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The University of Southern Mississippi

MIDDLE SCHOOL CULTURES AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

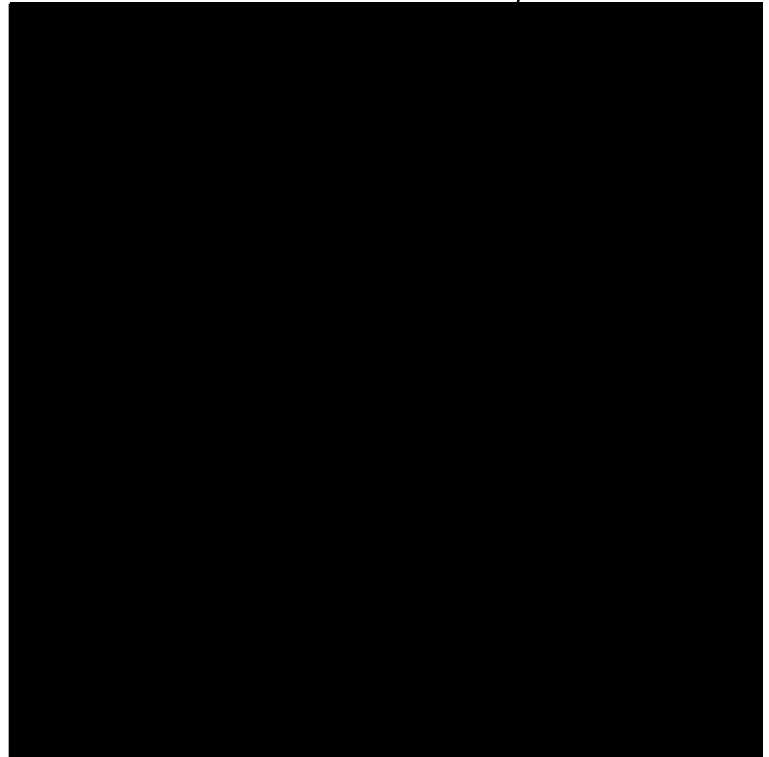
Nichel Holland Swindler

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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August 2009

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ABSTRACT

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by Nichel Holland Swindler

August 2009

School principals have the daunting task of improving their schools and ensuring that student performance increases. Many principals are using their understanding of leadership and culture to transform their schools in order to provide high-performing educational services. The primary purpose of this study was to increase the understanding of those middle school cultures that do in fact, facilitate student performance and achievement.

This study was conducted using information from middle schools in three southeastern states, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Teachers completed a 35-question school culture questionnaire designed by Dr. Jerry Valentine. Three research questions were proposed and answered through the use of the questionnaire, which was completed by 415 teachers from 47 middle schools among the three states.

The research study was guided by the following questions: 1) Is there a relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and student performance? 2) Do Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) predict AYP outcomes? 3) Do Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative

leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) predict the state-level school accreditation status of a school?

Based on these guided questions, three hypotheses were tested using a multiple regression analysis, a binary logistical regression, and a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The statistical analyses examined the relationships between Valentine's six factors of school culture and student performance, AYP status, and state-level accreditation factors. There was not a significant relationship between the factors of school culture and student performance. The regression analysis was conducted to determine if the six factors of school culture predict AYP outcomes in schools. The analysis did not predict the school's AYP target. The MANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference between the state-level accreditation factors on the six factors of school culture. The MANOVA did not reveal a difference. Thus, all three hypotheses were rejected.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to explore middle school cultures and their relationship to student performance. There are many variables that influence student performance. School culture is one of the primary factors that school principals and administrators can begin to change under their direct leadership (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Leaders, who alter their assumptions, values, beliefs, and purposes, modify the culture of the school's organization and increase student performance.

In the current state of high-stakes testing and accountability, it is the intent of many principals to build cultures of change. The ultimate goal of leadership is to instill in others the ability to perform and execute in your absence as they would in your presence; to move people forward individually and collectively. The atmosphere or ethos supportive of school improvement that results in enhanced student performance has six cultural factors. According to Valentine, the school culture should encompass the six cultural factors which include collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, a unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership (Middle Level Leadership College, n.d.). The objective of this study was to determine the magnitude of the relationship among the six factors associated with school culture and student performance in three southern states.

This chapter provides a background on middle school achievement and organizational culture. The background is followed by a statement of the problem

and the purpose of the study, and the hypotheses, definitions, delimitations, and assumptions continue. The chapter ends with a justification for the study.

Background

From the 1960s through the 1990s, the number of middle schools in the United States increased exponentially. However, Weller (1999) asserted that most of the basic tenets of the original philosophy and organizational structure are not incorporated in many middle schools. In *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*, the Carnegie Council Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents reinforced the need for middle schools, but noted inconsistencies in middle school programs. The findings noted the disregard of the adolescent within the organizational structure of the institution and the use of inappropriate tools of instruction and assessment. Both factors, the authors concluded, led to a decrease within learning in middle schools.

Since the report, achievement scores have continued to decline, as documented by student performance on national exams (National Middle School Association, 2003). While the decrease in student achievement during the middle level years is likely a result of many factors, it appears that middle schools are themselves key factors in their students' academic decline (Roney, Anfara, & Brown, 2008).

The majority of modern educational research focuses on secondary schools or on elementary schools. Although, there is a fair amount of middle school research pertaining to private schools and charter schools, most educational research neglects the middle school as the domain of study. This dearth of academic literature includes

limited availability of research on middle school culture. An examination of the relationship between middle school cultures and student performance is needed to fill this gap in educational research. This study on middle school cultures was designed to increase the understanding of middle school cultures that facilitate learning.

Many variables influence student performance. In their study of New Jersey middle schools, Sweetland and Hoy (2000) maintained that the most powerful variables associated with student performance are socio-economic status and school culture. Learning flourishes in school cultures where students are driven, or motivated by values and attitudes (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Preskill and Torres (1999) propose that culture is the infrastructure that influences the life of the organization. Building a school culture that fosters learning begins with leaders- the principal and others. The principal is the primary leader and articulates leadership to the teachers who establish cultures of learning in their classrooms (Danielson, 2007).

Each school has a distinctive personality, an ethos or a philosophy that is described by community members or visitors. According to MacNeil (2005), descriptions of the school are often referenced as the organizational culture or the school climate. Kyle and Bogotch (2000) examined school improvements. They based their efforts on addressing changes in a school as “reculturing” and found significant gains with student achievement. The leaders in many of the schools that address school culture often link organizational management theories to their school improvement actions.

