The Relationship Between Perceptions of School Climate and Student Achievement in Schools That Use Jostens' Renaissance Programs

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE
AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN SCHOOLS THAT
USE JOSTENS’ RENAISSANCE PROGRAMS

by

Amy Yarborough Coyne

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN SCHOOLS THAT USE JOSTENS’ RENAISSANCE PROGRAMS

by Amy Yarborough Coyne

December 2012

Each school has unique attributes and a personality that gives the school a distinct climate. Psychological qualities that schools possess might include trust, collaboration, cooperation, teaching attributes, expectations, community involvement, and engagement (Rhodes, Camic, Milburn, & Lowe, 2009). Given information regarding school climate, relationship needs, and motivation, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers involved in change and improvement processes and to determine whether academic change was related to the use of programs such as Jostens’ Renaissance.

The participants of this study consisted of 242 faculty and staff from five public schools from three separate school districts in the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region. The schools included three middle schools and two high schools. These participants completed a researcher-made questionnaire used to assess perception of school climate. Three building level administrators participated in a nine question interview to add qualitative data to the study that assessed common themes. Student achievement data for this study were measured through the Quality Distribution Index (QDI). QDI is unique to Mississippi, and the majority of the QDI score for a school comes from the school’s
Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2) and Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) test scores. QDI was gathered over a three-year academic period from 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 for the five schools included in the study for three academic years.

Correlations were conducted to test the relationship between school climate and achievement, school professionals’ support of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program, and faculty perceptions of impact of Jostens’ Renaissance Programs and school climate. Data analysis showed that there was significant correlation between school climate perception data and achievement over the three years of academic findings. After analysis of the descriptive statistics from the 242 respondents to The Perception Survey for Faculty and Staff, it was found that there was support for the Jostens’ Renaissance Program based upon the mean scores and standard deviations provided from the findings. Findings report that there was no statistical significance found between the perception survey findings and school climate. It was found that school climate does, indeed, have a statistically significant impact on student achievement due to significant increase in QDI over the three academic years. During the qualitative interviews, the respondents overwhelming had positive remarks about the climate and Jostens’ Renaissance being vital components of successful schools and successful academic achievement based upon their experiences with the programs. Responses from the interviewees indicated that faculty support Jostens’ Renaissance programs, support a need for a positive climate in order to obtain success, and support that there was, indeed, a positive connection between climate, these programs and achievement in the schools in this study.
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2012
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

School reform efforts are meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2001 that have mandates to improve student achievement, as well as student behavior and completion rates (George, White, & Schlaffer, 2007). During a time when accountability expectations and pressures are increasing and there is a demand for evidence that the work of educators is positively impacting students and schools as a whole, teacher effectiveness, attitude, climate, and overall school improvement are of major focus in schools. High quality educators are expected to be in place and supporting the educational efforts of all children in the schools (Fuller, Young, & Baker, 2010).

School efforts and decisions for improvement are a result of an array of factors that are typically a collective effort among all faculty, staff and the leadership of the school. The more formal and organized that the programs are the more effective and more successful the results will be from these programs (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). The undertakings of educators are multifaceted and often times overwhelming tasks that are filled with an assortment of duties that require that excellence in the classroom with assigned students be the standard expectation at all times. School success and overall improvement are dependent upon the efforts of educators to be willing to go above and beyond, build relationships, engage in extra efforts and work towards a vision that is comprehensive and leads to student achievement and progress (Somech & Ifat, 2007).

Student success in schools, school improvement and school climate have received a large amount of attention in literature that is tied to positive school climate and the promotion of academic achievement among students (Cohen, Pickeral, & McCloskey,
Anderson (1982) suggests that school climate research is “the stepchild” of climate research in both organizations and in school settings (p. 368). The organizational environment, or the school climate, addresses characteristics of safe teaching and learning environments where relationships are important. These safe climates build connectedness and belonging (Cohen et al., 2009). There is no comprehensive review of literature of the school building climate as it is perceived by teachers that indicates how this climate effects teacher morale and teacher motivation. Research builds upon relationships between stakeholders and examines relationships between the stakeholders and student achievement and teacher quality (Fuller et al., 2010).

In the research, the terms climate, culture and environment are all used synonymously. School climate is defined as “a reflection of the positive and negative feelings regarding school environments which may directly or indirectly affect a variety of learning outcomes” (Gunzelmann, 2005, p. 66). Keiser and Schulte (2009) define school climate as “the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community that influence children’s cognitive, social and psychological development” (p. 46). One of the first leaders in the educational world to write about school climate and the affects that this has on students and achievement was Perry in 1908. Cohen (2006) suggests that although there is no universally received definition of school climate, most research proposes that climate “reflects subjective experience” in schools (Cohen, 2006, p. 203). Cohen (2009) suggests that climate “refers to the character and quality of school life” (p. 101).

Collective efficacy is a term that comes from social cognitive theory regarding beliefs of the members of an organization about capabilities and goals of the group.
Efficacy beliefs are essential and are influenced by the strength that comes from these. When efficacy is strong and positive, individuals are more likely to work and put effort into the attainment of the goals set forth. Efficacy comes into play in school settings due to the effect that beliefs and attitudes have on achievement, the environment and on overall improvement (Goddard & Skrla, 2006).

School climate encompasses much more than one experience of one individual. This is a group phenomenon that is much more than the experience of an independent person. The climate incorporates students, educators, parents and at times also includes the community to play a role in the conditions and vision of the school (Cohen, Pickeral et al., 2009). When there is knowledge that a school climate is healthy and positive, it is ultimately suggested that academic success and overall school improvement takes place.

Culture of organizations and the study of organizational culture originated in anthropology. There are a number of levels involved in assessing the culture of an organization (Dumay, 2009). If all stakeholders in the organization subscribe to the same perceptions and vision, a culture is found to be homogeneous (Maslowski, 2006). Reality, truth, values, norms, and behaviors are all vital factors to look at when one seeks to look at the environment or culture or climate of an organization (Dumay, 2009). Teacher performance is a combination of their motivation, capacity, and their environment. These factors help to determine the overall effort and quality of instruction from these very important stakeholders (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Nichols (2007) recommends in her dissertation on school climate, leadership and student performance that a good solid qualitative approach to a study of school climate relating to personnel and teachers is recommended. Mattingly (2007) states in his dissertation on climate, teacher turnover, teacher efficacy, and job satisfaction that there
is a need for research that evaluates specific factors that may or may not be related to teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Perkins (2006) mentions that there is a need for further research of the relationship between climate, empowerment, and motivation of teachers, and a behavioral concept such as teacher effectiveness. Student achievement, teacher effectiveness, educational experiences, and outcomes in the schools are all dependent upon the efficacy beliefs of the individuals in a variety of ways (Goddard & Skrla, 2006).

Whitlock (2006) suggests that there is an emergence of research that advocates that a variety of connections in school are significant in predicting academic performance, health and other behaviors of students (Whitlock, 2006). Cohen, McCabe et al., (2009) suggest that support for the educational process and all stakeholders is not being researched sufficiently. This group of researchers suggest that further research, practices and support of climate enhancement in schools may well enhance the development of students and their ability to be taught (Cohen, Pickeral et al., 2009). Organizational theorists have reported that the most important act of school leaders should be attention to the culture of the organization and the development and improvement of this culture (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

In order to determine the implications of student achievement in relation to social norms, relationships, and external motivators, it is necessary to assess teacher perception of self and of the group as a whole. Perception of the adults in the working relationships has a large impact upon the outcomes and group norms developed. Teacher commitment and incentives for success will most often have an impact on success and effort put forth by students (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002). Teachers who are highly committed and
highly motivated and have healthy relationships with students have much more success with student performance and student achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009).

Adult stakeholders, namely teachers and school leaders, who portray positivity, high expectations, high beliefs and respect will typically yield high academic success and overall school improvement results (Hoy et al., 2002). A positive school environment with effective teaching is connected to improved student performance and less school dropout (Bruggencate, Luyten, Sheerens, & Sleegers, 2012). Early research regarding culture give priority to stakeholder and leader styles, cooperation and perception in regards to positive cultures or climate (Dumay, 2009). Bruggencate et al. (2012) suggest a need for further research connecting student engagement, participation, teacher effort, motivating factors and academic performance.

School-wide reward systems turn the emphasis on validating procedures, clearing up expectations and using positive reinforcement in teaching. Respect and positive social bonds are developed. School-wide rewards systems have been determined to have more long-term development of compliance (Howard, 2011). Successful implementation of school-wide reward systems require essential elements and a plan. The plan must include a leadership team, funding, collaboration, support, visibility, marketing, training and coaching, and demonstrations or modeling (George & Kincaid, 2008).

The use of recognitions and rewards are influential components that are fundamental to the development of a positive climate and culture (Harrison, 2010). Motivating both teachers and students is a crucial factor in creating a positive school culture. Purpose-based recognition aids in task performance, value, and obtaining personal goals for all stakeholders (Gostick & Elton, 2009). Harrison (2010) reports
that Jostens’ Renaissance was founded in 1988 by a group of educators. The ultimate goal of this program is to make the school experience more positive and enjoyable for both teachers and students. As found on the Jostens’ website, Jostens’ Renaissance includes a pride factor model. The factors or important aspects of this model are culture, motivation, performance, and recognition.

Statement of the Problem

Cohen and Hamilton (2009) suggest that school climate is a tool that schools may use as a “framework that supports healthy individuals and relationships, educator-parent mental health partnerships, and transformational learning for individuals and school communities” (p. 108). These authors also make note of the opinion that climate, communities, and understanding people is multifaceted and complicated. Cohen (2009) states that “school climate is at the nexus of individual and group experience” (p. 101). Cohen (2009) finds that perceptions and group trends are identified through climate and that these topics of study allow for intervention, strategies and assessments of educators on their current teaching and goals for the future. Halawah (2005) suggests that research on effective schools and leadership point out the importance of school administrators and teachers creating a “positive and nurturing school climate” (p. 337). School leaders who begin activities that build a positive culture, send positive messages, display respect, and are supportive of the overall learning environment are able to motivate students. School climates and cultures, academic achievement and school capacity, and effectiveness are connected to one another (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007).

Pepper and Thomas (2002) note that it is also important to examine school personnel and the quality of their performance and perceptions as a result of the school climate. A school environment in which teachers work well with one another, their
students, and administration is often found to be effective (Martinez, 2004).

Administrators and school leaders must demonstrate and model the behaviors and expectations that they expect of their personnel in order for effective engagement and successful implementation to occur. When stakeholders work together and are engaged, they are much more likely to win together and achieve (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

In the ever changing world in which we live in today, relationships with students, the climate of the schools, and the overall environment where learning takes place must be at the forefront of the minds of educators in order to overcome the challenges that we all face. There is great need to foster a climate that is not merely conducive to learning, but that is also motivating for students. If the environment is not a focus, achievement and academic performance will suffer and not reach their utmost potential. Achievement, relationships and overall academic experiences will only rise and benefit from focus on climate. School climate and the enhancement of it will assist in developing students, their ability to be taught, and the overall satisfaction of the educators who are involved in the process (Hoffman, Hutchinson, & Reiss, 2009). Analysis and change take time and practice. School systems that are willing to make a commitment to consistent and reinforcing programs for successful improvement and change will be the organizations that have sustainability and overall success (Reeves & Flach, 2011).

Encouraging all stakeholders, celebrating together, personalizing recognitions for others, and setting motivational examples for one another are excellent methods for increasing engagement and academic success (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Proactive and preventative approaches to dealing with inappropriate behaviors, lack of engagement, and student academic achievement are vital to meeting the challenges of school improvement (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). Positive school-wide behavioral support systems are
being used more frequently in schools to decrease problem behaviors. These systems are grounded in the approach of using teams to problem solve and expect individual change to occur as a result of the efforts of such systems (George et al., 2007).

A number of educational systems use rewards as well as punishments to aid in behavior control. Use of punishments disrupt the development of relationships and deter individuals from taking risks. Rewards have the opposite effect. School systems that use rewards and incentives to enhance student and teacher performance are on the rise. There is little evidence to assess sustainability and long-term change of organizations using these programs and a need for further research about such change (Hoffman et al., 2009).

Jostens’ Renaissance Program has a positive impact upon the overall school climate and learning environment. This program was developed to improve academics, overall school culture, student achievement, learning, and the entire school environment for all stakeholders. The belief of Jostens’ Renaissance is that students who believe that there will be positive recognitions for the efforts that they make will concentrate more and put forth more effort in academics and behaviors. This program makes the school a more pleasant and positive place for students, faculty, staff and parents (White, 2008).

Research Questions

The following Research Questions are considered throughout this study:

RQ1: Does school climate have a statistically significant impact on student achievement?

RQ2: Do school professionals support the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

RQ3: Do school faculty perceive a statistically significant impact between the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and school climate?
Definition of Terms

*Climate* is the quality and character of school life. Climate is the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community that influence children’s cognitive, social, and psychological development (Keiser & Schulte, 2009).

*Culture* is the behavioral norms, assumptions, and beliefs of an organization (Owens, 2004).

*Perception* is a source of behavior that individuals need to understand in order to understand specific behaviors of others (Bosworth, Lysbeth, & Diley, 2011).

*Intrinsic motivation* is motivation that is internal and that is not the result of outside factors (Phillips & Lindsay, 2006).

*Extrinsic motivation* is motivation that is external and that is a result of outside factors such as tangible rewards, praise or any number of external variables (Phillips Lindsay, 2006).

*Jostens’ Renaissance Program* is a customizable recognition program for students, and staff that uses incentives and rewards with the intention of improving grade point averages, attendance rates, graduation rates, faculty and staff involvement, and reducing discipline problems in schools (Jostens, 2012).

