readiness of children who have received PAT, Pre-K, and WIC services in Liberty would provide insight into the effects of this combination of services on school readiness and future academic achievement. Below is a brief summary of research related to the impact of Parents as Teachers programs, WIC programs, and the More at Four Pre-kindergarten program.

A research summary entitled *The Parents as Teachers program: Its Impact on School Readiness and Later School Achievement* (2007) summarizes results from a 2006

study of Missouri children who participated in Parents as Teachers (PAT) and other early childhood experiences. Researchers investigated the impact of Pre-kindergarten services on 7,710 Missouri children's readiness for school and performance on state assessments at the end of the early elementary years. The state of Missouri has offered Parents as Teachers services to all residents through every school district since 1985. Key findings from this study included 82% of low income children who participated with high intensity in both Parents as Teachers and preschool entered kindergarten ready to learn, as compared to only 64% of low income children who had no involvement in either service. A similar pattern emerged for more affluent children with 93% participating in PAT and preschool entering school ready to learn versus 81% who had no involvement in PAT or preschool services. At third grade, 88% of low income children who participated with high intensity in PAT and preschool reached a benchmark level of performance on the Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts test, as compared to 77% of low income children who had no involvement in either service. The results for more affluent children were 97% of children participating with high intensity in PAT and preschool reaching a benchmark level versus 93% who had no involvement in PAT or preschool services. Parents as Teachers combined with preschool shows promise for narrowing the achievement gap between low income students and more affluent students.

Since 1974, the Specialized Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has been promoting children's health and development. A report entitled *Feeding Our Future, Growing Up Healthy with WIC* (2009) by Children's HealthWatch has found that children under age three who receive WIC are more likely to

be in excellent or good health than eligible children who do not receive WIC due to access problems. Specifically children who receive WIC are 21% more likely to be in food secure households having the appropriate quantity and quality of food to support a healthy diet. These children are also 16% more likely to have a healthy height and weight for their age. Children receiving WIC are 24% more likely to be developmentally within normal limits. WIC promotes other protective factors of child health and development by improving rates of childhood immunizations and the likelihood of a child having a regular source of health care. WIC has also been shown to decrease the rate of low birth rate by 44% and increase the rate of breastfeeding by 23%.

The More at Four Program is North Carolina's statewide pre-kindergarten initiative for at-risk 4-year-olds, designed to help children be more successful when they enter school. The purpose of More at Four is to provide a high quality educational program for at-risk children in the year before kindergarten entry. The More at Four Evaluation team at the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute serves as the external evaluator for the North Carolina More at Four Program. Since More at Four began in 2001-2002, FPG has gathered information each year to evaluate the program's effectiveness. The more recent report from FPG, *Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Program, Performance and Progress in the 7th Year (2007-2008)* concludes that More at Four produces significant growth among at-risk and unserved children across all domains: language and literacy skills (receptive language, letter-word knowledge, print knowledge, phonological awareness), math skills (applied problems, counting), general knowledge (social awareness), and behavioral skills (social skills). The report also found

that More at Four produces even greater benefits among children with lower levels of English proficiency.

For the past three years, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has ranked More at Four as one of top two pre-kindergarten programs in the nation for Pre-K quality standards in their *State Preschool Yearbook* (2008). NIEER ranks states' preschool programs annually on early learning standards, teacher degrees, teacher specialized training, assistant teacher degrees, continuing professional development requirements, maximum class size, staff-child ratios, screening, referral and support services, meals and monitoring procedures

Results from this study do point to the fact that locally planned school readiness initiative can have an effect on increasing opportunities for and awareness of early childhood education. As Liberty is unique in its package of services that is offered locally, a study to determine the impact of this combination of services on the long-term academic success of children could have future implications for policymakers, schools, families, and communities alike in finding ways to close the achievement gap and improve the school readiness of children in rural areas.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

(In-person interview consent form)

Project Title: Community- Based Initiatives for Promoting School Readiness:

The Story of Celebrate Liberty's Children

Project Director: Dr. Rick Reitzug

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?
This study involves research and the purpose of the study is to describe a community based school readiness initiative (Celebrate Liberty's Children) that was launched in a rural area where high numbers of children were entering school with potential delays. This study serves to highlight how rural, limited resource communities can increase opportunities for children's experiences and access to services prior to school to enhance school readiness. One of the purposes of this project includes creating a historical account of this community based school readiness initiative and what lessons can be learned in terms of leadership, resource development, and community collaboration (via in person interviews with community team members).