Middle school principals and district level administrators would benefit from identifying practices or programs that positively influence student achievement

(NMSA, 2003). Accountability legislation stipulates an increase in student achievement as well as continuous improvement from year to year. Ideally, a practice or program would provide a framework and a standard for student performance in middle schools. Principals and administrators could then review the data provided and gauge increases and sustainability of those increases based on program benchmarks that could be sustained from year to year. If there is indeed a relationship between middle school cultures and student performance, principals and administrators could use these findings to change their assumptions, values, beliefs, and behaviors, improve their school's organizational culture, and increase student performance.

According to Hoy and Miskel (2005), organizational culture is an attempt to understand "the feel, sense, atmosphere, character, or image of an organization" (p. 165). Organizational culture is more than the behavior in an organization. It includes many aspects of an organization's beliefs and values. The day-to-day functions of the organization's expectations and the needs of the individuals are multi-faceted elements that influence the beliefs and values. The aspects of the schools such as the stories people tell their friends about "how things are done" and relationships among the people in the organization (Martin, 2002); and collectively the elements within the organization, bring a personality to the workplace.

Researchers have operationalized the "personality" of the workplace with terms such as climate, culture, and even atmosphere. The concern for culture within the workplace is not a new phenomenon. For decades, researchers have stressed the importance of employee interactions and values of workers in small, informal

organizations (Barnard, 1938; Hoy & Miskel, 2005). More recently, Saphier, King and D'Auria (2006) identified a framework that focuses on the organizational culture of schools. According to Saphier, King, and D'Auria schools with strong organizational cultures yield the best results for students (2006).

Statement of the Problem

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Legislation Act (NCLB) of 2001 into law. The objective of the law is to ensure that all students achieve proficiency in core academic disciplines. The legislation requires each state to develop and implement measurements to determine if their schools are meeting the mandate. By 2014, each state should have 100% of its students proficient in mathematics and English language arts, which includes reading. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the improvement measurement to determine how close the school and the state are to achieving the goal. The measurement is based on a series of annual academic performance goals. Schools that do not meet their performance goals in specific areas for two consecutive years are subject to sanctions.

Standards-based accountability heightened with the challenges of NCLB and changed assumptions redirect the basic tenets of school leadership. School principals are instructional leaders who have the overwhelming task of improving their schools as well as transforming the schools so that student achievement is accomplished (Southworth, 2004). All students, regardless of racial status or social, cultural and economic backgrounds are required to reach high academic standards under NCLB. As instructional leaders, principals have to direct teachers to produce students who

are willing to achieve. This type of leadership has to promote a positive learning environment that produces tangible, high outcomes (Southworth, 2002).

Before low-performing schools can transform into high-performing schools, principals need an understanding of the importance of school culture (Hoog, Johansson, & Olofsson, 2005). Principals are well-advised to recognize that a positive school culture impacts learning in the classroom. There are strategies that build and lead the culture of any school or organization toward improved performance. MacNeil (2005) states, “school leaders who choose to lead rather than just manage must first understand the school’s culture” (p. 290). Instead of just managing their schools, many of today’s principals lead them; that is, they are encouraged to study, analyze, and guide their school’s efforts to raise student achievement (Sergiovanni, 2001).

Leading a school requires leadership skills that focus on adults as teachers and teacher-leaders who can motivate themselves and their students. A principal and teachers can mold and shape a school’s culture to encourage, motivate, and bring confidence to individuals in the school. School reform efforts are structured for principals and teacher-leaders to focus on individualized student learning and the schools’ overall performance.

A significant problem with reform efforts is that many have failed to consistently improve student achievement (Owens, 2001). MacNeil (2005) commented that culture can be used to promote increased student achievement. A challenge to the improvement of student achievement is that currently there are neither specific actions nor explicit behaviors outlining components of positive school

cultures that result in improvement. According to Hoyle and Wallace, school culture is a framework used by many principals to “dissolve” dilemmas within the organization (2005). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) contend that school reform efforts are failing because the strategies and techniques used as reform efforts are not reaching the classroom level. Similarly, Sergiovanni (2005) asserts that the failure in reform is the result of leaders inadequately addressing the significance of school culture. Analyzes of these impacts will provide school leaders with insight about elements of school culture.

In view of this significant failure in progress, this study was designed with the purpose of examining, middle school performance and its relationship to six cultural sub-factors. According to Patterson (2006), positive school cultures should include collaboration, collegiality, unity of purpose, learning partnerships, and collaborative leadership. Peterson (2002) asserts that standards-based school reform efforts work in school cultures that embrace change. Staff members of a school, like employees of any organization, have a tendency to share values or patterns of beliefs. These values or patterns of belief directly affect or impact the culture, the learning environment, and ultimately individual performance; each of these variables in turn impacts student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine Valentine’s factors of school culture in relation to student achievement. Currently, there is no consensus on a nation-wide, effective framework for successful middle schools. Most of the current middle level research delineates characteristics for middle schools across the nation. The remedy

for these schools includes using a hierarchical agenda for school improvement. The list of items indicated that *culture* is the second most important element for principals to consider when creating a developmentally appropriate classroom for adolescents (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2004). According to Valentine, a middle level research guru, school culture has six elements. These factors are collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships.

In an effort to enhance the success of middle schools, principals have methods to measure the culture of the schools they are attempting to lead. A positive culture can implicate that school reform efforts necessary for change may improve instruction and ultimately increase student learning (Trimble, 2003). School principals who choose to assess the culture of their schools prior to making changes have data to support school improvement plans. Examining the culture of a school in relation to school performance will be a valuable source of insight as school leaders strive to improve student achievement necessary for federal mandates.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The key research questions for this study are:

1. Is there a relationship between Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and student performance?

2. Do Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) predict AYP outcomes?
3. Do Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) predict the state-level school accreditation status?

The research hypotheses that were be tested:

1. There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and student performance.
2. There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and the degree to which schools meet AYP targets.
3. There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and the state-level accreditation status of schools.

Definitions of Terms

Academic motivation. Academic motivation is "a measure of students' commitment of energy to academic goals" (Moore, 2007, p. 32).

Adequate Yearly Progress. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students achieving to state academic standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics.

Artifacts. School artifacts are textbooks, classroom resources, and technology used for instruction (e.g. Internet).

At-risk. Students who are not succeeding in school are considered at-risk.

Collective leadership. Collective leadership is a vehicle used to guarantee that everyone invested in the school transforms in a cohesive manner in an effort to attain a common goal.

Collegial support. Collegial support is the social trust and collaboration colleagues exhibit to help other teachers and staff members.

Culture. Culture is “the property of a group” (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005, p. 113).

High-performing school. A high-performing middle school is a school that has met AYP in English language arts and mathematics for two consecutive years in all subgroups. Additionally, the school is meeting the requirements for hiring and retaining teachers as well as meeting the academic benchmarks outlined in NCLB.

Instructional leadership. The instructional leadership is the principal’s role with student learning.

Low-performing school. A low-performing middle school is a school that has not met AYP in English language arts and mathematics for two consecutive years in all subgroups.