*Mississippi Curriculum Test – 2nd Edition* (MCT2) is the revised statewide language arts and mathematics curricula tests that are administered in May of each school year in grades 3 through 8 in the State of Mississippi. Student scores are numeric as well as labeled as proficiency levels of either advanced, proficient, basic, or minimal. The proficiency levels represent standards based on cut scores established by a committee of Mississippi teachers that were approved by the State Board of Education (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).
Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) includes end of the course tests in Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History results of multiple-choice tests. These tests include a numeric score as well as a proficiency level and a pass/fail status. Students take these tests at the completion of each of the courses and must obtain a passing score on all four tests in order to obtain a high school diploma (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Mississippi Alternate Assessment of the Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MAAECF) is a set of assessments designed for students with disabilities who cannot take the regular statewide assessment even with allowable accommodations. The MAAECF includes assessments in language arts, mathematics and science. There are several scoring tables for students and these scores are reported by proficiency levels (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Quality of Distribution Index (QDI) is a value that is calculated using data from MCT2 in language arts and mathematics; SATP data from the Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and United States History tests; and results from the language arts and mathematics sections of the MAAECF (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Student achievement is a result gained by effort. For the purposes of this study, achievement will be measured by the use of the state accountability measure of the QDI values (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Faculty and staff are defined by the researcher for the purposes of this study as teachers, assistant teachers, and secretaries in the schools. The terms faculty and staff may also be used synonymously with the term participants.
Delimitations

The survey that is being used is self-made. This study was delimited to five schools along the Mississippi Gulf Coast who were part of three separate public school districts that had used the Jostens’ Renaissance Program for a minimum of three years. Methodology was delimited to survey and interview instruments created by the researcher. Participants who were surveyed included faculty and staff members from these five schools who were willing to participate in completion of the survey. Those interviewed were delimited to building administrators within three of the five schools within the three school districts.

Assumptions

The general assumptions for the success of this study were that all respondents would complete their questionnaires and interviews with complete honesty. All respondents would complete the questionnaires and interviews with integrity and devote adequate time to the process. There was a general assumption that the achievement data gathered from each school that was calculated by the state is legitimate and the data was calculated accurately. There was also an assumption by the researcher that the Jostens’ representative provided a complete and accurate list of school districts in the southeastern region of the state who participated in Jostens’ Renaissance to choose from for this study. The chosen school districts were selected from a list of schools identified by the Jostens’ representative of the Southeastern Region of the State of Mississippi that was provided to the researcher upon the researcher’s request. The final assumption was that the QDI data collected from the state department was accurately calculated without flaws or mistakes.
Justification

The significance for school personnel to know and understand the impact of the environment and attitudes as a whole and the affect that these have on the achievement and overall education of the students in classrooms every day would result from this study. This research would answer questions and provide a rational for further focus on teaching and learning. There was a need for further research to identify reasons why some schools’ positive climates emerge and some do not. Educators and administrators would have assistance in selecting recognition programs that have positive effect on school climate, performance, and overall school improvement. Administrators and educators would be assisted in eliminating such programs if there was not significant improvement found as a result of such programs. Connecting climate, culture, achievement, and school effectiveness so that there was no more inconclusiveness to these correlations is a necessity. Effective climate improvement must model representative populations and processes for all stakeholders to develop skills and capacity for ongoing and active change. Recommendations were that schools will report on the impact of school-wide improvement and the correlations between achievement and teacher perception and morale while assessing the use of the newly popular incentive and rewards systems. Jostens’ Renaissance is a new program that has had little research conducted regarding effectiveness and sustainability.

Summary

Examining human behaviors in school settings is a complex undertaking. Relationships, personnel and student interactions, competence, performance, motivation and overall climate are areas that have been studied, and correlations have been made between and among these variables and their impact on school improvement,
environment and student performance in the world of accountability in which we exist today. It is well-known that culture and climate have a large influence on student academic achievement, self-esteem, and overall performance. Further research is needed in connecting school climate and culture with attributes necessary for learning and achievement.

Trust, values, assumptions, experiences, personalities, competence, capacity, and a multitude of other factors all influence the relationships and environment of the schools. School teachers within this environment must make efforts to determine a means of supporting the school improvement movements while conducting effective teaching and performing on task with students in efforts to continue improvement efforts, enhance the environment and increase academic achievement. The perception of the teachers has a great impact on the level of improvement, their trust development, and school performance. Engaging all stakeholders, especially the students, and giving them allowance to make some decisions in the educational process will improve academic achievement and positively impact the students and the teachers.

In today’s school systems, there are a number of school-wide initiatives being implemented with the intent of improving overall climate, performance, and capacity, and establishing long lasting positive change. Research is needed to determine which components and strategies of improvement contribute to successful execution and factors affecting successful school-wide implementation strategies. In an effort to establish sound research that gives more concrete information regarding these systems and their sustainability and true impact on achievement, environment, stakeholders, and the school as a whole, this research study is being conducted. Research on deep and progressive change has been suggested and this research will help with this area of need. In order to
have a safe and orderly school that has high learning and achievement, there is much work, improvement, and research needed.

Herff Jones and Jostens are two companies that are well known for the production and sale of school rings and graduation products, as well as caps and gowns for high schools and colleges. These two organizations have developed their own programs that they are sharing with schools to improve positive reinforcement and motivation for success that are intended to aid in overall school improvement. The Herff Jones programs are referred to as Value-added programs and are not used as widely as the Jostens’ program that is called Renaissance. Information on these programs may be obtained from sales representatives from each company only. Brief information may be obtained from the company websites. After requesting information from the representatives, the researcher found that the Jostens’ program is more widely used in the south and southeastern region than the Herff Jones program. Therefore, the Jostens’ Renaissance program is going to be used as the focus of this study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Learning environment research in recent years has become recognized as a method of assessing and evaluating educational processes (LaRocque, 2008). A positive school culture and climate leads to overall school improvement. The perceptions of the educators in the environment must be positive as well. Student motivation is not static. However, it is tied to characteristics within the learning environment (Gostick & Elton, 2009).

Schools are basically social systems that rely on the quality of relationships with all parties in daily interactions. These systems are evaluated in order to understand and make efforts to improve academic outcomes for all children (Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009). Value that all stakeholders, especially the students and teachers, place upon education has a large impact upon the overall student performance outcomes and the success of the school as a whole (Bruggencate et al., 2012).

There is an increase globally in a call for development and implementation of resources to aid with innovations with the goal of improving education (Moolenaar, Daly & Sleegers, 2010). It is critical to understand that culture is complex due to it being distinctive and individualized. All stakeholders must clearly understand the purpose and plan of the organization and should ensure that all matters and plans work well. When there is a complex set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and expectations present, the behaviors of the organization are not suitable and things go wrong (MacNeil, et al., 2009). Successful schools possess strong academic focus, collaboration, strong leadership, a caring environment and high expectations (Harrison, 2010).
Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the conceptual framework that emphasizes features of human beings environments, climate, behaviors, self-efficacy, and motivation to succeed. The theory of choice that addresses all of these issues is the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura. Great deals of the early psychological theories were founded on behaviorist principles which incorporated an input-output model of behavior (Bandura, 2001). There has been some difficulty in the past in determining which variables best explain climate (Tornatzky, Brookover, Hathaway, Miller, & Passalacqua, 1980). Adams, Shea, and Kacergius (1978) refer to aspirations, self-concepts, and attitudes as important inputs.

Consciousness, “a basis of mental living,” is an aspect that is a great part of social cognitive theory. Consciousness is said by Bandura (2001) to make life personally controllable as well as worth living (p. 3). Smith and Hitt (2005) state that the functioning of human beings are rooted in social systems. People create agencies and social systems to “organize, guide, and regulate human activities (p. 10).” The social systems that are created provide resources as well as limitations and restrictions for personal functioning and development. The social cognitive theory promotes a social system that is guided by modeling and standards that allow for adjustment in development (Smith & Hitt, 2005, p. 12).

Over the years, many theories have been suggested to describe human psychosocial functioning. Human behaviors and motivations have been portrayed as being formed and managed by either environmental factors or by a person’s internal nature and outlook. “Social cognitive theory explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation” (Bandura, 1986, p. 362). Social cognitive theory points
out that a teachers’ perception of group or individual capacity and ability influences the behaviors of the individuals or groups (Hoy, et al., 2002).

The triadic reciprocal causation model consists of three parts. The first of these three are personal characteristics such as goals, anxiety, and self-efficacy. The second part of the model is comprised of behavioral patterns including self-evaluations, self-observations and perceptions. The final portions of the model are environmental factors, both social and physical environments (Wood & Bandura, 1989). According to this theory, humans develop their own personal efficacy from four sources. These sources are accomplishments in performance, observations of the performance of others, persuasion and social influences and judgements of personal vulnerabilities and capabilities (Tollefson, 2000).

“When cultures are cohesive, people contribute their efforts toward a common destiny, rallying around shared values that give meaning to work and to their lives” (Nichols, 2007, p. 3). McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2002) mention that a fundamental aspect of school climate is purely interaction and how “connected” individuals feel to one another in the school (p. 138). Bandura (2001) discusses “connectionists” in regards to cognitive activities and conceptual models related to social cognitive theory (p. 3). Teachers are more determined to put forth effort and plan and set high goals when they themselves take a personal accountability for academic achievement of all students without allowing setbacks to deter them from their goals (Hoy et al., 2002).

Climate, motivation, morale and the desire to continue working in a position are all aspects of internal mechanisms. Bandura (1997) mentions that people are not simply
“hosts of internal mechanisms orchestrated by environmental events” (p. 158). This researcher goes on to state that people are representatives of experiences and that people are not simply undergoing experiences. The sensory systems that people use with everyday experiences are tools that give definition, guidance and fulfillment to life (Bandura, 1997). These theorists find that attending to and monitoring culture in organizations and schools are vital actions for leaders. If a school culture is not welcoming and warm then achievement in students will decline (MacNeil et al., 2009). Organizational innovation has been studied in areas of this theory. Innovation requires the transformation of knowledge and practices to produce successful organizational change (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

Bandura (1986) discussed that in social cognitive theory there is a belief that people self-regulate motivation and performance by a variety of mechanisms that all function simultaneously. One of the major mechanisms that are working in this process works through a person’s self-efficacy. Social cognitive theory is grounded in the belief that an individual must possess skills to perform functions and in order to be successful that an individual must have a resilient self-belief in one’s ability to accomplish desired goals. There is a strong premise in social cognitive theory that a group of people may possess the same skill levels and perform at varying levels depending upon their self-beliefs or efficacy. The person’s beliefs and self-efficacy in turn influence the motivation that the person possesses and fosters the person’s persistence to persever. Self-beliefs and efficacy have an affect on patterns of thought that are either supports or impediments to the person (Bandura, 1986).

Social cognitive theory outlines four ways that individuals develop strong self-efficacy and motivation: mastery experiences, modeling, social persuasion, and
physiological states. Social cognitive theory is grounded in observations, imitations, and modeling. The theory focuses on how and why behaviors occur. The theory has a natural ability and sense to arouse emotions, which includes models that include the environment (Bandura, 1986). Social cognitive theory ultimately possesses the intensity to support transformation in human functioning (Smith & Hitt, 2005). The model of triadic reciprocal causation within the social cognitive theory enables both personal and organizational factors to operate simultaneously and influence individuals (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Individuals who exercise self-control in their lives and a positive sense of self-efficacy carry out plans of action and efforts introduced to them that lead to goal attainment and overall increased achievement (Hoy et al., 2002).

Wood and Bandura (1989) addressed motivational systems conducted in simple tasks that have a direct affect on levels of performance with tasks. Managers of organizations must master manageable goals, provide influence over the collective effort, as well as learn forms of functions relating to motivational factors. Managers must determine the best means of integrating rules and applying them to each member of the work group (Wood & Bandura, 1989). The potential for growth in academic success in social situations that are found to be positive, warm, and welcoming is much greater than in depleted and weak social systems (Hoy et al., 2002).

Tollefson (2000) reports that cognitive psychologists see that the main issue is belief of educators and students about the likelihood of student success and the ways in which these views impact student achievement and student-teacher interactions. Children enter situations in hopes of learning what it requires to be successful. Students who expect to do well usually do so, and those who expect to do poorly will do just that.
Discovering just how much effort one needs to disburse in order to achieve a specific outcome is an evolving process for most students (Tollefson, 2000).

Differences in student effort put forward are related to differences in the individuals’ confidence in their own abilities, their goal setting, competence, and their attribution or success and for failure with academic tasks (Tollefson, 2000). In 1968, The Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis extended an application of behavior principles and analysis and conducted a study of human behavior. This laid groundwork for further studies on improvement of human behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2002). When students accomplish tasks successfully, their belief that they will master other similar tasks in the future increases. Thus, the student gains confidence (Sugai & Horner, 2002). An individual’s own beliefs about his or her abilities comprises his or her sense of self-efficacy. Beliefs and efficacy of students are developed as a direct result of their success in school (Tollefson, 2000).

Self-determination theory is also an approach that is applicable to motivation and climate and success. This theory is an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while also using a meta-theory that highlights the importance of humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory examines the aspects of the environment that encumber or undermine the self-motivation, social functioning and well-being of individuals. This theory is interested in the environments that are averse towards productive development tendencies (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Self-determination theory uses inquiries into human tendencies and inner psychological needs that serve as the starting point of a person’s self-motivation and personality development and also looks into the conditions that promote those affirmative
processes. Through this empirical process, three psychological needs are identified. The first is the need for competence. The second is the need for connections. While the last need is identified as the demand for independence. These three are fundamental for paving the way for optimal functioning that will lead to development and harmony along with social growth and personal health and happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Self-determination theory has been able to classify a number of clear-cut types of motivation. Each of these types has definite outcomes for learning, performance, well-being and for personal practice (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Humans are encouraged by fundamental survival needs such as love, power, freedom, and fun that drive their behaviors (Haywood, Kuespert, Madecky, & Nor, 2008). Basic needs being met will satisfy psychological and physiological needs and lead to development of human well-being. Essential psychological needs that are not all satisfied all of the time will not interfere with overall well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Identifying development of adolescents has meaningful significance in the development of their capacity, skill, drive, and interest (Kaplan & Flum, 2009).

Another theory that is essential to consider through this study is that of change. A variety of change theories are present that attempt to answer the questions of why change happens. A few such theories are discussed within this section. The first type of change theory referenced dates back to 1951 and was introduced by Kurt Lewin. Kurt Lewin was a social scientist and his theory is referred to as a three-step change model. Lewin’s theory addressed that behaviors are a means of balancing forces that are working in opposing directions. Lewin’s model addressed the fact that there are forces out there that either promote or stop change from occurring. Lewin believed that change would
occur once the force of one of the strengths was greater than the other (Kritsonis, 2004-2005).