Why are you asking me?
You are being asked to complete an in-person interview based on the following criteria:

- Current and former member of Celebrate Liberty's Children community team

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?
You are being asked to complete an in-person interview about your experiences and knowledge of Celebrate Liberty's Children. The in-person interview is anticipated to take sixty to ninety minutes to complete.

Is there any audio/video recording?
Audio recording will be used for the interviews. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape. Access to the tapes will be limited only to the student researcher and the transcriber. The centralized database for interview data will be accessible only to those individuals with a password. Passwords will be given to individuals who work directly on the project and have a clear need to access the data.

What are the dangers to me?
The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses a minimal risk to participants. There is a risk of breach of confidentiality due to the fact audio recordings will be made of interviews and these recordings are potentially identifiable.

If you have any concerns about your rights or how you are being treated please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research and Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482. Questions about this project or your benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by the principal investigator Dr. Rick Reitzug who may be contacted at (336) 334-3460 (ucreitzu@triad.rr.com) or the student researcher Heidi Austin who may be contacted at (919) 357-5836 (heidiaustin@gmail.com).

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?
There are no direct benefits to participants in this study.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?
Benefits of the study to society and the field of educational leadership may include the contribution of knowledge regarding leadership, resource development, and community collaboration as they relate to early childhood initiatives in rural areas.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?
There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?
The centralized database for interview data will be accessible only to those individuals with a password. Passwords will be given to individuals who work directly on the project and have a clear need to access the data. Interview notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the student researcher's home. Your name will not be used in any report of the study.

All data will be kept for three years after the close of the project.

Identified data and consent forms will be destroyed three years after close of the project and will be shredded. Tapes will be erased and crushed. Digital files will be deleted from the hard drive of the computer.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law such as a legal duty to report abuse that might supercede these confidentiality promises.

What if I want to leave the study?
You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?
If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:
By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Heidi Austin.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your participation and involvement with Celebrate Liberty's Children (CLC).
   a) When/How did you first hear of CLC?
   b) How was CLC initially formed/started?
   c) What was/is your understanding of CLC's purpose?
   d) Why did you choose to participate in CLC?

2. Describe the process CLC used for planning?
   a) Who was involved in the planning?
   b) How often did the team meet?
   c) What type of data/information did the team reviewed?
   d) What issues areas did the team identify?

3. What do you feel were the most important steps CLC took during the planning process?

4. What are some of the challenges that CLC experienced during the planning stage? What helped the group overcome these challenges?

5. Please describe your knowledge/involvement in CLC's capital campaign with the Partnership to renovate the old Liberty School into the Liberty Early Childhood Center.
   a) What types of community fundraisers were utilized?
   b) What was the community's response to this ambitious effort?

6. What have been some milestones – or successes – that CLC has experienced throughout the process of creating the Liberty Early Childhood Center?

7. What do you feel are the most pressing issues for families with young children (birth to age 5) in the Liberty area?

8. Please describe any local programming that you are aware of CLC's involvement with.
9. Please describe how the programming you just mentioned is impacting families with young children in the Liberty area?

10. From your point of view, do you feel CLC's efforts are successful? What do you think accounts for CLC's successes/lack of success as a community team?

11. What suggestions or advice would you give to other rural communities seeking to replicate the work of CLC?

12. How do you keep community leaders and volunteers engaged in the efforts of CLC?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences with CLC?