Master teacher. A master teacher is an exemplary teacher.

Middle school. A middle school is a school with students in grades 6-8.

Motivation. Motivation is “a temporal sequence that is started, sustained, directed, and finally terminated” which examines “why people think and behave as they do” (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

Professional development. Professional development includes the activities or workshops that teachers engage in to become better teachers.

School culture. School culture is a common set of beliefs, values, and behaviors delineated as a descriptive apparatus (Silverman, 2005). A realistic view is the “set of codes that guide the daily work of teachers” (Firestone & Louis, 1999, p. 298).

School effectiveness. School effectiveness is “the students’ growth in academic achievement” (Miller & Rowan, 2006, p. 221).

Student achievement. Student achievement is “what students know and are able to do” (Earl & Katz, 2006, p. 50).

Teacher collaboration. Teacher collaboration is communication between teachers within the same content area or communication between teachers who are teaching the same grade level or group of students but teach different content areas.

Teaming. Teaming is a group of teachers assembled to create an educational goal.

Transformation. Transformation is a process of change.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a change in structure, purpose, goals, and behaviors as the group transitions from one stage to another (Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk, 2003).

Delimitations

The following limitations were acknowledged for this study:

1. The study was limited to middle schools in public school districts in the states of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. As a result, the findings may not be applicable to schools in other states or at other educational levels (e.g., elementary school or high school).
2. The study was limited to professional educators, specifically teachers, in these schools. The findings will not distinguish the type of teacher (e.g., librarian, special education teacher, gifted and talented teacher, or general education teacher).
3. The study does not encompass all individuals associated with a school's culture. Participants of the study include only teachers of each individual school. Additional staff members such as instructional assistants, secretaries, cafeteria workers, custodians, literacy coaches, and security (hall) monitors were excluded.
4. While Valentine's model of culture was adopted for this study, there is not universal agreement regarding the definition of the term "culture." According to Hoyle and Wallace (2005), there is no canonical definition of the term; therefore, there is no consensus on the content of culture. Culture can include values, beliefs, artifacts, and symbols. It can also include symbols, behaviors, language, and values that exist on a pre-conscious level. In education, there are subgroups which are part of larger groups that may have subcultures

within larger cultures. Indicatively, there may be groups of people who live in different regions that do not share a central idea concerning a key concept.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for the purposes of this study:

1. The participants responded honestly and interpreted the instrument as intended.
2. The participants clearly understood the definition of culture adopted for this study.

Justification

This study is justified by the potential it has to impact the understanding of middle school administrators and teachers regarding school culture and its relationship to school performance. In contemporary leadership and management literature, transformation is used to describe the challenging goals of change. The government has intervened with requirements for greater accountability because of the failed efforts of transformation at the school level. The kinds of transformation over the last two decades have included structures, procedures, and legal parameters in which schools operate (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005).

Educational leadership is the primary determinant in a safe and healthy learning environment. An impressive number of educational studies conclude that leadership is a key catalyst for student achievement. The school leadership research provides ample evidence that leadership really matters and leaders who are effective “know what to do, when to do it, and why to do it” (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004, p. 49). And, although leadership is key, leadership as it is traditionally defined

must be redefined to include teachers. Teachers have a tremendous role in influencing school culture. Their effectiveness as leaders must also be measured.

The art of getting an effective leader to know what to do at the right time is referred to as a transformation process (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). The process requires the leader to get people to change. The art of being a change agent is a learning process. Current educational research needs to explore the learning process in relation to three themes. According to Hoyle and Wallace, the three themes of strong culture, learning organization, and staff collaboration are well-worth pursuing and furthering in regard to the future of education (2005).

Summary

School principals have the daunting task of improving their schools and ensuring that student performance is increasing. Many schools are using their understanding of culture to transform their schools to provide high-performing educational services. Theories of organizational culture used to strengthen and empower businesses are being extended and applied in the educational context as school culture. This study of middle school culture was designed to increase the understanding of middle school cultures that facilitate student performance and achievement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature related to school culture and student performance. The chapter begins with the theoretical foundations of organizational culture and its relevance to school culture. The topic of school culture for this study is defined and examined. The chapter delineates the avenues of current research related to school cultures and student achievement. The empirical literature is discussed, including that which addresses the impact of school leadership on organizational culture. Next, the six cultural factors described by Jerry Valentine (collective leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) are explored. Fullan (2001) further extends this premise to education and refers to organizational culture within the educational context as school culture. Every school has a unique, yet distinctive culture. The culture of the school influences the student performance and the success of the school. The concept of culture was developed by anthropologists to explain commonalities and differences among groups, tribes, and societies. The final part of the chapter links middle school cultures with student achievement.

Theoretical Foundations

The review of theory in this section examines several aspects of culture and measures of school culture. This section will present the perspectives of Piaget's cognitive developmental theory and Maslow's behavioral theory both of which may support the developmental aspects associated middle school children. In addition, this section will present the perspectives of two main theorists, Heider's Attribution

Theory and Kanter's Empowerment Theory, and some history of the construct of organizational culture in order to illustrate its evolution and development.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development began to spark the interest of many researchers as early as 1950. Piaget's learning theory is a developmental theory which categorizes the aptitude of student learning in all children at different ages. According to Piaget, children seek new knowledge and apply it to their existing knowledge. Therefore, children build on their level of understanding and mature from experiences around them.

Piaget (1972) concluded:

that the average child will experience four developmental stages. First, a child will enter the sensory-motor stage (birth to 2), then the preoperational stage (2 to 7), next the concrete operational stage (7 to 12), and finally the formal operational stage (12 and beyond). Piaget suggests that children pass through the stages in a continuous and constant pattern. The different stages explain a child's thinking process or learning pattern. (Johnson-Pynn & Nisbet, 2002, pp. 241-242).

Due to the ages of children served at the middle level, middle schools have to address students at the concrete operational stage (7 to 12) as well as the formal operational stage (12 and beyond).

Piaget is known for his research in constructivism, or the way people learn. According to Piaget (1972), learning is a cognitive process derived by many instructional tasks as well as the surroundings of the teaching. Lerner further developed Piaget's results by concluding early adolescents attribute meaning and

value to their work (2002). Some children learn while others do not learn and many adolescents are on different learning paths. Specifically, a student can value learning and extend into the formal operational stage while other students remain in the concrete operational stage. Therefore, Piaget's cognitive theory underpins the parameters that prohibit learning in people.

The implications from Piaget's cognitive theory suggest that competence to learn is not the only factor included in learning. The findings from Piaget's initial work were initially refuted at the adolescent stage (the end of the concrete stage and the beginning of the formal operational stage). At this stage, theorist who replicated Piaget's work continue to get different findings within the formal operational stage.