In 1958, an extension of Lewin’s theory was presented and involved a seven step theory that concentrated on the change agent and the jobs of this agent instead of focusing upon the actual change. Change that focused on the change agent was determined to be embedded and more resolute (Kritsonis, 2004-2005). Another change theory is social cognitive theory or social learning theory. As previously stated, social cognitive theory is grounded in observations, imitations, and modeling. The theory focuses on how and why behaviors occur. The theory has a natural ability and sense to arouse emotions which includes models that include the environment (Bandura, 1986). This theory is a theory of change due to the behavior change that is present and affected by the extensive factors of the environment and a number of other such factors (Kritsonis, 2004-2005).

Such theories address concepts of effort, meaningfulness, relationships, and boundaries. The links between and among all factors have a large impact upon the values of the explanations that result from such connections. It is most appropriate to review relationships between developments of organizations and practices. The assessment of connections and relationships with these variables lead to the answers to the questions of why in daily practice (Bartunek, 2008).

Accountability

Education and the teaching profession are not strangers to the concepts of change and school improvement. Change and improvement efforts might come about as a result of new legislation, new research or in a number of other ways. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed and focused on equal access to
education for all as well as placed an emphasis on high standards and accountability in schools. ESEA was reauthorized and became the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). A number of the most recent changes are a direct result of this legislation. This legislation has an impact on teacher attrition, testing, support, budgets, and accountability (Kinsey, 2006).

There is no denying that NCLB has and will have a marked effect on the practice of accountability in education and the measures of student achievement and growth. However, much of the focus of the future of accountability in education evaluates and researches the flaws of the legislation (Cizek, 2009). The legislation takes rights, equity, and fairness to the forefront. On the other hand, the threats and coercive measures that drive this legislation are increasing stress levels among educators and stakeholders that are in many cases leading to inflexible and stringent responses in practice and policy (Daly, 2009). As a response to controversy and debate over the NCLB standards, law makers are being pressured to introduce studies to assess the progress measurement based upon the standards set by this legislation (Heck, 2006).

Education is always developing, improving and changing. Due to this, it is essential that educational leaders confront improvement and change daily (Kinsey, 2006). The NCLB has a very demanding set of timelines and goals for school systems to close the achievement gaps in our country. There are a number of initiatives and variables recommended that need to be assessed in producing sustainable change and improvement in education. These variables include universal standards, respectful and welcoming school cultures, involvement of all stakeholders, performance based assessments for all students, and a number of other variables (Fanning, 2007). The expansion of accountability and the oversight associated with NCLB bring achievement and practices
to bring about change to improve achievement to the forefront in schools across the nation (Heck, 2006). The high-stakes tests that students are involved in taking and passing as a result of this legislation can lead to a decrease in student motivation and cause an increase in retention and school dropout rates (Amrein & Berliner, 2003).

All of the variable and factors associated with NCLB and school improvement movements and initiatives display that there is a certain level of trust, empowerment, and engaged involvement in successful and sustainable change (Daly, 2009). Teacher morale, school environments, achievement, competence, support and accountability are all factors that must be taken into consideration (Kinsey, 2006). Attendance, culture, collaboration, assessments, and the environment are essential to assess when working on school improvement efforts (Fanning, 2007). NCLB is built upon quite a number of assumptions. These include school change occurring without a substantial increase in funding, presence of well-known and understood lists of reform tasks, formal testing and assessment structures, risk of sanctions and a loss of resources if improvement is not made within the allotted time (Daly, 2009). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is a result of federal legislation, and in the areas of academic achievement students who are traditionally more successful academically will have a higher chance of reaching the benchmarks of proficiency set by NCLB than those with skill levels that are weaker (Heck, 2006).

The Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards of 2010 gives a brief history of accreditation and accountability in Mississippi. This document states that Mississippi’s accreditation improvement goes back to 1896 when The University of Mississippi published its first program of approved high school studies. In 1918, The University of Mississippi made requests for the appointment of a committee of
individuals to serve to classify the high schools and their affiliations. In 1920, this committee became called the State High School Accrediting Commission. In 1949, the Mississippi Education Association was dissolved and the Mississippi Accrediting Commission was formed and began to be the agency to regulate accreditation in Mississippi (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

The accountability standards note that the accreditation law of 1970 gave the Mississippi Department of Education the authority to evaluate standards and establish procedures for accountability and accreditation. In 1982, Governor William Winter initiated an accountability initiative that was referred to as the Education Reform Act of 1982. This was the first recorded legislation that served to create accountability guidelines and a system that was performance-based for both elementary and secondary schools in the state (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

In 2000, more requirements were enforced in the area of accountability systems. Legislation in Mississippi in 2000 gave two performance standards that must be met. This included an annual growth component in the area of student achievement and included the number of students who were scoring in certain ranges on the state-wide assessments as the factors affecting school labels and accreditation. For the first time in Mississippi accountability, all stakeholders in the schools were held accountable for the learning of the students in the schools. In 2007 and 2008, a task force that was identified to strictly assess accountability evaluated the curriculum in Language Arts and Mathematics as well as the state-wide assessments for these two academic areas. Goals regarding dropout rates were added along with goals to reach the national averages and match assessments and curriculum to national norms. There were goals and plans in place to move Mississippi schools toward the national performance standards. These
initiatives have moved to the other major academic areas (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

The Commission on School Accreditation currently serves as the determining body for annual accreditation of Mississippi public schools in the fall of each year. Accreditation status is based upon verified data from the prior school year. Accreditation labels assigned include accredited, advised, probation, and withdrawn. Accredited schools are those that are in 100% compliance with the accountability standards. Advised schools are those that have deficiencies and that are required to develop a plan for correcting and addressing the identified deficiencies. School districts or schools with a probation status were assigned advised the previous year and did not take the corrective action required to address or fix these deficiencies. A school or district that was assigned a probation status that they did not correct will be assigned a withdrawn status the following year. School performance classifications assigned are based upon the state achievement model and growth model. These classifications include star, high performing, successful, academic watch, low-performing, at-risk of failing, and failing (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Mississippi accountability takes into account achievement, growth and high school completion rates in order to assign an accountability status to the individual schools and the school districts. The calculation of what is referred to as the Quality Distribution Index (QDI) in achievement gives to educators and stakeholders predictions of scores, as well as growth. This index includes the number of advanced, proficient, and basic scores in an equation that determines the total QDI for each district, school, and classroom teacher. The two kinds of data used in the state to measure accountability and
assign ratings are the statewide assessment results and the information regarding school completion of the grade level cohorts (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

In Grades 3 through 8, students take a test called the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2). Subject areas tested with the MCT2 are language arts and math. In high school, students are administered the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) in the areas of Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History. These tests are administered towards the end of each of these courses for all students enrolled in those courses. The score of the student’s first attempt at these SATP tests are what is used to determine achievement accountability for high schools. The third test administered as part of the accountability system is the Mississippi Alternate Assessment of the Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MAAECF). This test is administered to students with disabilities that are so severe that the students cannot take the MCT2 or the SATP tests. The MAAECF includes assessments in the areas of math, science and language arts (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

The school completion portion of the accountability ratings is based upon the completion rates of the individual cohorts of students. Each student in the cohort must be accounted for at the year of graduation to determine whether the student counts as a drop out, received a certificate of attendance, received a regular diploma, or received an occupational diploma. Cohorts of students begin being tracked in the freshman year of high school. In determining high school completion, a standard diploma, occupational diploma, certificate of attendance, GED, dropout, student still enrolled, and a student who met requirements with the exception of the exit SATP tests are all assigned a number value and the formula uses these values to determine completion (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).
After calculating the growth, completion rate, and achievement, a rating of accountability is assigned. As a repeat of the accountability ratings, they are in rank order from highest to lowest: star school/district, high performing school/district, successful school/district, academic watch school/district, at risk of failing school/district, low performing school/district, and failing school/district. After all calculations are completed and achievement, growth, and high school completion are calculated, a district report card displaying the achievement model results and the QDIs is published and shared with all stakeholders (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Local state education agencies are able to request waivers and submit applications for waivers to NCLB. As of the time of this report, 26 states have requested a waiver of the NCLB requirements. The Mississippi Department of Education has developed a waiver request that will aid in evaluating barriers to academic achievement as well as to aid in identifying these barriers. Waivers will aid in the schools being held accountable to provide high quality support and teaching, interventions that are appropriate and research-based, technology assistance and support for teaching (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Current accountability requirements and school improvement initiatives address a need for continued and sustained improvement. Improvement initiatives must include a focus on achievement, competency, capacity for success, cultural factors, engagement from all stakeholders and methods for sustaining appropriate improvement and change (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010). First-rate, ethical, and superior education is vital in achieving more sustainability. Sustainable development arose from large concern over the environment and development needs being met (Nevin, 2008). Support, training, awareness of surroundings, basic needs, and the overall climate are variable necessary to
consider in improvement efforts in education (Wade, 2008). After assessing this information, it was decided that a study of a means of improvement that has sustainability and positive environmental change while improving achievement and capacity is called for. Frequently, school improvement efforts are short term and not sustained. Efforts that increase sustainability include the use of extrinsic motivators for students’ success such as reinforcement or reward systems (National School Climate Council, 2007).

Demands on schools in today’s society come from both internal as well as external factors. There is great need for structure, stability, and a focus on the necessary requirements for school improvement and academic achievement and success. Teacher and student performance are assessed in order to determine levels of success (Somech, & Wenderow, 2006). Student growth in academics is argued to be the most superior factor necessary to evaluate to measure school accountability and success measures of teachers and schools (Heck, 2006).

Climate

Loukas & Robinson (2004) note that school climate is an all encompassing component of the school organization and the people within it. In a 2002 journal article, it was mentioned that schools with encouraging environments tend to be the schools that shape positive attitudes and enhance motivation to learn and succeed (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). Schools are basically social systems that rely on the quality of relationships with all parties in daily interactions. These systems are evaluated in order to understand and make efforts to improve academic outcomes for all children (Goddard et al., 2009). Value that all stakeholders, especially the students and teachers, place upon education has a large impact upon the overall student performance outcomes and the success of the school as a whole (Bruggencate et al., 2012). A strong correlation between culture,
climate, and academic achievement exists. A positive school climate enhances the academic success of students (Owens, 2004).

The National School Climate Council (2007) reports that research confirms that a safe, supportive school with positive relationships, quality, character, and respect fosters learning and achievement, as well as appropriate social development among all school children. The council’s report of 2007 also states that welcoming and hospitable school climates decreases the academic partiality and promotes capacity, competence, and overall health of students, which leads to continued success. Positive school environments strongly affect a student’s desire and interest to learn and be successful (National School Climate Council, 2007).

A study of organizational citizenship and behaviors of organizations in 2007 found that relationships and climate have become “paramount” in the ways that schools and organizations survive and adapt for enduring growth (Somech & Ifat, 2007, p. 41). This study notes that support and overall organizational value are two factors that advance and uphold the behaviors of the teachers and other members of the school organization (Somech & Ifat, 2007). Fiore (2001) states that all stakeholders in schools must recognize that school climate and culture are very powerful.

Researchers, educators, and psychologists alike have all spent years on the question of why some students attain success in learning and achievement and some students are unsuccessful (Tollefson, 2000). Within the past decade, there has been an inflation in the research in organizations in relation to students’ interpersonal relationships and academic motivation, achievement and behavior. Student interpersonal relationships, academic motivation, and school engagement are under the microscope of a number of researchers. Many of the researchers involved in social processes research
and academic motivation focus on processes, social goals, instigation, direction, and intensity of behaviors, as well as engagement (Anderman & Kaplan, 2008).

The affect of relationships, academic motivation, and individuality are evident in cultural identity of students. Identities shape self-perception and this, in turn, aids with engagement, participation, and motivation (Kaplan & Flum, 2009). Perceived belonging, connection to, or identification with the school and social acceptance all key factors in performance research (Anderman & Kaplan, 2008). Engagement of students in school based upon their encounters, preferences, and dealings is undeniably influenced by who they believe that they are and by who they want to be and will essentially become. Self-identity, attitudes, and commitment are directly affected by the climate and environment of the school (Kaplan & Flum, 2009). A number of factors impact student motivation and student achievement. Such factors include disinterest, stress, ignorance, perceived safety, trust, lack of satisfaction, and a number of other factors (Akey, 2007).

Low-achieving students have been found to be much less engaged in school, both psychologically and behaviorally. Students who have a history of low-achievement that are placed in high quality classrooms with low incidents of conflict are more likely to display behavioral engagement and improved academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, as cited in Allensworth and Easton (2007) reported results of a 2005 study on dropout rates and climate factors. The report concluded that attendance, academic preparation and success, relationships with teachers, perceived importance of coursework in relation to their futures, and supports in place for academic achievement were all strongly correlated to students’ dropout rates and desire to stay in school (Allensworth & Easton, 2007).
Relationships

The review of literature found that positive relationships between teachers and students are associated with various desired outcomes that include academic achievement, low frustration, and appropriate social development, whereas, poor relationships are associated with retention and learning problems for students. It is important to nurture relationships with teacher leaders to responsible behaviors, pro-social behaviors, as well as higher academic performance (Rohner, Khaleque, Elias & Sultana, 2010). There is a strong correlation between supportive teacher-student relationships and a substantial impact on student conduct, achievement, and student adjustment (Rohner, 2010). At the conclusion of their study, Khan, Haynes, Armstrong, and Rohner (2010) found that their supportive relationships in school are vital to success of students in development tasks, school tasks, and are correlated to predicting academic success. Children who have a negative relationship with their educators are much more likely to have difficulties in the areas of engagement, trust, and, most importantly, academic achievement. Conflicts between teachers and students lead to lower grades on report cards and lower scores on standardized achievement tests. The student and teacher relationship is most important for the at-risk students in order to obtain success and develop resiliency (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011).

Types of interactions in classrooms have been researched and report that teachers who advocate motivation in teaching and learning also have positive social outcomes as well as positive academic outcomes (Khan et al., 2010). Khan et al. (2010) report that effective climates are reported by students to be caring and supportive. Environments without judgement, filled with trust and common goals will lead to the development of productive school climate conditions (Price, 2011).
Development of bonding in school is critical to reinforce social integration of students in school (Maele & Houtte, 2011). Student well-being, engagement, relationships, and trust are based upon the perception the student has of the teacher’s interpersonal behaviors (Maele & Houtte, 2011). The perception of students of their teachers in the area of academic support and expectations was directly related to more engagement in school and better behavioral compliance in classrooms. Rejected students often disengage and perform less adequately in academics. This relationship and perceptions of students is also correlated to competence, self-efficacy, and achievement (Khan et al., 2010). During times when students are alienated in schools, negative educational outcomes are created. Social integration, on the other hand, leads to positive educational outcomes (Maele & Houtte, 2011). Students profit when qualified personnel take time and give energy to their academics and their social growth (Price, 2011). Student attachment to school increases and positive student outcomes are associated with perceived teacher support by students (Maele & Houtte, 2011).