APPENDIX C

SURVEY TOOL

1. Your relationship to the child you are completing this survey for:
□ Mother □ Father □ Grandparent □ Other:_____

2. What is your child's ethnicity?
□ Caucasian □ African American □ Hispanic □ Other: _____
□ Asian □ American Indian □ Multi-Ethnic

3. What is your marital status?
□ Married □ Single □ Separated □ Divorced

4. What is your family income per year?
□ Less than $30,000 □ $30,000 to $50,000 □ More than $50,000

5. What is the number of years of education you have completed?
□ 1-6 years (elementary school, K-5th grade)
□ 7-9 years (middle school, 6th-8th grade)
□ 10-13 years (some high school)
□ GED
□ High School Graduate
□ Trade School
□ Associate's degree
□ Some College
□ Bachelor's degree
□ Graduate School

6. How many children aged birth to age five years live in your home?
_____

7. How many children aged six years to eighteen years live in your home?
_____

8. Are you aware that Celebrate Liberty's Children is a local advisory committee composed of community volunteers that identifies and secures resources for programs and services for young children (ages birth to five) and their families - with the goal that every child enters school healthy and ready to succeed?
____ I knew this.

____ I may have heard something about this.
____ I was not aware of this.

9. **For each program or service, put a check in one of the columns (A, B, C, or D) based on whether you are knowledgeable of the service, have only heard of it, have never heard of it at all, or have personally used the service. <u>Please place only one check (A, B, C, or D) for each item</u>.**

Community Programs supported by Celebrate Liberty's Children Local Advisory Committee	**A.** **Highly Aware of Service**	**B.** **Have Heard of It**	**C.** **Have Never Heard of It**	**D.** **Have Used this Service**
Celebrate Liberty's Children Day Festival that includes games, entertainment and screenings for children.				
Pre-Kindergarten Program Classes for 4-year-old children.				
Parents as Teachers Program Parent educator who educates parents on each stage of child development.				
Monthly Early Learning Groups Families of preschool age children engage in parent/child activities and socialize with other parents and children.				
Randolph Community College Courses GED, English as a Second Language (ESL), and basic skills computer classes offered at the Liberty Early Childhood Center.				
Women Infant Children (WIC) Clinic A satellite office of the Randolph County Health Department WIC clinic.				
Parent Resource Room Educational materials/parent resource bulletin board.				
Distribution of free children's books Children's books distributed at Christmas parades and community fairs.				

Please mark whether you Agree, Disagree, or are Unsure for the following statements.	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
The first five years of a child's life are the foundation for future growth and development.			
What children learn during their first five years depends on the experiences they have each and every day.			
The newborn brain is especially interested in sounds.			
Sounds are the building blocks of speech and language.			
A caregiver should let a baby hear their voice as much as possible to facilitate language development.			
Early childhood education is vital to strong schools and a strong economy.			
The return on the investment in quality early childhood education includes (please check all you agree with): □ Higher graduation rates □ Better job skills □ Increased home ownership □ Less chance of criminal activity			
A child's capacity for learning is not set from birth and can be significantly increased or decreased based on how the child's caregiver interacts with him.			
Childcare teachers with degrees in early childhood education provide the children in their care with activities that are both stimulating and appropriate to their levels of development; as a result, the children are better prepared when they enter school.			

11. If the following services were available locally in the Liberty area, would you use these services? Please mark would or would not use.

Service	Would Use	Would Not Use
Immunization Clinic for Children		
Well Child Clinic		
Food Stamp Application/Recertification Assistance		
Dental Clinic for Children		
Volunteer Services to assist families in finding information and match eligible families to services.		

12. What other services do you have a hard time accessing and believe are needed in the Liberty area?

_____

_____

13. **Are there specific workshops or parenting group topics that would be helpful to you in raising your children?**

_____

_____

14. **Is there anything else you would like Celebrate Liberty's Children to know regarding programs and services for young children in the Liberty area?**

_____

_____