Piaget noted individual variability increases in people at the beginning of their second decade, which is the time many children enter middle school. The difference is shown in student work or test scores. Stanovich asserts that individual variability forces people to choose to participate or not to participate, which is irrelevant in regards to cognitive ability (2004). Therefore, children may have the cognitive ability to perform well academically and choose not to do well. The major concern for learning is part of a broader picture which includes understanding in relation to a goal or value as the critical piece that links achievement with accomplishment (Kuhn, 2008).

Educational research suggests that children learn from their surroundings and their beliefs or values determine their behavior (Maze, 1983). All behavior is grounded by explanations of the conceptualization of basic goals. Abraham Maslow,

a well-respected psychologist, developed a human behavioral theory known as Maslow's Hierarchy. The hierarchy is

a pyramid of five levels of basic goals that every person needs

Level 1 (Physiological) begins with basic needs such as air, food, and sleep.

Level 2 (Safety) states that everyone needs security and some form of family or dependency. Level 3 (Love and Belonging) indicates that all people need

love from a friend or family member. Level 4 (Esteem) denotes that all

people need achievement or confidence to go on. Level 5 (Self-Actualization)

reports that all people should be in an environment that supports and enables people to meet their goals. (Chapman, 2004, p.1-2)

One of the most researched theories of motivation and needs is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. According to Maslow, people need specific elements in their surroundings in order for them to reach the final level, Self-Actualization (1970). Maslow's Hierarchy is significant because it delineates a process to help people become motivated to achieve.

Research suggests that understanding achievement begins with motivation. Attribution Theory is centered on how individuals understand events in relation to their behavior. The first psychologist to recommend a theory of attribution was Fritz Heider (1958). The intention of Attribution Theory was to aid the understanding of the causes of human behavior. Heider's theory suggested that what people perceive and believe about their surroundings will dictate their actions, even if what they perceive and believe is contradictory to their beliefs and values. According to Heider (1958), all behavior is determined by internal and external factors. In 1967, Kelley

advanced Attribution Theory by adding hypotheses about factors that affect the formation of attribution. In contrast to Heider's theory, in 1986, Weiner's theory focused on attribution but changed the focal point from causes of human behavior toward outcomes of student achievement. Peterson and Schreiber (2006) used Weiner's framework of the Attribution Theory to examine student motivation within small-group learning. Attribution Theory is appropriate for examining student motivation in school settings because it addresses personal and social motivation (Weiner, 2000).

Additional theory related to individuals and their performance was introduced by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Kanter (2006) developed a theory of organizational empowerment, suggesting that when opportunities for empowerment arise, employee attitude improves, and as a result, the organization becomes more effective in attaining its goals. The Theory of Organizational Empowerment is centered on the foundation of the efforts within the organization. In other words, those with sufficient power are able to accomplish the tasks required to achieve organizational goals. These individuals have the ability to empower those around them and thus create an effective work unit within the organization. On the other hand, individuals in positions that limit their ability to acquire power and opportunity perceive themselves to be powerless. Powerless individuals lack control over their fate and are dependent on those around them. According to Kanter (1972), they are more rigid, more rules-oriented, and less committed to the achievement of organizational goals than empowered individuals. Kanter believes the conditions of the work environment predispose employee work efforts (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006). Fullan (2001) contends

that schools are merely mini-organizations and that what has begun to work for organizations across the world should be applied to schools. Indeed, school culture is a component of school effectiveness that needs to be addressed by school leaders.

According to Deal and Peterson (1999), who study corporate and organizational cultures, culture is historically rooted and socially transmitted as levels of ideas or thoughts. Cultures examine and portray the underlying social meanings that shape and mold the groups' beliefs and behaviors over a period of time. Ultimately, culture is represented as a deep pattern of thinking. Hoy and Miskel (2005) assert that school culture is analyzed and examined in three different ways; a culture of efficacy, a culture of trust, and a culture of control. Teachers with high collective efficacy are more apt to meet challenging goals and have higher test scores (Goddard, 2002; Griffith 2003).

Three essential elements that exist in every organization are context, capacity, and conversation (Smith, 2008). The essential elements emerge inside of every school portrait. The school context defines the setting and the understanding of how humans interact with each other and the impact that the context has on the school. Specifically, the school context is the culture, climate, message, and physical environment. No two schools are alike, but there are similarities among successful schools that portray a framework for leadership. Smith purports that school context, school capacity, and school conversations help leaders focus the lens of the camera taking their school picture (2008).

The school context delineates the answers to several questions significant to school change. First, school context determines the definition of the school. Next,

school context implies what is happening at the particular school. The context also sets the parameters for what can be done and reinforces the interrelated components of the school culture. Significant change in any organization does not occur unless there is change within the essential elements that improve the capacities and further the conversation regarding school change.

Research on organizational cultures analyzes the organization and the formal structure of businesses and other institutions. Research supports that organizations are effective in reaching their goals when employees are satisfied and empowered (Trevino & Nelson, 1999; Kanter, 2006). Ginevicius and Vaitkunaite (2006) lend credence to the growing belief that a mixture of informal and formal organizational values is a solution to improving the efficiency of the institution. As a topic of research, organizational culture captures the attention of many practitioners in the field of education because of its potential to impact the school's outcomes (Gillet & Stenfert-Kroese, 2003).

Literature Review

The initial review of literature describes the commonalities of school cultures. Problems specific to school culture are identified in the literature, but there are very few published studies of interventions to ameliorate the environment as a means of enhancing student achievement. The research from organizational culture has been analyzed and extrapolations have been made and applied to public schools. School cultures are a minority within the greater group of organizational cultures as a whole, and the available literature reflects this minority status.

School Cultures

Over the years, school culture has been defined and redefined with subsequent definitions addressing different nuances. These definitions can be separated into two categories: culture from a corporate viewpoint and culture from a school's perception. Prominent education researchers have sought to define culture within the context of schools. Senge (2000) asserts that strong cultures increase the ability of organizations to reach their goals whether in businesses, corporations, or schools. Deal and Kennedy (1999) compared companies in the top twenty percent and the bottom twenty percent. The companies with stronger cultures had higher gains in earnings, investments, and stock prices. Deal and Kennedy identified companies that were culturally superior and recognized that the organizational cognizance was a result of values, goals, and purpose. According to Patterson (2006), the key to achievement is determined by the people within the organization who shape and mold the purposes, norms, values, and assumptions.

Importance of Culture

Many researchers have written extensively on the subject of culture. This review of literature considers the views of Edgar Schein (1985), Terrence Deal (1999), and Kent Peterson (1999). Ideas from each of these authors helped to select a definition of culture for the purpose of this research project. Initially, Edgar Schein (1985) examined the concept of culture from the organizational perspective. Schien's (1993) work with organizational culture is significant to this study because schools are organizations in his study. He originally defined culture as:

. . . a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1985, p. 9).