Relationships of school leaders directly affect the attitudes of teachers and students and defines the climate of the school (Price, 2011).

The primary objective of a school is to generate and support a climate and culture that is welcoming and warm for student learning to occur. School culture and climate are found to be among the greatest influences in positively affecting academic achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). Culture and cultural processes are also researched in social processes and academic motivation research (Anderman & Kaplan, 2008). Climate and culture are concepts that overlap one another according to a number of theorists (MacNeil et al., 2009). Since the 1980s, attention to positive school climate and culture has been a focal point of practitioners and policy makers (Price, 2011).
School climate has various meanings. It is described as a social system of shared norms and expectations of school personnel and students, includes teacher morale and levels of teacher empowerment, the personality of the school or the environment as indicated by the amount of negative behavior that might occur within the school (Johnson, Stevens, & Zvoch, 2007). Climate is described as the heart and soul of the school. Climate is what brings the teachers and students to love the school and have a passion to be a part of the school (MacNeil et al., 2009).

Positive school climate leads to the classroom being a "supportive workplace" that principals generate for teachers in order to establish an appropriate environment for learning to occur (Price, 2011, p. 43). A school’s culture is a set of complex norms and patterns, attitudes and beliefs, values and behaviors, traditions and ceremonies that are deep-rooted in the soul of the school. The school’s culture dictates "the way we do things around here" and cannot be altered alone (Barth, 2001, p. 7). Culture plays a crucial role in the development of a successful school (MacNeil et al., 2009).

Strong cultures aid in learning, climate development, self-efficacy, and perceptions, and influences teacher abilities, positive relationships, job satisfaction, and commitment levels. Climates that are positive are largely understood to possess environments in which the entire school community prospers (Price, 2011). Key functions of school culture are that they foster effectiveness and productivity, improve collaborative and collegial activities for better communication and problem solving, and foster successful improvement efforts. Cultures also build commitment to and an identification with all stakeholders, and amplifies energy, motivation and vitality and increases previous focus on problem behavior attention to what is truly of value.
The most critical element of culture in school is creating one such culture that promotes student learning (Barth, 2001).

Trust

School leaders who have a clear focus on particular attributes of climate that influence culture of the school will ultimately advance and support student achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). Practices to aid in positive school culture development that are suggested in research include defining expectations of all stakeholders, removing distractors to deter problem behaviors, personalize instruction to support engagement, and teach and strengthen prosocial skills (McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai, 2010). Organizations with open-minded climates are argued to be the risk takers and those who continuously improve the organizations and are more likely to be successful in implementation (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

The perception of students regarding the environment of the classroom has a definite impact on growth, development and achievement. Safe, supportive, and warm classrooms promote and develop enjoyment as well as accomplishment and lead to an increase in student achievement and risk-taking (LaRocque, 2008). These perceptions are an indicator of academic improvement and success. Schools gauge success by student performance on a number of assessments; however, the most significant indicator are the results of the state curriculum and/or achievement tests (Lassen et al., 2006).

Student achievement or academic performance is tied to or correlated with student behaviors, school connectivity, engagement, completion rates, dropout rates, and a number of other variables. Other factors that play a role in academic outcomes are motivation, instructional strategies used, trust, relationships, and the learning
environment. The relationship between academic performance and student behaviors is the most significant (Lassen et al., 2006).

The whole school environment may need to change in order to enhance the probability of classroom environments and promote prosocial behaviors (McIntosh et al., 2010). Almost all school cultures are initially resistant to change. When this is the case, it makes school improvement unavailing. Every school has a culture. Some school cultures are toxic, while others are hospitable and welcoming (Barth, 2001). Schools with unhealthy cultures and climates are dissuaded in their attainment of their goals by the sets of demands that typically are directed from the public (MacNeil et al., 2009). Schools with unhealthy cultures and climates have a tendency to create at-risk students. Changing a toxic culture into a hospitable and healthy one that provokes learning among all stakeholders is the primary challenge of school leaders (Barth, 2001).

There are quite a few challenges classroom teachers face today. Educators are responsible for teaching academic subjects and dealing with non-academic influences that affect instruction (Lassen et al., 2006). High-stakes testing may often result in teachers using direct instruction primarily, and this can decrease the motivation of students and even result in an increase in retention rates and dropout rates (Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Educators flourish when they sense that their endeavors positively influence students (Price, 2011). Teachers, even when properly trained, have challenges with nurturing effective practices when left to do these on their own (McIntosh et al., 2010). School personnels’ attitudes affect the environment of the school (Price, 2011). Encouragement to enhance performance has been found to have a more extensive influence over morale and productivity that any form of punitive measure or evaluation feedback provided (Reeves & Flach, 2011).
Over a teacher’s career, these individuals develop a set of beliefs about student abilities and efficacy expectations. The developed efficacy expectations are made use of and reflect in the classroom interactions the teachers have with their students. In order to develop a climate and environment in the classroom that fosters motivation and engagement, a precursor for teachers that is a necessity is knowledge of student motivation (Tollefson, 2000). Perceptions have a resolved influence on behaviors. In an effort to better understand and attempt to positively impact behaviors, educators must recognize the importance of perception (Haywood et al., 2008). When a teacher perceives that a student is an uninterested learner, he or she is resistant to put forth maximum effort to raise the student’s interests (Tollefson, 2000). Perception, mastery, performance, and strategies are all linked to the environment and student grades and performance (Wolters, 2004).

Teachers place high value on effort. Effort expenditure is important to teachers, even if students are not successful. Teachers establish reasons why students are either successful or unsuccessful in schools (Tollefson, 2000). According to Tollefson (2000), teacher fears that he or she is unable to raise interest is indicative of poor confidence and skills themselves. Teacher willingness to be unprotected and open to other roles is typically due to their perception that others are willing to be open, honest, reliable, and competent (Maele & Houtte, 2011). Perceptions of teacher affirmation, as well as acceptance, were found to be significant predictors of academic achievement (Rohner, 2010).

In order to understand school effectiveness, a focus on trusting relationships and their influence on achievement and school performance of the organization is a necessity (Goddard et al., 2009). Social-cognitive frameworks that refer to perceptions of
individuals make inquiries into predictive selections, engagement, performance, and perceived value of tasks (Kaplan & Flum, 2009). Teachers are found to introduce trust when the teachers perceive that the students are capable of meeting the academic demands that are administered (Maele & Houtte, 2011).

Transformational leadership provides for the consideration of individuals and the team in demonstrating confidence and innovative capacities for safe risk taking. Leaders, including administration and teachers, provide a safe work environment to encourage innovation without fear. Personnel who are close with the team members are described to have a strategic advantage as increased connections enable the team to obtain maximum skills and knowledge in shared learning. Creative and open-minded personnel possess the innovative and supportive climates that foster positive change (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

Relational trust is studied in organizations to assess the school climate. Literature regarding climate and school effectiveness display that trust, relationships, satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment affect learning, achievement, and overall climate and culture. Elements such as cohesion, trust, power sharing, and commitment all impact the satisfaction of the leader and personnel (Price, 2011). Trust plays a large role in the attainment of favorable and positive future academic outcomes (Goddard et al., 2009). Trust helps to build a students capacity and self-esteem. Students who do not believe that they are good at doing tasks will usually have little resiliency and be more likely to fail (Barry, 2007).

Support and an atmosphere that is collegial aids in developing substantial, reliable and confident faculty, staff, and students (Price, 2011). The importance of trust is introduced as a revelation through influence in the way that teachers and students interact
with one another. Trust displayed in teacher-student relationships are indicative of the quality of school life for both parties (Maele & Houtte, 2011). Schools that have high levels of trust within them also have exceptional dedication, allegiance, and cohesion. Affective ties, belief, and trust are essential in the relationship process. The demeanor of school personnel develops the school climate, or the environment for learning that impacts school operations (Price, 2011). Trust is absolutely correlated with teacher performance and professional behaviors and is in turn, positively linked with student achievement (Goddard et al., 2009). There have been strong links reported between the behaviors and beliefs of teachers and positive student achievement outcomes (Hoy et al., 2002). The efforts and work put into the improvement by the teacher is completely interconnected with engagement and performance of students (Bruggencate et al., 2012).

The relationship between the various aspects of goal theory and academic achievement have found a positive relationship between achievement and performance approaches. Classroom grades and achievement and perception of the main focus of school are positive predictors of a students grade point average (Wolters, 2004). As testing and accountability have come to be prominent and significant, school personnel need to increase their focus on cultural goals in an effort to invigorate the learning environment. Improvements in academic success will occur in organizations with optimistic and engaging cultures that demonstrate and model a supportive climate. Authentic and enduring change and improvement is more effortlessly achieved if the culture of the school is positively changed first (MacNeil et al., 2009).

School-Wide Support and Reinforcement

School-wide supports include strategies and plans in an effort to aid schools in improved academic performance, better safety, less inappropriate behaviors and the
development of positive school cultures (Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007).
Effective schools that reach educational achievement goals have strong leadership, high
expectations of all stakeholders, systematic evaluations given to students on a regular
basis, and a welcoming and structured school environment (Hoy et al., 2002). School
routines and plans are individual and based upon the needs, as well as the strengths, of
the schools after reviewing school data (McIntosh et al., 2010).

Strong and positive culture develops more motivated faculty and staff that leads
to greater success in academic outcomes for success (MacNeil et al., 2009). School
leaders must serve as the agents of change with a well-defined plan to transform the
culture of the school in methods of teaching and learning. Confirmation from effective
school leaders recommends that attention to the improvement of the culture of the school
as an environment of learning is vital to enhanced teaching morale as well as student
achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). Goals of leaders include increases in commitment,
capacity, engagement, and overall achievement (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

There is an increase globally in a call for development and implementation of
resources to aid with innovations with the goal of improving education (Moolenaar et al.,
2010). It is critical to understand that culture is complex due to it being distinctive and
individualized. All stakeholders must clearly understand the purpose and plan of the
organization and should ensure that all matters and plans work well. When there is a
complex set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and expectations present, the behaviors of the
organization are not suitable and things go wrong (MacNeil et al., 2009). Successful
schools possess strong academic focus, collaboration, strong leadership, a caring
environment and high expectations (Harrison, 2010).
After a review of theory and research on achievement, motivation, and individuality as a community, Wigfield and Wagner (2005) determine that there is much more to be studied in relation to motivation, development, competence, and learning. Collaborative leadership that involves all stakeholders focuses on school-wide processes that direct improvement, collaboration, encouragement, empowerment, and a sense of shared accountability for student learning and achievement. A key target is to drive teacher actions and student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Alternative means of assessing student progress, academic achievement, and overall school effectiveness need to be examined (Heck, 2006). Culture is improved and reinforced by the use of reinforcement, rewards, positivity, ceremonies, traditions, expectations, and symbols. The Jostens’ Renaissance Program aligns the practices and norms of the program with these same variables (Torres, 2009).

A growing body of research results report that school-wide systems are effective approaches in improving overall school climate (Lassen et al., 2006). School-wide systems combine the use of analysis, adoption of practices and principles of behavior management, and capacity to respond (Sugai & Horner, 2002). School improvement studies fundamentally evaluate change in the learning, achievement, and overall outcomes of the school over a period of time (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Humans make efforts to govern their own behaviors so that one elects to do what is most satisfying to one’s own needs (Haywood et al., 2008). In the past, it has been traditional for schools to use punitive disciplinary action to address challenging student behaviors. Such methods have not been sufficiently examined and many researchers suggest that reactive discipline procedures only increase the frequency of occurrence of problem behavior. Use of proactive and preventative approaches to handling challenging behavior in schools is
found to be more effective. A focus on proactive discipline with the establishment of precise expectations has supported an increase in appropriate behaviors (Lassen et al., 2006). Expectations should be taught using direct instruction at critical times during the school year (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Research surrounding student goals found that students have a wide variety of explanations for pursuing goals. These reasons are often tied to motivation in the classroom and affected motivation in different ways. Performance goals have been measured by social goals most often. For example, a desire to please others or make good grades is a social goal. Mastery goals, on the other hand, generally involve a desire to be competent and be able to achieve set goals (Urdan & Mestas, 2006).

Motivation in the real world is highly valued. Motivation leads to production. Human motivation can come from a value for an activity or even from outside pressures. It is concerned with energy, direction, and persistence of intentional action. People can be compelled into acting or doing by an enduring curiosity or by the offer of an incentive (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation is internal; however, circumstances that occur externally have much to do with decisions that individuals make (Haywood et al., 2008). Individuals who possess authentic and self-endorsed motivation are said to have more interest, excitement, and confidence. This, in turn, leads to improved performance, creativity, and increased self-esteem (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation exhibits positive aptitude for individuals to pursue and overcome challenges, to acquire information, and to learn. As children, humans are cheerful, active, curious, and eager to learn, even without the offer of rewards. As humans, each individual is bestowed with certain tendencies of intrinsic motivation. Research articulates that in order to maintain and intensify such motivation, supportive
conditions must exist. External motivation involves behaviors performed in an effort to satisfy outside demands or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Consistent and complimentary feedback to students regarding performance will likely reinforce their intrinsic motivation (Haywood et al., 2008).

Most students who are unmotivated perceive that they are not connected to the school or to people in the school. In reality, students are traditionally motivated. In a number of instances, this motivation stems from a desire to safeguard their feelings of self-worth and value (Haywood et al., 2008). Rewards and their effects on intrinsic motivation have been extensively researched and debated. A comprehensive meta-analysis corroborates that tangible rewards made as a contingency of performance tend to weaken intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Recognition should be made personal, purposeful, distinctive, and be related to task-completion (Gostick & Elton, 2009).

Strong school cultures possess better and more motivated educators who have greater success in the areas of student performance and overall student outcomes (MacNeil et al., 2009). Positive environments lead to promotion of student learning and achievement, engagement, encouragement, and risk-taking. Caring and safe environments that foster a sense of belonging and a connection to the school provide for improvements in social, emotional, and academic learning. School climate measurement findings can lead to positive overall development, improvement in schools and will make a huge impact on the lives of children (National School Climate Council, 2007).