Barth (2002) offers a current, yet curtailed explanation of culture from an organizational perspective. Barth defines culture as “a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths” that is deeply embedded in the heart of every organization.

After Edgar Schein’s definition was established, Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson used culture as a concept in the school system, because of their assertion that cultures in schools are unique in comparison to other organizations. Yet school culture, an important factor affecting the quality and impact of school reform, is not often addressed in detail by many educational researchers (1999). Many researchers suggest characteristics or outcomes of schools with good school cultures, but omit a framework in which to identify or organize the attributes (Griffith, 2003). Schools have interpersonal dynamics within them but comprehending those dynamics is contingent upon the school leaders understanding the culture (Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & Dipaola, 2006).

Researchers have analyzed organizational culture and named the components. Deal and Peterson (1999) delineated a detailed categorization of the facets of organizational culture, identifying eight parts. The aspects of organizational culture

were namely, mission, vision, values, rituals and ceremonies, traditions, history, and artifacts (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Janson further examined the aspects of organizational culture and divided the managerial atmosphere into three categories; philosophical, traditional and general (2002).

There are many ways to manage a school building. Sometimes the school leader has a vision of the perfect school. The vision is a picture of the end result or the overall accomplishment of the school. A good leader creates a vision and is able to change and improve the school so the vision is manifested. The key to improving the school is getting the teachers to share the vision.

The culture influences what staff members believe about school programs and improvement strategies. Positively influencing the school culture can improve test scores without concentrating on school personnel and instructional strategies. According to Wagner and Masden-Copas (2002), focusing on improving the school culture should always precede implementing school “programs” in an effort to increase student achievement. Schools that are attentive to their culture are more successful with student achievement and the professional growth and development of their teachers (Wagner & Masden-Copas, 2002; DuFour, 2002).

Schools with strong cultures produce more master teachers and staff members who understand the art of decision-making. In other words, researchers believe that a strong, professional culture can be transformed and developed through leadership. Leadership paradigms have shifted during the twenty-first century. Before high-stakes testing and the era of accountability, educational administrators were managers and eventually instructional leaders. Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson (2003) opined that

for schools to have favorable outcomes, schools have to have transformational leadership. In addition, Laub asserts that school leaders need to be transformational leaders (2007). Likewise, Franklin stated, “For schools to be effective centers of learning, strong principals are critical for shaping the culture (p. 6).

Hoog, Johansson, and Olofsson studied the relationship among school structure, school culture, and school leadership as preconditions for effective schools and successful principalships (2005). They concluded these schools change their school cultures to meet the expectations and directions of the school district. School success and increased academic performance were attributed to the goals of the principal which were in line with the goals of the school district. Again, the findings of the study support the vision as a statement of belief portrayed by the principal. The success of the school is viewed in the fostering of the vision from the principal up to the school board members and the superintendent.

Among school leaders, according to Danielson (2007), there is no one more important than the teacher and what the teacher knows, believes, and does. But the school culture also encompasses other school personnel, stakeholders, and students and determines the way they think, feel, and act (Deal & Peterson, 2002). Their expectations and values within a school shape and mold all of the happenings within a school setting. They include conversations at the bus stop before school and discussions held in the teacher’s lounge.

Data demonstrates that leadership does matter and that there is a relationship between leadership and student achievement. In the seventy leadership studies that Waters, Marzano and McNulty examined, they chose to use leadership studies with

substantive student achievement to identify common components of leadership reported as twenty-one key areas of responsibility (2004). The study pinpointed culture as the first and most significant characteristic of schools with effective leadership and substantial student achievement from year to year.

Characteristics of Constructive School Cultures

Saphier, King and D'Auria studied developing the professional culture of the school by developing the leaders' capacity to work the teachers in three major areas: academic focus, shared beliefs and values, and productive professional relationships (2006). In the study there is a "DNA of School Leadership." The DNA of a school is composed of three elements including *academic focus, shared beliefs and values, and productive professional relationships*. The academic focus provides rigorous, yet relevant instruction aligned to the state standards. Shared beliefs and values, important elements within any given culture, are key ideas for generating dedication and commitment in teachers. However, shared beliefs and values are significant for students as well. Their experiences are a characteristic used to help deepen the understanding of the school and convey the school's mission. Conchas and Rodriquez purport that schools account that they "help students," but receiving help is a characteristic of high-performing schools (2008). Therefore, schools should have evidence of students' experiences in the school culture.

The professional relationships fostered by the academic achievement based on the school's culture should reflect the school's purpose (Conchas & Rodriquez, 2008). Saphier, King, and D'Auria refer to leadership in terms of the teachers and

other staff members at the school (2006). The teacher's behavior, the class routines, and the school's procedures shape and mold the school's culture.

School culture includes some key elements that represent purposes, norms, values, and assumptions. Lezotte (2001) found seven cultural norms needed to build a school's performance. The seven norms are instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment, climate and high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relations, opportunity to learn and time on task. Valentine studied middle level leadership and wrote about the effect of school cultures. His research disclosed six norms associated with middle school cultures (MLL, n.d.). According to Valentine, the six standards are collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships. There is a fair amount of consistency and overlap between Lezotte's and Valentine's findings.

Researchers have scrutinized additional components of school culture. Deal and Key (1998) discuss the mystic quality of ritual and ceremony. Rituals and ceremonies connect the purpose of the individual to their core values (Moxley, 2000). One of the additional components of school culture is storytelling. Stories are meaningful tools used in education. The act of storytelling captures an experience that can be used as a lesson learned (McCay, 2003). In addition, artifacts can be symbolically used as elements of school culture (Patterson, 2006). Schools use symbolic artifacts such as school mascots, yearbooks, and school banners to represent the school's spirit and community.

Culture within school environments was more of a slogan to describe the daily practices within the school setting. Culture is described as the components of many of the daily tasks of leadership. Now, culture is being seen not as the property that emerges from the leader but as the daily practices of the teacher and the output of the student body (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Community members, parents, stakeholders, and staff members view school culture as what is in the school and what the school has. If the school has a culture, then the school's culture can be manipulated and changed. However, if the school is a culture, then the daily operations and the community influence require a greater transformation.

The organizational influences necessary to make a difference go beyond the span of a managerialist approach to control the culture. In this context, creating a strong school culture is more than merely manipulating the school symbols. Creating a strong school culture is a transformation that changes what goes on in the school. Effective principals have noted survival strategies that are used to help urban schools create equitable educational services for all students. The first strategy is defining the school's culture (Burke, Baca, Picus, & Jones, 2003). School leaders then use the school's culture to shape, mold, and maintain the students' capacity to learn and to achieve.