Schools increased their emphasis on school-wide supports as a response to multiple requests to improve discipline systems and overall student success (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Pragmatic research ascertains that successful school-wide practices generate environments that reinforce effective instruction, build capacity for learning, and
create positive school change (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). School-wide support systems are person-centered and experiential approaches intended to decrease problem behaviors, improve overall culture and climate, and enhance learning and achievement for all students. School-wide systems are used in an effort to be proactive and preventative instead of being reactive and punitive (McIntosh et al., 2010). School-wide supports involve a broad field of strategies that are both systematic and individualized. The purpose of these strategies are to strengthen social and learning outcomes while decreasing or preventing problem behaviors with the entire student body (George & Kincaid, 2008).

A great number of schools use the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) to aid in dealing with unacceptable behaviors with the use of research-based strategies. Individuals in a PBS system often have the need for an individual plan for each child who is in need of behavioral intervention that is specific to aid in reducing problem behaviors. These plans are developed after behavioral assessments are completed, and the plans are referred to as Behavior Intervention Plans, or a BIP. Overall student achievement is statistically significantly related to student behavior (Lassen et al., 2006).

As an outgrowth of these behavioral systems, there are programs that have been developed to aid in not just behavioral success, but in overall school improvement and academic success for students. There is a belief that schools should have atmospheres of positive learning where students and school personnel are able to develop strong relationships. School personnel should be visionaries who take steps to make plans to foster this type of learning environment (Harrison, 2010). School-wide systems focus on using specified strategies, practices, and processes and go beyond the individual behavior and emphasize collective behaviors, structures, and routines of faculty and staff while
using the whole school as a unit of analysis. Using whole school or school-wide analysis will lead to arranging learning and social environments into sustained practices that address behavioral needs (Sugai & Horner, 2002). The Jostens Renaissance Program provides the necessary tools to implement in order to reach this goal (Harrison, 2010). School problem behavior has decreased with the use of monitoring, reinforcement of acceptable behaviors, and modeling. Efforts to support appropriate behaviors establish guidelines and use of behavior management techniques have been cited to effectively change student behavior (Lassen et al., 2006).

School-wide systems rely on data to guide all decision making. Elements of school-wide support include social competence, academic achievement, supportive decision making, supportive staff behavior, and supportive student behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2002). The strongest impact on achievement was found in schools with high teacher commitment and schools with successfully formed positive environments. Collaborative efforts among all stakeholders lead to increased student success. (Ross & Gray, 2006).

Praise and reward lead to trust, less discouragement, and a sense of accomplishment, thus leading to better academic success and high achievement (Howard, 2011). Students who perceive legitimate potential for achievement as a viable possibility within a safe environment will make the effort to attempt tasks and ultimately take additional risks. Students who are acknowledged with incentives and rewards for achievement and effort are further motivated to produce good school work. Students with low self-esteem and self-efficacy who are traditionally unsuccessful are the students who value and crave the reinforcement the most (Haywood et al., 2008).
Reactive individual teacher and school responses are foreseeable and related to immediate reduction of behavior. Reactive responses are ineffective in making more prolonged constructive effects on school climate that prevent further instances of anti-social or inappropriate behaviors. By themselves, the reactions are not meeting the needs of developing safe schools with supportive climates (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Students who are deprived of appreciation and rewards experience feelings of aggravation, difficulty, and disengagement that precipitate to lack of effort and a plunge in academic performance (Haywood et al., 2008).

School-wide reward systems turn the emphasis on validating procedures, clearing up expectations, and using positive reinforcement in teaching. Respect and positive social bonds are developed. School-wide rewards systems have been determined to have more long-term development of compliance (Howard, 2011). Successful implementation of school-wide reward systems requires essential elements and a plan. The plan must include a leadership team, funding, collaboration, support, visibility, marketing, training and coaching, and demonstrations or modeling (George & Kincaid, 2008).

This era of intense school-based reform prompts adoption of school-wide systems, evidence-based practices, and significant amounts of academic support (McIntosh et al., 2010). Positive behavior systems or reward systems in schools impose compliance with rules. These are also reported to teach self-discipline. In turn, self-control, character, and responsibility are taught (Howard, 2011). Recognition programs are intended to boost morale, improve production, and generate a positive school climate (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Punishment does teach students what not to do. Rewards model and teach students what to do and what is appropriate. Effects of punishment are
generally short term and do not address multiple factors. Punishment generates anger, fear and shame (Howard, 2011).

Consistent reminders and reinforcement of expectations and clear rationales for expectations and shared visions, as well as public recognition, contribute to success in school-wide reward systems (George et al., 2007). Reward systems designed to reward whole classes or large groups consistently without the option of individual achievement awards are reported to be destructive and damaging. Rewards given to an individual student based upon that student’s achievements or performance lead to gains in capacity, interest, and engagement (Haywood et al., 2008).

Exceptional leaders realize that cultures of celebration build and intensify a sense of cohesion and balance to organization and these leaders make celebrations of success a priority. Performance-based recognition confirms self-worth, connects people to important actions, impacts people’s strengths and potential, and provides evidence of fulfillment and success for all team members (Gostick & Elton, 2009). With an increase in pressure there are more incentives offered to allow for innovation to occur and for new ideas and practices to begin that will improve academic performance (Moolenaar et al., 2010). Sustainability is often seen as an ambiguous concept. There is belief that the duration and management of positive and successful outcomes is quite simple. The essential elements or factors of sustainability are the environment and climate and attitude of stakeholders. Incentive and rewards programs can contribute to long standing change. Long-standing change in behavior of all stakeholders is a necessity for sustainability (McIntosh et al., 2010).

The use of recognitions and rewards are influential components that are fundamental to the development of a positive climate and culture (Harrison, 2010).
Motivating both teachers and students is a crucial factor in creating a positive school culture. Purpose-based recognition aids in task performance, value, and obtaining personal goals for all stakeholders (Gostick & Elton, 2009). Harrison (2010) reports that Jostens’ Renaissance was founded in 1988 by a group of educators. The ultimate goal of this program is to make the school experience more positive and enjoyable for both teachers and students.

As found on the Jostens’ website Jostens’ Renaissance includes a pride factor model. The factors or important aspects of this model are culture, motivation, performance, and recognition. The goals of the pride factor model are to improve administrative support and faculty and staff support, improve grade point averages, attendance rates, graduation rates, decrease school discipline problems, and increase faculty and stakeholder involvement. Jostens’ has model programs and ideas. However, each school or school system has free rein to plan ongoing recognition efforts and customize the program that fit the needs of their student body, schools, and communities.

Most Jostens’ Renaissance Programs provide incentives and rewards using individual student data regarding grades, attendance, and discipline records during each grading period. Depending upon these factors, students receive recognitions and rewards specific to their classification on a scale of requirements set forth by the Renaissance committees of each school. Schools tailor the programs around the needs. For example, a school with high absenteeism might have high incentives for low absenteeism each grading period, while another with high discipline infraction rates might have this factor ranked more highly on the scale of rewards. These factors are never set in stone. They change based upon the needs of the schools and provide incentives for students to
perform well and behave appropriately and be in school instead of reacting and administering punishments to stop these behaviors. Many Jostens’ Renaissance schools have quarterly or semester celebrations, guest speakers, or rallies for the students who meet the qualifications of their Renaissance program (White, 2008).

Development of a positive and welcoming school culture along with better student achievement are Jostens’ two main goals. Renaissance claims to stimulate and invigorate excitement for academics, maximize student performance and teacher passion and increase participation in the school from the community. Jostens’ Renaissance has two sides. The first side focuses on student motivation and recognition. The second side focuses on faculty and staff recognition and motivation. In Renaissance schools, it is reported that discipline has improved in all areas, attendance has improved, retention rates have decreased, and the overall dropout rate has decreased (Harrison, 2010).

Summary

Educators are faced with a number of challenges before they ever begin to attempt to educate the students. The challenges and obstacles will most often influence the instruction provided by the teachers in the classrooms. Proactive and preventative measures must be exercised in order to effectively deal with the challenges that the teachers face (Lassen et al., 2006). Collaboration among all stakeholders is a necessity in overcoming obstacles and creating positive environments for teaching and learning to occur (Reinke, Splett, Robeson, & Offutt, 2009).

Learning environment research in recent years has become recognized as a method of assessing and evaluating educational processes (LaRocque, 2008). A positive school culture and climate leads to overall school improvement. The perceptions of the educators in the environment must be positive as well. Student motivation is not static.
However, it is tied to characteristics within the learning environment (Gostick & Elton, 2009). Toxic cultures, attitudes, and outlooks will breed failure. Boosting and celebrating teachers and staff will indirectly boost the climate and culture and make them more positive and productive (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Classroom environments have a large number of factors within them that influence students. These factors include growth, development and achievement. Warm, welcoming, safe, encouraging, and supportive classrooms promote achievement and accomplishment (LaRocque, 2008).

Motivating students can result in engagement in the learning process and achievement. Student motivation can influence their future expectations, intentions, and responses. Motivation stems from successful past experiences, rewards, appreciation and celebrations of successes (Pintrich, 2003). A student’s academic motivation is the reason that the student attends to, engages in, and puts forth effort in achieving in school (Anderman & Kaplan, 2008). Motivation is directly related to student beliefs and self-esteem. Student effort, performance, achievement, and their sense of self-worth are also tied to motivation and success (Barry, 2007).

The importance of recognition programs has been thoroughly discussed. Recognition programs that are peer driven and that focus on motivation of all stakeholders will boost morale, create a positive culture, increase achievement and competence, and improve the overall school and the school environment (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). In a number of instances, dissatisfaction with environment or a lack of a feeling of appreciation are leading causes of dissatisfaction, poor performance, and a decrease in effort (Rhodes et al., 2009). Regular use of extrinsic and intrinsic incentives are a large part of classroom management strategies. These types of incentives promote
learning and increase feedback and praise to enhance intrinsic motivation within students (Haywood et al., 2008).

Recognition is about pointing out the positive results and reinforcing improved performance. An environment where contributions and efforts are appreciated and celebrated is shaped through these recognitions (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Rewarding hard work, effort, and achievement will breed further hard work, effort, and achievement (Gostick & Elton, 2009). The use of rewards to gain desired achievement outcomes will most definitely stimulate extrinsic motivation. Over an extended period of time with successful outcomes and improved effort, there is thought that the use of rewards may develop a sense of intrinsic motivation for individuals. Rewards and token economy systems are found to be extremely effective in assisting teachers with classroom management, even for the toughest of classes (Porter, 2007). Jostens’ Renaissance is a fairly new program with very little research conducted regarding its sustainability of success. Therefore, research regarding this program is needed.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology and details how the research problem was explored in this study. The research design is articulated and the Research Questions are provided. An explanation of data collection materials, sample selection, and procedures are offered. Issues of reliability, validity, and protection of the rights of the participants are addressed in the chapter.

This research investigated the correlation between and among teacher perception of school climate, achievement, and the use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program in five separate schools along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Jostens’ Renaissance is an incentive-based program that is customizable based upon the needs of individual schools. This program provides reward systems for students who meet certain criteria in areas identified by the needs of the schools. Most Jostens’ Renaissance Programs assess attendance, academic performance, and discipline.

This research was designed with the purpose of adding to a limited body of literature on perception of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and achievement and climate in public schools. Surveys were conducted with faculty and staff of school districts using the program for a minimum of three years. Interviews of a sample of school leaders from these schools were also conducted.

Three Research Questions were addressed:

RQ1: Does school climate have a statistically significant impact on student achievement?

RQ2: Do school professionals support the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?
RQ3: Do school faculty perceive a statistically significant impact between the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and school climate?

Research Design

The research design was descriptive and correlational. The research involved the collection of data from the sample group on a single occasion. The variable, perceived school climate, was measured using survey methods from faculty and staff of five schools from the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region. This quantitative study used a survey designed to explore the relationship between school climate, use of an incentive program, teacher perceptions and student achievement for students in Grades 6 through 12. The survey instrument measured how teachers perceived school climate. Because school climate has been shown to influence the behaviors and academic experiences of stakeholders in a school it was desirable to ascertain the perceptions that teachers had of school climate. Survey methodology provided minimal intrusion by the researcher.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of approximately 300 faculty and staff from five public schools from three separate school districts in the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region. The schools included three middle schools and two high schools. Permission to conduct the study and an agreement to provide relevant data was obtained from the individual school superintendents (Appendix A). All five of the schools examined in this study were schools that had participated in use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program in their schools for a minimum of three years. The chosen school districts were selected from a list of schools identified by the Jostens’ representative of the Southeastern Region of the State of Mississippi that was provided to the researcher upon the researcher’s request.
Instrumentation

School climate, support, and Jostens’ Renaissance perception data were collected through the administration of a 30-item instrument developed for the purposes of this study. The survey was designed to obtain a clear perspective of how the entire staff of each of the five schools perceived the climate of the school, the school’s support systems and the use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. A review of the literature on school climate factors, teacher perception, environment, learning, support, motivation, and achievement informed the development of the instrument, The Perception Survey for Faculty and Staff (Appendix B). The directions prompt respondents to rate their levels of agreement with 30 statements using a five-point, Likert-type scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. Items 1 through 19 are school climate indicators. Items 20 through 25 are school support system indicators. Items 26 through 30 are indicators related to the Jostens’ Renaissance Program.

A draft of the survey instrument was shared with a panel of four experts to assess the validity of the instrument. The four experts had extensive knowledge of school climate and the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. One expert was a high school principal who had used Jostens’ Renaissance in his high school for three years. The second expert was a middle school assistant principal who had previously been involved in the Jostens’ Renaissance Program at the high school level and was currently using the program at the middle school level. The third expert was a middle school principal who had been involved in Jostens’ Renaissance Programs for four years at her current school. The fourth expert was a high school teacher who had attended the Jostens’ Renaissance Program conference and training and, subsequently, introduced the program to her high school where she helped to facilitate the implementation. The panel of experts were
asked to assess the face validity and content validity. Each reviewer was asked to identify items that should be omitted and poorly worded items within the instrument. There were no suggestions for change given; therefore, no changes were made.

School achievement data were collected in the form of the school Quality Distribution Index from the state department of education. For the three middle schools included in the study the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2) was used as the measure of student achievement. For the two high schools, student achievement was measured by the Mississippi Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) in Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History. In Grades 3 through 8, students take a test called the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2). Subject areas tested with the MCT2 are language arts and math. In the high school, students are administered the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) in the areas of Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History. These tests are administered towards the end of each of these courses for all students enrolled in those courses. The score of the student’s first attempt at these SATP tests is what is used to determine achievement accountability for high schools and is the major component of the QDI. The third test administered as part of the accountability system is the Mississippi Alternate Assessment of the Extended Curriculum Frameworks (MAAECF). This test is administered to students with disabilities that are so severe that the students cannot take the MCT2 or the SATP tests. The MAAECF includes assessments in the areas of math, science and language arts (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

The calculation of what is referred to as the Quality Distribution Index (QDI) in achievement gives to educators and stakeholders predictions of scores as well as growth. This index includes the number of advanced, proficient, and basic scores in an equation that determines the total QDI for each district, school, and classroom teacher. The two
kinds of data used in the state to measure accountability and assign ratings are the statewide assessment results and the information regarding school completion of the grade level cohorts (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

QDI data were collected from the Mississippi Department of Education website as a record of the achievement level of the schools pertaining to this research study. Data acquired did not contain personally identifiable information and consisted of public information that was included in the school report cards that are issued to the public and published annually. Mississippi accountability takes into account achievement, growth, and high school completion rates in order to assign an accountability status to the individual schools and the school districts.

The school completion portion of the accountability ratings is based upon the completion rates of the individual cohorts of students. Each student in the cohort must be accounted for at the year of graduation to determine whether the student counts as a drop out, received a certificate of attendance, received a regular diploma, or received an occupational diploma. Cohorts of students begin being tracked in the freshman year of high school. In determining high school completion, a standard diploma, occupational diploma, certificate of attendance, GED, dropout, student still enrolled, and a student who met requirements with the exception of the exit SATP tests are all assigned a number value and the formula uses these values to determine completion (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

After calculating the growth, completion rate and achievement, a rating of accountability is assigned. As a repeat of the accountability ratings, they are in rank order from highest to lowest: star school/district, high performing school/district, successful school/district, academic watch school/district, at risk of failing school/district,
low performing school/district, and failing school/district. After all calculations are completed and achievement, growth, and high school completion are calculated, a district report card displaying the achievement model results and the QDIs is published and shared with all stakeholders (Mississippi Department of Education, 2010).

Pilot Study

After obtaining approval from the Institutional review board at The University of Southern Mississippi (Appendix C), a pilot study was conducted with 16 faculty members of an upper elementary school from a school district that had used the Jostens’ Renaissance Program for four years. The purpose of the pilot study was to improve the quality of the research instrument and to refine the data collection process to be used in the larger study. Specifically, the researcher was interested in obtaining more information about the reliability and feasibility of the study, the actual time needed to complete the survey, and the responses from the participants regarding items and the survey format.

Data collection for the pilot study took place during a brief after-school meeting in the elementary school library. Each participant was provided written informed consent information (Appendix D) along with verbal directions regarding the study, which included a reminder that the survey was completely anonymous and voluntary. The members of the pilot group were asked to complete the instrument frankly. The group was told that they were a pilot group and that the feedback and analyzed data from their responses were being used to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument and to make appropriate changes to the instrument before it was used in the full study.

Participants placed completed questionnaires in a manilla envelope labeled pilot study. Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess internal consistency, as well as the
evaluation of blank items. Data from these 16 completed questionnaires were gathered and Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for the 30 survey items to assess internal consistency. The resulting Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for survey items was .994, suggesting that the items had high internal consistency. The high reliability value led the researcher to continue with the administration of the larger study. After analyzing the information from the pilot study and a final analysis of validity and reliability no changes were made to the original instrument.

Interviews regarding perspectives on school climate, support for enrichment and achievement, and perceptions of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program were conducted with three building-level administrators in an effort to gain their perceptions. The three administrators from selected separate schools within the approved districts were willing to participate in an interview. One school principal had participated in Jostens’ Renaissance for four years. The second building-level administrator had been involved at a high school where Jostens’ had been implemented for three years prior and the third building-level assistant principal was an administrator who had worked with a Jostens’ school for one year.

Each administrator was asked nine structured, open-ended interview questions, developed by the researcher (Appendix E). Interviews were conducted individually in the office of each participating administrator. The interviews were audio-taped by the researcher. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was prearranged by phone conversation at the convenience of the school administrator. Questions 1 through 3 of the interview related to school climate, motivation and school climate indicators. Questions 4 and 5 related to the school support system. Questions 6 through 9 related to the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. After the interview, the audio-recorded interviews
were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcriptions were used to assess whether there were common themes.

Procedures

Once participating school district superintendents granted permission (Appendix A), the researcher submitted an application to The University of Southern Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). After the IRB approval was obtained (Appendix C), the researcher conducted a pilot study with 16 faculty members from an upper elementary school who participated in the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. Participants in the pilot study were not included in the current study. Permission of the principal of the school where these faculty members work was also obtained.

School climate, support, and perception of Jostens’ Renaissance data were collected through the administration of a 30-item instrument developed for the purposes of this study. The survey was completed by 242 participants representing five schools. Three of these schools were middle schools and two were high schools. The data were collected at these schools through meetings with the faculty and staff. After collection of these questionnaires, the researcher coded the schools by number and coded the responses to the questionnaires. Each school’s data were entered into a spreadsheet and then SPSS was used to run the data and allow the researcher to look for themes and make interpretations of the statistical findings.

The Office of Educational Accountability at the Mississippi State Department was the source that the researcher used to collect the student achievement data for each of the represented schools. Data for each academic year are made public through the Mississippi Department of Education each academic year. The QDI for each school for three academic years was used to report each school’s level of student achievement.
Data Analysis

Survey data were entered into SPSS and descriptive statistics were generated for each of the climate factors on the survey. Descriptive statistics including frequency and percentages for data, along with standard deviations, were utilized to determine if statistically significant relationships existed among school climate and student achievement in participating schools. Student achievement data, in the form of the QDI scores, were gathered over a three-year academic period from 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 by gathering the Quality of Distribution Index (QDI) scores of each of the five schools included in the study for all three of these academic years. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for the QDI for these academic years.

Through the analysis of the qualitative component of this research study the researcher first transcribed and then examined the responses from the different participants and coded these responses as either positive or negative in regards to the perceived relationships with climate, achievement, and Jostens’ Renaissance Programs. Next, the researcher looked for common themes from each question and expanded upon them. All of the interview recordings were transcribed word for word by the researcher. All three transcriptions were analyzed comparatively to identify themes, correlations and important trends, and other pertinent data.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the results and statistical findings of this study. This chapter reports the data related to the relationship between perception of school climate and student achievement in schools on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that use Jostens’ Renaissance Programs in their institutions. Student achievement data, in the form of QDI data, were gathered over a three-year academic period from 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 by gathering the Quality of Distribution Index (QDI) scores of each of the five schools included in the study for all three of these academic years. Six schools were invited to participate, one withdrew from the study prior to surveys being issued. School climate and perception data were gathered from faculty and staff of the five schools by conducting a 30-question researcher-made perception survey consisting of a five-point, Likert-type scale. A total of 295 survey packets were distributed at the five schools participating. A total of 242 completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 82%. Additional data were gathered from interviews of three building principals from participating schools.

Descriptive Statistics

Data from the 242 completed surveys were entered into SPSS. Internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha, was calculated for the 30 survey items. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the study was .965, suggesting that these items had high internal consistency and reliability. Of the respondents, 105 or 43% worked at a high school, and 137 or 57% worked at a middle school. Participation in the survey was completely anonymous. The only identifying information reported by the participants was the
number of years that each individual had worked at that particular school site. This information was written in at the top of the participant’s questionnaire. Descriptive statistics reported that the mean number of years at the individual school site for the 242 participants was 6.66 years (Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year at current school</td>
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<td>5.79</td>
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<td>Perceptions</td>
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<td>.613</td>
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Reported years at the school ranged from individuals working at the school site for 1 year up to 33 years. There were 46 (19%) of the participants who had worked at their school for one year. Two (.8%) of the participants who had worked at their school site for 33 years. Table 2 displays the frequencies and percentages of experience for the participants of the survey. As shown in Table 2, 74.8% of the participants worked at each respective school three or more years, indicating that a large majority of the participants were working within the schools during the minimum three academic years of Jostens’ implementation, as required of schools selected for this study. However, a number of participants, 25.2%, worked at the respective schools between one and two years and were not employed during the entire three academic years of implementation.
Table 2

*Frequencies of Experience*

*(N=242)*

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<th>Years at School</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted to answer each of the Research Questions. The student achievement data were represented by the Quality of Distribution Index (QDI) score that was calculated at the state department for each school within each of the school districts. The data in Table 3 display the QDIs of each of the represented schools for each of the three academic years. This table shows a descriptive view of the QDI data. To maintain anonymity, each school was coded with a number between 1 and 5 and was represented by this number in the data collection process. As shown in the table, there is an increase in each school’s QDI from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011. School 1 increased from 185 to 192 and finished 2010-2011 with a QDI of 225. Schools 2 and 4 also showed increases each year. School 3 had a drop of 6 point in 2009-2010; however, it increased by 17 points the following year. School 5 increased by 10 from year 2008-2009 and then remained consistent at 213 for year 2010-2011.

Table 3

Descriptive QDI Data over Three Academic Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2008-2009 QDI</th>
<th>2009-2010 QDI</th>
<th>2010-2011 QDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ1. Does the school climate have a statistically significant impact on student achievement?

In addressing Research Question 1, mean and standard deviations were calculated as well as a one-way within subjects ANOVA, and the researcher evaluated these results. The data in Table 4 display the mean Quality of Distribution Index (QDI) for the schools over the three-year period. A one-way within subjects, or repeated measures, ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of time on the Quality of Distribution Index. This test indicated that over the three year academic period of the five schools studied there was a significant effect on achievement $F(2,8) = 8.59, p = .01$. Therefore, for Research Question 1, school climate does indeed have a statistically significant impact on student achievement due to significant increase in QDI over the three academic years, where year one the QDI means equal 178.8 and the year three QDI means equal 200.0.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mean QDI over Three Years</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>178.80</td>
<td>15.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>187.40</td>
<td>18.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>200.00</td>
<td>18.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ2. Do school professionals support the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

Statistics were calculated for the individual survey items and mean scores were analyzed. Table 5 displays means and standard deviations for individual survey items, their mean scores and standard deviations. Participants were asked to rate their perception of the conditions of their schools in areas of school climate and achievement,
as well as rate the Jostens’ Renaissance Programs on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). Mean scores of the items comprising the most agreement and least agreement in subscales are discussed in the following section to provide the reader with additional information regarding participants’ perceptions of the overall school climate and opinion of the Jostens’ Renaissance Programs in regards to achievement.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics of Perception Survey Items Including Mean and Standard Deviation*

*(N=242)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel that I am involved in an important program for children.</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I believe that I am empowering students.</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I believe that I am helping students become independent learners.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The faculty values school improvement.</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I perceive that I make a difference.</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Leaders and teachers take time to praise students who perform well.</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Teachers in this school believe that children can learn.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I work at a school where students come first.</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Item</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I perceive that I have an impact on other teachers and students.</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. The use of Jostens’ Renaissance Program helps my school climate improve.</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. The use of Jostens’ Renaissance Program aids in student achievement.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers support the mission of the school.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. The use of Jostens’ Renaissance Program aids in developing student engagement.</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have the support of fellow faculty and staff.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Teachers and students form bonds and positive working relationships that promote learning.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Teachers have access to needed instructional materials and equipment.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I have the support of the administration</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Teaches accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. School leaders value my ideas.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Leaders in school trust the professional judgement of teachers.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Faculty and staff suggestions are considered and appreciated.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Students here just aren’t motivated to learn.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers trust one another.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The morale of students is high.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The morale of teachers is high.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The administration treats all faculty and staff as equals.</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean scores for the 242 completed questionnaires ranged from 3.47 to 4.52.

Based on a review of the item means, the items with the highest perceived levels of agreement, in order from highest to lowest mean score reported, were with the following statements: (11) *I feel that I am involved in an important program for children*, (26) *Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school*, (10) *I believe that I’m empowering students*, and (9) *I believe that I am helping students become independent learners*. Based on a review of the item means, the items with the lowest perceived level of agreement, in ascending order from number 30 to number 37 were (23) *The administration treats all faculty and staff as equals*, (18) *The morale of teachers is high*, (19) *The morale of students is high*, and (2) *Teachers trust one another*.

There were five items with a standard deviation of 1.00 or greater. These five items are (1) *School leaders value my ideas*, (5) *Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well*, (21) *I have support of the administration*, (18) *The morale of teachers is high*, and (23) *The administration treats all faculty and staff as equals*. Analysis of these data within individual schools showed no significance to report in this study. As these
five statements are read, it is noticed by the researcher that four of the five items noted are directly related to the school leader or the school administration, with the fifth being about the morale of the teachers.

To answer Research Question 2 regarding professional support for the Jostens’ Renaissance Program, an evaluation of the responses to the Jostens’ Renaissance specific questions was completed. The Jostens’ specific statements had a range of means from 4.19 to 4.25 ranged from 3.47 to 4.52. Further analysis of the results indicated that there was no significant relationship between support for the program and achievement over the three year academic period. This information is presented in Table 5.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson’s Correlation</td>
<td>-.031</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>.774</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ 3. Do school faculty perceive a statistically significant impact between the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and student climate?

In order to assess the data and answer Research Question 3 regarding faculty perception of impact of the Renaissance Program and climate, Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between the perception survey responses and school climate. As shown in Table 6, there was no statistically significant relationship between the two variables of perception survey results and the school climate data during any of the academic years. For year one the results were, $r(242)_1 = -.031, p = .628$. Results for year two were $r(242)_2 = .084, p = .191$. Year
was reported as, $r(242) = .019$, $p = .774$. Therefore, after reviewing the three academic years of data, it was noted that there was no significant relationship between perception responses and school climate.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The interviewees were two assistant principals and one principal of schools located in the three coastal districts that were included in the survey. Through the analysis of the qualitative component of this research study the researcher transcribed and examined the responses from the different participants and coded these responses as either positive or negative in regards to the perceived relationships with climate, achievement and Jostens’ Renaissance Programs. Next, the researcher looked for common themes from each question. The following themes emerged: positive relationships and school environments are important, motivation and appreciation are critical, safety is vital and all interviewees value Jostens’ Renaissance Programs. The following is a summary of responses to the interview questions.