According to Saphier, King, and D'Auria (2006) schools are unique and their DNA consists of similar structures, but there is a different genetic make-up for every school according to its needs. Sergiovanni (2005) contends that conventional wisdom establishes that leadership is about getting to the root of a problem and finding the best solution. School circumstances and situations are different, since school reform

is defined differently from school to school, identifying a concise problem and finding a perfect solution are difficult questions to resolve and answers to obtain. English (2003) contends that changes and decisions for school improvement cannot be made with a cookie-cutter approach. Laub contends that “leadership is difficult” (2007, p. 36).

Leadership is also understood as being a complex and comprehensive task (Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2004). The traditions, policies, and norms of a school make the boundaries for a philosophical leadership framework. The underlying restrictions set guidelines for school progress which is reflected through leadership in the school decisions, staff development, and community relationships. All school administrators have to exhibit respect and consideration for the school make-up. Sometimes changing what is on the inside is not necessary. The answer is to challenge the existing boundaries and the structure or hidden culture that holds the school together (English, 2003).

Several researchers have identified elements, often overlapping, of successful school cultures. Deal and Peterson list eleven elements of successful school cultures in their book, *Shaping School Culture* (1999) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Eleven Elements to Successful Cultures

-
1. A mission focused on student and teacher learning
 2. A rich sense of history and purpose
 3. Core values of collegiality, performance, improvements that engender quality, achievement, and learning for everyone
 4. Positive beliefs and assumptions about the potential of students and staff to learn and grow
 5. A strong professional community that uses knowledge, experience, and research to improve practice
 6. An informal network that fosters positive communication flow
 7. Shared leadership that balances continuity and improvement
 8. Rituals and ceremonies that reinforce core cultural values
 9. Stories that celebrate successes and recognize heroines and heroes
 10. A physical environment that symbolizes joy and pride
 11. A widely shared sense of respect and caring for everyone
-

(Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 116)

In a similar study, Goldring and Knox (2002) identified a positive correlation between a school's culture and student achievement. They examined schools in California, and had teachers and principals prioritize the elements of school culture in relation to student achievement. Then they identified schools with high test scores and noticeable achievement. Their research identified six key ingredients for successful schools. The items recognized in the successful schools in California were shared vision, traditions, shared decision-making, collaboration, innovation, and communication.

The six ingredients from Goldring and Knox's study incorporate many of the same concepts as Deal and Peterson's *Eleven Elements to Successful Cultures*. Deal and

Peterson identified element # 1 as a mission of focus. Goldring and Knox named their first trait a shared vision. Although these authors have different names for the components of their studies, they include similar beliefs.

Likewise, Huffman and Hipp (2003) describe characteristics of strong, unwavering cultures. In their book *Reculturing Schools as Professional Learning Communities*, Huffman and Hipp found factors that every culture should address to enhance their school's culture. They purport that factors influencing school cultures are positive teacher attitudes; the academic focus across the school; a shared vision; shared decision-making; teacher collaboration across the different grade levels and within every discipline; continuous growth and development; and accountability for student achievement (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). All of these factors address the elements found in Deal and Patterson's list of elements for positive cultures and the traits necessary to increase student achievement in Goldring and Knox's study.

The factors influencing school cultures found in the studies conducted by Deal and Patterson (1999), Goldring and Knox (2002), and Huffman and Hipp (2003) are all included in the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) meta-analysis that examined more than 5,000 school studies. Of the 5,000 studies, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found 70 studies with standardized measures of student achievement which met McREL's criteria for inclusion in a meta-analysis. McREL's meta-analysis resulted in the identification of 21 leadership responsibilities that are correlated with student achievement. Waters, Marzano and McNulty concluded that key to maintaining these characteristics of leadership responsibilities found in the 21 areas identified, is principal leadership. Principal leadership is

significantly correlated with student achievement. The first area of responsibility is *culture*. From the research they interpreted that not all leadership behaviors will have a positive impact on student achievement. There are many variables that impact student achievement. Laub (2007) suggested that schools with opportunities for collaboration are conducive to higher levels of student success and achievement.

Collaboration is the beginning practice of permitting staff members to understand the method of decision-making. Collaboration produces a sense of community and commitment for adults. According to Busher and Barker, the construction of a collaborative culture is the heart of making successful schools (2003). Although, many middle schools use collegial leadership or team teaching to help their staff members see the need for collaboration (Kokolis, 2007). Similarly, Griffith wrote that schools with staff members that have trusting relationships and an atmosphere of cooperation has more educational success (2003). The cooperation and trust spreads from teacher to teacher, to principals, to students, and to parents. The trusting environment is integral to permeating and sustaining an effective school (Busher & Barker, 2003).

Collaboration also figures prominently in the studies of Kise and Russell (2008) and Williams and Sheridan (2006). In completing their research, Kise and Russell worked with staff members and students from multiple schools to identify trends and patterns. Their goal was to dissect educational theory and understand what concepts work best for them. They used a problem-solving model to help students and teachers grasp respect and the impact of respect within the community. The cultural characteristics that Kise and Russell pinpointed were thinking and feeling

(2008). Building a culture of academic excellence means students have to think. Thinking requires that the students analyze, reason, and seize the concept of principles. The problem-solving model was centered on collaborative ideas. Through teamwork the students gain an appreciation for individual differences and student values. In a similar study, Williams and Sheridan found that social interaction and collaboration were a means to motivate students to improve academically (2006).

Several researchers attribute the differential impact of leadership to change. Change can be made in varying levels and degrees. The descriptive of change in relation to student achievement is two-fold, it is viewed as the focus of change and the order of change (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Many school leadership teams identify problems, but the concern is “knowing the right thing to do” to rectify the problem (Elmore, 2003, p. 9). The concentration of school change can harm a school if it is not implemented carefully. A school culture offers experiences for professional learning and collaboration for all teachers (Sparks, 2005; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Derpak and Yarema (2002) concur that cultures are only positive if there is a “constant pursuit” and a “consistent priority” on improving student performance. Burke, Baca, Picus, and Jones examine resources for student success and pinpoint nine strategies (2003). The first strategy is to define the school culture. The remainder of the nine strategies address the evaluation and assessment of the school by pursuing and consistently prioritizing the culture (see Table 2). The characteristics

of culture may differ in terminology, but as long as the culture is steady and dependable, the culture will improve student performance.

Table 2

Effective principal and teacher leadership survival strategies:

Defining the school's culture

Leading with vision, conviction, and honesty

Prioritizing relationships

Defining district protocol at the beginning of any process

Using effective strategic-planning and time-management strategies

Being flexible and adaptable to do whatever it takes to achieve results within the policies and procedures of the school district

Recruiting the best people for the job and establishing career paths for retention

Determining how principals and teachers wear many hats

Creating checkpoints for accountability

(Burke, Baka, Picus, & Jones, 2003)

A positive or negative culture can be determined, but there is not a recipe or specific set of ingredients that measure the cultures that improve school performances. The overall spirit of the school or the atmosphere is detected as part of the culture. School spirit cannot be labeled. Everything from the individual classroom environments, the attitudes of the people in the school, and the programs implemented at the school make up the school culture. Again, bus stop conversations by students and exchanges in the teacher's lounge are a part of a school's culture.

Educators have many benchmarks used to assess the positive or negative impact of school culture on student performance. Deal and Patterson (1999), Goldring and Knox (2002), and Derpak and Yarema (2002), among many others,

have identified criteria by which to examine school culture. The results, however, will provide neither a recipe nor a specific set of ingredients to measure the cultures that do improve student performance. These less tangible criteria, although integral to the concept of school culture and consequently its impact upon student performance, stand in stark contrast to measurable components of school culture. Such factors, including attendance rates, comments or responses from the parents, the students' mean GPA, the participation rates at school events, data from state level school surveys, and the students' responses or comments about the school, expressed as forms of data, are commonly found as components of the school's report card and are used to measure the school's overall performance.

Building principals and administrators can use these data as well as many additional strategies to improve and strengthen the culture of their schools (Derpak & Yarema, 2002; Earl & Katz, 2006). School leaders find situations in their schools that have more than a single right answer. Leaders use collaborative efforts from all of the staff members to find the correct decision for individual situations. The daunting task of predicting the future and anticipating the outcome of the decisions made under their leadership requires the use of data to make informed judgments. According to the Education Commission of the States (2000), data can be used to discover problems, diagnose situations, predict future circumstances, improve schools, evaluate effectiveness, and promote accountability.

Predicting the future of a school requires the school leaders to know their school's data. Many leaders think they know their school and understand its culture, although there are always additional data to consider and alternate perspectives to

view. Since data has more than one point of view, there may be an alternative way to evaluate the data. Data determines factors that describe the school's culture and calculate its growth. Examining school culture using data provides the school lenses through which to view their existing beliefs.

In an ever-changing society, schools have to change to meet the demands of federal and state government mandates while attracting community members. Healthy schools are constantly changing to serve all of their students. The school mission has to portray what the school staff members believe in. The school mission or the vision sets the tone of the school's culture. Culture is learned and often shared with other individuals (Flood, Lapp, Squire, & Jensen, 2003). Franklin (2002) examined the principal's leadership philosophy and how influential it is to a teacher in a high-performing school. Franklin concluded that the teachers believe and follow the principal's philosophy (2002). The philosophy of the school leadership serves as a model for the teachers to follow (Franklin, 2002). The personal philosophy and the school mission statement of the school leader should be related. The personal philosophy of the building leaders, especially the principal, does not have to be identical to the school mission statement, but the two beliefs should depict a similar, or shared vision. Middle school research has concluded that schools which integrate and implement their school philosophy within their school focus plans improve the school's environment (Kokolis, 2007).

Other school factors shape a school's culture as well. Glanz (2004) reported that the assistant principal also maintains the standard of the school culture. The assistant principal plays an important role in maintaining the tone set by the principal.

In addition, some schools have innovative ways to attract and maintain members of the educational community. They make the community feel appreciated and wanted. Getting parents involved in events, recognizing teachers, honoring student, staff and school improvements, and rewarding students with fun events are simple ways principals or assistant principals can use to strengthen the school's culture. These examples are similar to Deal and Peterson's (1999) elements of recognition and Goldring and Knox's (2002) tradition. Maintaining a healthy culture is challenging, but it is easier when staff members, stakeholders, and students have a common vision (Laub, 2007).

Making schools more effective requires shaping and structuring the hidden rules of mundane tasks and behaviors. The day-to-day rules and behaviors also represent the school's culture. A culture that encourages productivity, builds confidences, and improves personal esteem grows improved character in children and adults. Principals have to know the power of school culture. Leaders who acknowledge rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and even symbols have healthy school environments and positive school cultures.

School leaders are in pivotal positions in regard to the change in educational reform. The increased level of focus on improvement efforts pinpoints the school principal, but it is impossible for one person to run a school and mold the culture entirely by themselves. Maher, Lucas, and Valentine suggest that reform efforts require the input and help from all members of the organization (2001). The entire school and the stakeholders are needed to achieve the goals of school improvement,

although the impact of the school leader is influential (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004; Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

In summary, researchers have identified factors of strong cultures that enable organizations to obtain their goals. A school's culture is important because it includes the purposes, norms, and values that staff members bring to the school. A school's culture has distinct characteristics that mold and shape the school's atmosphere. The leadership behaviors exhibited on a daily basis impact the academic concentration, the values, and the interpersonal relationships.

School Leaders and Their Impact on Organizational Culture

For over a decade, Keith Leithwood and Daniel Duke reviewed literature in educational administration. They identified and classified common leadership styles found to be dominant in contemporary research on leadership. Leithwood and Duke classified educational leadership as being instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership and contingency leadership (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Recent research is aimed at putting a name to theories of organizational management and school effectiveness. The administrator brings a philosophy or a set of values to the building atmosphere that will allow growth and change or stifle the learning (Barbour, 2005).

There are basic assumptions regarding organizational theories of school effectiveness. Specifically, all organizations develop managerial roles based on technical and environmental situations and the specific managerial arrangements are appropriate if they are correctly matched to circumstances (Rowan, 2002). Miller and Rowan suggest current leadership in schools require "organic forms of management"

which use supportive forms of leadership (2006). The primary emphasis of the principal or school leader is to build and maintain the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003), but leadership is a shared by a team emphasis on organization and structure that cultivates learning.

Contemporary leadership often requires everyone working together to fulfill a vision. Everyone includes teachers, librarians, media specialists, guidance counselors, non-instructional staff members, community members, and parents. School administrators can not lead schools alone. With the mandates and expectations for enhanced qualities of instruction, administrators need support from all stakeholders. Thus, the roles of administrators are evolving. The myth that the principal is the superhero is an out-dated belief. Although Buchen (2004) suggests the principal does it all, “the principal becomes the 360-degree leader of the micro-macro whole” (p. 103), Chirichello alleges that the principal is not alone, that the principal is no longer the only leader of a school (2003).

The shift in educational reform efforts to improve schools warrants a leader who is an active change agent. The agent rallies support from multiple leaders (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000). Leaders in schools have to incorporate a variety of strategies from various sources as an attempt to make a profound impact on improved test scores to meet the accountability expectations. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2003) contend that school leadership is vital to the performance of the school. In the same vein, Armstrong wrote that the school leadership team is fundamental to school improvement, but the level of achievement is pervaded by the assistant principal (2004).