**Question 1.** Drawing upon your educational experiences, what do you think motivates students?

All of the interviewees mentioned that motivating factors must be well thought out and planned and must meet the needs of the personalities of the groups of students as they move through the grade levels. All three of the interviewees also mentioned the importance of relationships when addressing this question. The impact of finding appropriate motivation for students was discussed as being key to the success of the students in school as well as in relation to attendance rates and helping to feed a desire for students to want to come to school each day.
As one respondent mentioned, it is vital to look at the groups each year and evaluate motivators. He said:

We’ve got to remember that schools are a microcosm of society and if there’s something out there that is hot, then that is what will motivate the kids. I guess you have a responsibility as the person in charge of programs like this to get out there and figure out what is going to motivate this year’s group of kids. It might not be the same as what motivated last year’s group of kids. That’s very important as far as the success of your program is concerned. Because, if you throw something out there that is outdated, you’ve lost it. You’ve lost your chance to motivate them. And it’s also important that it’s not just one person doing it. You have to have a team and the team must be made up of motivated individuals. They’ve got to put some effort into figuring out what is going to motivate the kids and put some things in place (personal communication, July 6, 2012).

Question 2. Drawing upon your educational experiences, what do you think motivates teachers?

The main themes of these responses revealed the opinions that motivation and a feeling of worth and appreciation are important when discussing the needs of faculty and staff members of schools. The participants acknowledged that adults working in schools tend to require smaller types of motivation than that of the students. Adults, however, need motivation and expressions of appreciation or pats on the back in order to assist with their attitudes towards daily work, school missions, and effectiveness.

When discussing motivators for adults, one respondent noted that:
As a whole, recognition motivates most teachers. It could be something as simple as a little card, a little thank you card regarding something that they did above and beyond that will motivate them the next time. For teachers, it doesn’t have to be anything big. It could be as simple as an extra jean day during the week or an extra 15 minutes for lunch (personal communication, July 6, 2012).

Question 3. Drawing upon your educational experiences, how do you think school climate effects the motivation of teachers and students?

All three interviewees noted that positive relationships and positive climates are keys to motivating faculty and students. Interviewees linked positive climates and relationships to more productivity, more achievement, and more overall effectiveness in schools. Without the ability to enjoy the school experience, the interviewees noted that schools are not able to achieve their overall goals as efficiently. One interviewee noted that the individuals on campus, adults and children, must have someone with whom they possess a positive and trusting working relationship with someone to provide the emotional safety necessary for each of these individuals to obtain the most out of each school day. He stated:

Teachers have to be able to connect with kids in order to have kids eager to come to school. If you have a school where the majority of the kids are trying to stay home on a regular basis, it’s not going to do anything for the school culture (personal communication, June 28, 2012).

Question 4. Drawing upon your educational experiences, how would you describe ideal support systems in schools?

Ideal support systems were described by the interviewees as being supports that
allow all individuals within the school to feel a level of success, positivity and safety.

Support systems are sometimes academic in nature and sometimes non-academic. Support systems are noted by the interviewees as being any type of system within a school that provides for the individuals within the organization with a feeling of safety to try new things, set and accomplish new goals, and allow a sense of overall achievement and feeling of higher self-worth and ability. Successful and effective support systems were discussed as ideally providing better climates and better relationships between individuals within the school, thus leading to better achievement and more risk-taking by all individuals, especially students.

Question 5. Please name and describe for me the current support systems that you use in your schools. Please also describe which of these programs you think are most effective and helpful.

The support systems that were named by the interviewees included Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math programs for students, Jostens’ Renaissance Programs, Teacher Support Teams, evening parent theme-nights and teacher-parent after-hours work nights with students, community volunteer and mentor programs, and other academic software programs. These support systems are a combination of academic and environmental supports used within the schools that involve participation from all stakeholders in order to obtain success. The respondents noted that there are ways to improve and change some of these supports in order to provide for more success and more positive results from such programs. The overall responses were that any and all additional supports that allow stakeholders to work together to assist with student
achievement and a feeling of worth were effective and helpful to the individual students and the school as a whole.

**Question 6.** Drawing upon your educational experiences, what do you think are the positives of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

The respondents noted that Jostens’ Renaissance allows for celebrations of success for students throughout the school year. The programs used were noted as being motivators for students to perform to the best of their abilities in order to obtain the incentives offered. Another common theme from all three respondents was that Jostens’ Programs allowed for a healthy competition between and among the students and classes within the schools. Jostens’ is described as a program that motivates students to do their best academically, as well as behaviorally, at school each day. The third interviewee noted that:

> This is very effective. Kids come running down the hallway to get their cards. Here, I think that we have a pretty good system for rewarding kids for behavior, effort and academics because they need to get more than just a grade. They need a little bonus for hard work and success (personal communication, July 6, 2012).

**Question 7.** Drawing upon your educational experiences, will you continue to use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program in your school in the future?

Interviewees reported that Jostens’ was undoubtedly a program that all three administrators will continue to use in their schools. Suggestions were offered for slight changes that might need to be made to the program each year. The most noted change or addition to the upcoming program was a need to find more methods of
incorporating rewards for faculty and staff into this program in the future. However, interviewees reported their intentions to continue using Jostens’ incentive programs within the schools.

Question 8. Drawing upon your educational experiences, have you seen a change in your school climate since the use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

All of the interviewees answered affirmatively. The second interviewee responded, “Absolutely. Absolutely. It permeated the entire school (personal communication, June 28, 2012).” The respondents referred to a more friendly and overall positive climate witnessed since the implementation of the program. They also noted that, overall, students appear to be more motivated to come to school and that there appear to be more positive relationships between everyone on campus. Incentives and motivators, regardless of the size of them, are noted as being essential to the climate of the school and to buy-in to the initiatives and changes that are often inevitable in school settings.

Question 9. Drawing upon your educational experiences, what is the connection between Jostens’ Renaissance and achievement?

The administrators referred back to the previously mentioned healthy competition that this program had brought to their campuses. The students worked diligently to perform to the best of their abilities; often the main reason for their motivation was noted as the incentives that are offered to them as a result of their academic success. It was noted that often times the student who might easily perform as a Beta honor roll or “B” average student without much effort was motivated by the incentives of the Renaissance program and therefore started working harder and soon moved to the Alpha honor roll or
“A” average, simply as a result of the incentives offered to such a student through these programs. One respondent simply stated that “I think there is a lot to be gained from this and achievement increases as a result of those gains and incentives of the program (personal communication, June 21, 2012),”

Summary

In summary, correlations were conducted to test the relationship between school climate and achievement, school professional’s support of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and faculty perceptions of impact of Jostens’ Renaissance Programs and school climate. Statistical analysis showed that there was significant correlation between school climate perception data and achievement or Quality of Distribution Index over the three years of academic findings. The second Research Question was: Do school professionals support the Jostens’ Renaissance Program? After analysis of the descriptive statistics from the 242 respondents to the perception survey, it was found that there was an overall support of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program based upon the mean scores and standard deviations provided from the findings. The third Research Question was: Do school faculty perceive a statistically significant impact between the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and school climate? Correlational findings reporting displays that there is no statistical significance found between the perception survey findings and school climate. It is important to note in this summary that the schools surveyed have been using the Jostens’ Renaissance Program for a minimum of three years. Findings report that 25.2% of the faculty surveyed had been working in their respective schools for one to two years.

During the qualitative interview research, the respondents overwhelming had positive remarks and recommendations about the climate and Jostens’ Renaissance being
vital components of successful schools and successful academic achievement based upon their educational experiences and their experiences with the programs. In relation to the Research Questions, the respondent information supports that faculty supports Jostens’ Renaissance programs, support a need for a positive climate in order to obtain success and support that there is indeed a positive connection between climate, these programs, and achievement in the respondents’ schools.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there was a correlation between and among teacher perception of school climate, achievement, and the use of Jostens’ Renaissance Programs in schools. Additionally, this study contributes to the limited body of literature on perception and Jostens’ Renaissance Programs overall. The researcher intended for school personnel at the conclusion of this study to have an understanding of the impact of climate and attitudes and perceptions as they were related to achievement. The study had the intention of assisting with understanding the impact of Jostens’ Renaissance Programs and achievement and sustained change.

The results of this study may be used to assist school administration and central office personnel in becoming better equipped with knowledge on how incentive programs and school climate affect achievement, which may in turn affect school and district accountability. When administrators and school personnel analyze climate, incentive programs and achievement, it is important to be aware that climate does indeed have a significant impact on student achievement. School personnel have support for programs such as the Jostens’ Renaissance Program, and they do believe that these such programs aid in improving achievement and academic performance.

As was mentioned in previous studies, it is important to note that in order to determine the implications of achievement in relation to social norms, relationships, and external motivators, it is necessary to assess faculty perception of self and of the group as a whole entity. Perception of adults in working relationships has previously been determined to have an impact on outcomes and group norms (Hoy et al., 2002).
Reminders of the importance of relationships and overall environment aid in overcoming challenges that arise should be in the forefront of educator minds (Hoffman et al., 2009). Encouraging all members of the team, making recognitions personal, and working together are excellent methods for moving towards the goals of increasing engagement and achievement (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Educators are faced with a number of challenges before they ever begin to attempt to educate the students. The challenges and obstacles will most often influence the instruction provided by the teachers in the classrooms. Proactive and preventative measures must be exercised in order to effectively deal with the challenges that the teachers face (Lassen et al., 2006). Cohen and Hamilton (2009) suggest that school climate is a tool that schools may use as a “framework that supports healthy individuals and relationships, educator-parent mental health partnerships, and transformational learning for individuals and school communities” (p. 108). These authors also make note of the opinion that climate, communities, and understanding people is multifaceted and complicated. Cohen (2009) states that “school climate is at the nexus of individual and group experience” (p. 101).

Learning environment research in recent years has become recognized as a method of assessing and evaluating educational processes (LaRocque, 2008). A positive school culture and climate leads to overall school improvement. The perceptions of the educators in the environment must be positive as well. Student motivation is not static. However, it is tied to characteristics within the learning environment (Gostick & Elton, 2009). Cohen (2009) finds that perceptions and group trends are identified through climate and that these topics of study allow for intervention, strategies and assessments of educators on their current teaching and goals for the future.
Halawah (2005) suggests that research on effective schools and leadership point out the importance of school administrators and teachers creating a “positive and nurturing school climate” (p. 337). School leaders who begin activities that build a positive culture, send positive messages, display respect, and are supportive of the overall learning environment are able to motivate students. School climates and cultures, academic achievement and school capacity and effectiveness are connected to one another (Glickman et al., 2007). Rewarding hard work, effort, and achievement will breed further hard work, effort and achievement (Gostick & Elton, 2009).

The use of rewards to gain desired achievement outcomes will most definitely stimulate extrinsic motivation. Over an extended period of time with successful outcomes and improved effort, there is thought that the use of rewards may develop a sense of intrinsic motivation for individuals. Rewards and token economy systems are found to be extremely effective in assisting teachers with classroom management, even for the toughest of classes (Porter, 2007). Jostens’ Renaissance is a fairly new program with very little research conducted regarding the sustainability of its success. Therefore, a need for research regarding this program was needed.

There was a need for further information to answer questions and provide a rational for further focus on teaching and learning. This chapter includes an overview of the problem, Research Questions, design and a summary of the major findings that were all discussed in the first four chapters. In addition, the chapter includes conclusions and discussions based on the findings from the study. Recommendations for school leaders for practice and implementation are discussed along with recommendations for future research to assist those researchers who may choose to expand on this study.
Conclusions and Discussion

A large portion of respondents were employed with their respective schools for seven years or fewer. The largest percentage of participant representation by a single frequency were the group that was employed with their current school for only one year. Statistical data indicated that there was a mean of 6.6 years at the respective schools for the entire group of the respondents. The potential problem with the mean of years of experience data is that a large portion of the participants were employed with their current school for fewer than the three year minimum of Jostens’ Renaissance implementation, and their lack of experience with the program may have had an impact on the findings. There was an implication from the large standard deviation in regards to the leader questions showing disagreement and a need for further research in the area of leader specific questions.

The first Research Question asked, “Does school climate have a statistically significant impact on student achievement?” A review of the climate perception data was completed. After reviewing the climate data as well as the data regarding the average of QDI scores over the three academic years, it was found that the scores increased significantly, indicating that student achievement increased during the time that the Jostens’ Renaissance Program was implemented.

The second and third Research Questions asked, “Do school professionals support the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?” and “Do school faculty perceive a statistically significant impact between the Jostens’ Renaissance Program and school climate?” In order to answer Research Question 2 regarding professional support for the Jostens’ Renaissance Program, an evaluation of the responses to the Jostens’ Renaissance specific questions was completed. The Jostens’ specific statements had a range of means from
4.19 to 4.25 of findings that ranged from 3.47 to 4.52. The perception responses regarding Jostens’ Renaissance were in the range of agree and strongly agree scale categories, on average noting an overall positive agreement with such programs effectiveness. However, when looking at correlations between perception responses and achievement, there was no statistically significant relationship found over the three year academic period. Statistical data support agreement with professionals and the Jostens’ Programs. The results of this study indicated that the participating school professionals were supportive of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. Therefore, the answer to Research Question 2 would be yes. There were no findings of statistical significance and the answer to Research Question 3 would therefore be no.

White (2008) reported that Jostens’ Renaissance Program had a positive impact upon the overall school climate and learning environment. This program was developed to improve academics, overall school culture, student achievement, learning, and the entire school environment for all stakeholders. The belief of Jostens’ Renaissance is that students who believe that there will be positive recognitions for the efforts that they make will concentrate more and put forth more effort in academics and behaviors. This program makes the school a more pleasant and positive place for students, faculty, staff, and parents (White, 2008).

Through the qualitative interviews in this study, the respondents overwhelming made positive remarks and recommendations about the value of school climate and Jostens’ Renaissance as vital components of successful schools and successful academic achievement based upon their educational experiences and their experiences with the programs. In relation to the Research Questions, the respondent information suggests that faculty support Jostens’ Renaissance programs, support a need
for a positive climate in order to obtain success, and support that there is indeed a positive connection between climate, these programs, and achievement in the schools that the respondents worked in.

Pepper and Thomas (2002) noted that it is important to examine school personnel characteristics and the quality of their performance and perceptions as a result of the school climate. A school environment where teachers work well with one another, with their students, and with administrators is often found to be effective (Martinez, 2004). Administrators and school leaders must demonstrate and model the behaviors and expectations that they expect of their personnel in order for effective engagement and successful implementation to occur. When stakeholders work together and are engaged, they are much more likely to win together and achieve (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

The literature discussed above is important and relevant to the following research findings of the current study. Based on a review of the perception survey item means, the lowest perceived agreement statements were (23) *The administration treats all faculty and staff as equals*, (18) *The morale of teachers is high*, (19) *The morale of students is high*, and (27) *Teachers trust one another.* The lowest level of agreement was related to the belief that, although there are programs in place to address children’s needs, trust and morale are believed to be low overall in the schools. These findings may have been a downfall of this study. Although the research displayed that there is support for incentive programs and statistical significance between climate and achievement, the factors above that were rated lowest are vital to climate and, therefore, a potential breakdown in climate is noted as barrier to statistical significance between climate and Jostens’ Programs. The researcher notes that additional leader data is needed to do
further analysis of the data and program effectiveness after review of the standard deviations of the leader survey items.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based upon the findings of this study and a review of the literature, the researcher offers several recommendations to policy makers and school districts regarding the continued perceived value of climate and incentive programs and achievement within schools. The first recommendation is that all school leaders be aware of the trends involved in academic success, school climate, and Jostens’ Renaissance Programs or other incentive programs. If a school leader does not already use a tool to gauge school climate, they should implement the use of one for the school and all of the stakeholders of the school. Following this, the leader should analyze this data and use the feedback to make future decisions for the school and for motivators and incentives for the school personnel and students.

The second recommendation of the researcher is to educate all stakeholders on climate and relationships and environment have on academic achievement. This information should be disbursed and shared from the district office down to each of the individual schools. In education, everyone should remain informed of the growing trends in research and be educated regarding the needs of the individuals and school communities as a whole in order to obtain future success. By understanding what effects education, future innovations from all stakeholders will be more likely to occur.

School leaders should also take time to ensure that trust and relationship building efforts are conducted with faculty and staff. Faculty and staff should feel a high level of trust and respect in order to take chances and risks and be willing to partake in the endeavors and initiatives offered by the school. This, in turn, helps to ensure that better
relationships are formed with students and better academic achievement will be an ultimate outcome. When trust and respect do not exist, faculty and staff do not feel a part of the whole, and the vision and mission of the school are often not owned by these individuals and not worked towards.

Limitations

This study was limited to a smaller population than initially intended because one high school withdrew from the study at the time of survey distributions. Although the sample size remained large enough to meet the needs of the study, a large number of the participants were not employed by their schools for the three years of Jostens’ Renaissance Program implementation that was desired. This study was limited to only three middle and two high schools. The achievement data were limited to school-wide QDI data scores and individual teacher data were not solicited or analyzed. A final limitation is that the interview questions may have had an inherent bias in that only positive questions were asked about the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. This leads the reader to assume that the researcher might have had a bias towards the program and the positive aspects of this program.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that this study be replicated with some modifications to include a larger sample size and more grade levels. Elementary schools and more districts should be included in a future study. A larger sample size could provide inclusion of more administrators for the qualitative interviews and perhaps more teachers with experience working with the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. However, future studies may consider limiting participants to those who have worked in their current school a minimum of three years. Other measures of students achievement might also be
considered, especially in schools outside of the State of Mississippi that do not use QDI measures.

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of faculty and staff regarding climate, achievement, and Jostens’ Renaissance Programs. After a review of theory and research on achievement, motivation, and individuality as a community, Wigfield and Wagner (2005) determine that there is much more to be studied in relation to motivation, development, competence, and learning. Collaborative leadership that involves all stakeholders focuses on school-wide processes that direct improvement, collaboration, encouragement, empowerment, and a sense of shared accountability for student learning and achievement. A key target is to drive teacher actions and student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Exceptional leaders realize that cultures of celebration build and intensify a sense of cohesion and balance to organization, and these leaders make celebrations of success a priority. Performance-based recognition confirms self-worth, connects people to important actions, impacts people’s strengths and potential, and provides evidence of fulfillment and success for all team members (Gostick & Elton, 2009). With an increase in pressure there are more incentives offered to allow for innovation to occur and for new ideas and practices to begin that will improve academic performance (Moolenaar, Daly & Sleegers, 2010). Sustainability is often seen as an ambiguous concept. There is belief that the duration and management of positive and successful outcomes is quite simple (McIntosh et al., 2010).

Alternative means of assessing student progress, academic achievement, and overall school effectiveness need to be examined (Heck, 2006). Culture is improved
and reinforced by the use of reinforcement, rewards, positivity, ceremonies, traditions, expectations, and symbols. The Jostens’ Renaissance Program aligns the practices and norms of the program with these same variables (Torres, 2009). The essential elements or factors of sustainability are the environment and climate and the attitude of stakeholders. Incentive and rewards programs can contribute to long-standing change. Long-standing change in behavior of all stakeholders is a necessity for sustainability (McIntosh et al., 2010).

Recommendations for this study include expanding on the current research to deepen the body of literature on this topic through the inclusion of more districts and schools to allow for generalization. It is also recommended that school leaders become aware of correlation data and trends regarding climate, relationships, incentive programs, and student achievement. Additionally, local school personnel and district level central office personnel should become familiar with the impact of climate and incentive programs on student achievement.
March 8, 2012

Mrs. Amy Coyne
(name of school and address omitted)

Re: Doctoral Research Study on Outcomes from Jostens’ Renaissance Program

Dear Mrs. Coyne,

I am approving your request to conduct a survey of middle and high school faculty for your dissertation.

Please arrange with (name omitted) in this office for distribution and collection of the materials. Her email is (name omitted).

Best wishes as you undertake this ambitious study.

Sincerely,

(name omitted)

Superintendent
### APPENDIX B

**PERCEPTION SURVEY FOR FACULTY AND STAFF**

To what degree do these statements describe the conditions of your school? Year working at school ____

Rate each statement on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 = Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2 = Disagree</th>
<th>3 = Neutral</th>
<th>4 = Agree</th>
<th>5 = Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 1. School leaders value my ideas. |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Teachers trust one another. |   |   |   |   |
| 3. Teachers support the mission of the school. |   |   |   |   |
| 4. Leaders in school trust the professional judgement of teachers. |   |   |   |   |
| 5. Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well. |   |   |   |   |
| 6. Leaders and teachers take the time to praise students who perform well. |   |   |   |   |
| 7. Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching. |   |   |   |   |
| 8. The faculty values school improvement. |   |   |   |   |
| 9. I believe that I am helping students become independent learners. |   |   |   |   |
| 10. I believe that I am empowering students. |   |   |   |   |
| 11. I feel that I am involved in an important program for children. |   |   |   |   |
| 12. I work at a school where students come first. |   |   |   |   |
| 13. I perceive that I make a difference. |   |   |   |   |
| 14. I perceive that I have an impact on other teachers and students. |   |   |   |   |
| 15. Teachers in this school believe that children can learn. |   |   |   |   |
| 16. Students here just aren’t motivated to learn. |   |   |   |   |
| 17. Teachers and students form bonds and positive working relationships that promote learning. |   |   |   |   |
| 18. The morale of teachers is high. |   |   |   |   |
| 19. The morale of students is high. |   |   |   |   |
| 20. I have the support of fellow faculty and staff. |   |   |   |   |
| 21. I have the support of my administration. |   |   |   |   |
| 22. I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers. |   |   |   |   |
| 23. The administration treats all faculty and staff as equals. |   |   |   |   |
| 24. Faculty and staff suggestions are considered and appreciated. |   |   |   |   |
| 25. Teachers have access to needed instructional materials and equipment. |   |   |   |   |
| 26. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school. |   |   |   |   |
| 27. Teachers accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm. |   |   |   |   |
| 28. The use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program aids in student achievement. |   |   |   |   |
| 29. The use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program aids in developing engagement. |   |   |   |   |
| 30. The use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program helps my school climate improve. |   |   |   |   |
APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

• The risks to subjects are minimized.
• The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
• The selection of subjects is equitable.
• Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
• Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
• Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
• Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
• Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
• If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
• Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12032808
PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship between Perception of School Climate and Student Achievement in Schools that use Josten’s Renaissance Program
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
RESEARCHER/S: Amy Yarborough Coyne
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Administration

FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 04/26/2012 to 04/25/2013

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
APPENDIX D
SURVEY COVER LETTER AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Research Partner,

My name is Amy Coyne. I am the assistant principal [Redacted]. I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in educational administration from The University of Southern Mississippi. As partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy degree, I am conducting research on the relationship between perception of school climate and student achievement in schools that use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program.

The survey that is being used with faculty and staff for this study is a thirty question perception questionnaire. Attached to this letter, you will find informed consent information explaining the details of the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or discontinue participation at any time. By participating in this study, you are helping educational leaders better understand the way in which perceptions, school climate and recognition programs might improve school performance. This in turn will benefit all stakeholders in school systems using such programs.

Remember that by completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire you are granting permission for this anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described in the informed consent.

If you have any questions concerning this research project or would like a copy of the completed research, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. You may reach me at acoyne@bwsd.org or 228-467-6611.

Thanks again for your help.

Amy Y Coyne
INFORMED CONSENT FOR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Is there a relationship between perception of school climate and student achievement in schools that use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

Please let me begin by saying thank you for taking the time to review this information. I am a graduate student at the University of Southern Mississippi pursuing my Ph.D. in educational administration. I am conducting a study entitled The Relationship Between Perception of School Climate and Student Achievement in Schools that Use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. I am asking that you participate in this survey.

Faculty and staff will be asked to complete the Perception Survey for Faculty and Staff and I have developed. Completed surveys are to be placed in the provided envelope and handed back to the researcher before leaving school today. Total time required for completion of the survey should not exceed 10 minutes.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may feel free to decline participation or discontinue participation at any point without penalty. You may skip or choose to refuse to answer any questions I ask that you not put any identifying information on your surveys to increase your confidentiality. Raw data will be kept in a locked cabinet dedicated to this research. Raw data will be completely destroyed at a time period not less than two years from the submission of the study. Should this research be published or presented, you will not be identifiable.

By participating in this survey, you are helping educators gain insight into how faculty and staff perceive school climate and recognitions systems and their impact on student achievement. By completing and returning this questionnaire you are granting permission for this anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described above.

If you have any questions concerning this research project or would like a copy of the completed research, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. You may reach me at acoyne@bwsd.org or 228-467-6611.

Amy Y. Coyne, Ed.S.

Signature of Participant _______________________________ Date __________________

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board. The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601)-266-6820.
APPENDIX E

RESEARCH PACKET INTERVIEW COVER LETTER

Dear Research Partner,

My name is Amy Coyne. I am the assistant principal of Bay High School in Bay St. Louis, MS. I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in educational administration from The University of Southern Mississippi. As partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy degree, I am conducting research on the relationship between perception of school climate and student achievement in schools that use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program.

The interview that you are asked to participate in is a nine question interview that will last approximately thirty minutes. Attached to this letter, you will find informed consent information regarding the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or discontinue participation at any time. By participating in this study, you are helping educational leaders better understand the way in which perceptions, school climate and recognition programs might improve school performance. This in turn will benefit all stakeholders in school systems using such programs.

Remember that by completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire you are granting permission for this anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described in the informed consent.

If you have any questions concerning this research project or would like a copy of the completed research, please feel free to contact me at any time. You may reach me at acoyne@bwsd.org or 228-467-6611.

Thanks again for your help.

Amy Y Coyne
INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT

Is there a relationship between perception of school climate and student achievement in schools that use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

Please let me begin by saying thank you for taking the time to review this information. I am a graduate student at the University of Southern Mississippi pursuing my Ph.D. in educational administration. I am conducting a study entitled The Relationship Between Perception of School Climate and Student Achievement in Schools that Use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program. I am asking that you participate in this survey.

In an effort to get administrator perspectives on school climate, support for enrichment and achievement and perceptions of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program, interviews will be conducted with three school administrators in an effort to directly observe and obtain further data for comparison and analysis. Interviews consist of structured open-ended visits structured to meet the administration to review school discipline data, school participation data in the Jostens’ program at each school site and the statistics that surround these in relation to school achievement levels as measured by the state accountability and reporting system.

The interview will be audio taped by the researcher. The interview will last approximately thirty minutes and will be pre-arranged by phone conversation at your convenience. The interview will consist of nine questions for you as the administrator to give dialogue and feedback upon. After the interview, the audio recorded interviews will be transcribed word for word by the researcher. All transcriptions will be analyzed comparatively to identify themes, correlations and important trends and other pertinent data. After transcription of the audio tapes, the researcher will keep these for one calendar year and then will dispose of these tapes.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may feel free to decline participation or discontinue participation at any point without penalty. I ask that you not put any identifying information on your surveys to increase your confidentiality. Raw data will be kept in a locked cabinet dedicated to this research. Should this research be published or presented, you will not be identifiable.

By participating in this interview, you are helping educators gain insight into how faculty and staff perceive school climate and recognitions systems and their impact on student achievement. By completing this interview you are granting permission for this anonymous and confidential data to be used for the purposes described above.

If you have any questions concerning this research project or would like a copy of the completed research, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. You may reach me at acovne@bwsd.org or 228-467-6611.

Signature of Participant _____________________________ Date ________________

Amy Y. Coyne, Ed.S

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board. The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601)-266-6820.
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Drawing upon your educational experiences, what do you think motivates students?

2. Drawing upon your educational experiences, what do you think motivates teachers?

3. Drawing upon your educational experiences, how do you think school climate effects the motivation of teachers and students?

4. Drawing upon your educational experiences, how would you describe ideal support systems in schools?

5. Please name and describe for me the current support systems that you use in your schools. Please also describe which of these programs you think are most effective and helpful.

6. Drawing upon your educational experiences, what do you think are the positives of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

7. Drawing upon your educational experiences, will you continue to use the Jostens’ Renaissance Program in your school in the future?

8. Drawing upon your educational experiences, have you seen a change in your school climate since the use of the Jostens’ Renaissance Program?

9. Drawing upon your educational experiences, what is the connection between Jostens’ Renaissance and achievement?
REFERENCES