Servais (2003) suggests the emerging roles and responsibilities of the school principal constitute a transformational leadership function. According to research, schools with transformational leadership practices have increased levels of student achievement (Armstrong, 2004). Chirichello contends that principals need leadership practices that add leadership roles for additional staff members such as teachers so that principals exhibit participatory leadership behaviors (2003). In addition, Buchen (2004) affirms that principals are identified as Chief Learning Officers (CLO). The CLO is a learning manager who integrates learning and management skills to create a seamless leadership team.

Transformational leadership is an empowering effort which uses both collaborative and collective leadership styles to obtain goals otherwise unattainable. The principal collaborates with other teachers to inspire leadership roles and responsibilities in them and ultimately transform the school. Lambert (2003) alleges that when school leaders are collaborative instructional leaders, the school will improve and the improvement efforts will be sustainable.

Collaborative leadership thus, is akin to participation and sharing, or participatory leadership. Similarly, collective leadership is a responsibility which encompasses a role from staff members other than the principal. But, collective leadership differs from collaborative leadership in that it is considered a distributive leadership. Commencing with an environment of learning (Elmore, 2002), it requires all staff members to support each other and to value collaboration. Chirichello contends that school cultures that respect and incorporate collective leadership have opportunities for teachers to develop and grow and to become school leaders (2003).

The transformational leadership role impacts the parameters of the school culture (Servais, 2003). Research with a shared leadership perspective reveals that mutual goals from a shared decision-making process charge teachers with efforts to achieve higher student performance (Blasé & Blasé, 2004).

Principals and teachers who are skillful demonstrate appropriate instructional behaviors. Sparks (2005) notes that leadership skills have to be exhibited by principals and teachers if quality teaching is to occur in every classroom. According to Kise and Russell (2008), school leaders influence the school's culture. Lewis, James, Hancock, and Hill-Jackson added that students seek respect and relationships based on interest and trust with their teachers, especially African-American students (2008).

There are many qualities that make good school leaders. Good teachers are good leaders. Many good leaders have both academic knowledge in their subject areas and good interpersonal skills. Good leaders are not always highly, intellectual people. Leaders are effective when they can encourage students to meet their goals whether academic or behavioral (Tomal, 2007). Effective leaders have abilities to establish a vision for students and inspire them to meet their goals. The nature of leadership in education has expanded to include those at the teacher level (Angelle, 2007). The recent context of school leadership, which in many instances associates the responsibility for leadership with a team rather than just the principal, calls for a different understanding of the leadership necessary to increase student performance. Leaders are not just principals, but classroom teachers as well (Danielson, 2007; Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, Levy, & Saunders, 2008). For this study, the construct

of leadership is attached to the teacher's role, as well as to that of the principal. The teacher is closer to the student than the principal or any other school personnel and is a key determinant of the classroom culture that the principal influences through collaborative and collective leadership.

Collaborative Leadership

Research often identifies the collaborative leadership approach as a contemporary framework for school improvement. Collaborative leadership is a shared leadership approach that requests participation from principals, teachers, and stakeholders (Lambert, 2002). In the past, any form of "collaboration among teachers has not been the norm." (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p. 878). Collaboration can not be adequately taught in educational preparation courses. It is a foundational skill that requires communication and mentoring, which are developed over time (Chuck, 2008).

Recent reform efforts in education emphasize collaboration as a strategy to improve schools. Morse (2000) suggests mandating collaboration as a tool in school reform efforts. Schools systems need their personnel to communicate, discuss, and share thoughts. Schools cannot improve without communication and participation from other educators (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Lambert, 2003; Elmore, 2003).

Researchers differ on the impact of collaboration upon student achievement. Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran purport that collaboration among teachers improves teacher empowerment, teacher efficacy, and attitudes toward teaching (2007). There is insufficient empirical evidence to predict a positive correlation

between teacher collaboration and improved student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Welch, Brownell, & Sheridan, 1999). However, there is evidence to show collaboration should be used among principals, teachers, and other instructional staff members to improve the leadership and link leadership with learning (Hausman & Goldring, 2001)

Research concludes when teachers are involved in the decision-making process pertaining to instructional decisions, the decisions are accepted and implemented with a greater impact upon student achievement. Cotton examined schools and determined leadership styles were more effective in schools where teachers were part of the decision-making process (2003). In schools that are succeeding, teachers are encouraged to share ideas and their ideas are valued. Their work efforts are recognized and they are kept abreast of current, instructional issues. According to Marzano (2003), school improvement efforts are supported in schools when teachers participate in the decision-making process. Using a shared decision-making process builds relationships and respect among teachers. Healthy school relationships encourage teacher growth and support the professional judgments of the teachers (Duffy, 2003).

Professional learning and collaboration are key features associated with successful schools (DuFour, 2002). Teachers are less supportive of change when teachers are not part of the decision-making process (Fullan, 2001). Collaboration is a method used to support teacher morale and increase student achievement. There are teachers who are part of the school team or structure, but they become or remain

isolated by choice. Many of these teachers do not share common school beliefs and values, particularly the belief that all students are capable of learning.

Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration is an opportunity for teachers and instructional leaders to communicate and strengthen the bond among staff members. Collaboration is inexpensive; however, it does require time and a willingness to participate. Time is often a challenge in today's society. It is a technique used by many modern organizations to enhance their performance. High-performing organizations are increasing the amount of time for employees to discuss their work and find innovative strategies. School systems should mirror the opportunity and provide increased time for teacher collaboration. Duffy alleges that a courageous leader who increases time for collaborative behaviors decreases the expectation of the authoritarian role (2003). Wartgow states collaboration is a strategy used by leaders to build hope in an organization (2008).

Researchers have determined that collaboration does not exist without trust and commitment (Duffy, 2003). The school's social structure facilitates a collaborative environment. Schools are designed with specific time for collaboration such as common planning, faculty meetings, and staff development (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008). Therefore, it is the instructional leader who provides opportunities for teachers to dialogue, plan, and learn from each other. Collaboration can increase trust and will help staff members expand their thoughts and ideas throughout the team, department, or the school. As teachers share and

discuss their efforts and responsibilities for their goals, they make an informal commitment to work toward a common goal, better instruction.

Collaborative efforts do not exist only among the teachers, but throughout the organization structure of the school. Reducing class sizes is a school improvement effort used to enhance instructional improvements (Pedder, 2006). Small class-sizes enhance teacher collaboration. And, small class-sizes are one of the characteristics of professional learning communities (Cooper & Boyd, 2000). Reformers are encouraging the examination of school sizes or the separation of students to determine characteristics of values found in the smaller school areas (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). Pedder (2006) posits class size research will be more valuable if the students' perspective is used to draw conclusions to improve strategies for effective classrooms. In middle school, the teaming concept is popular. The separation of students provides a small school setting to personalize the educational opportunity. In addition, creating smaller communities within the school provides opportunities for the teachers to collaborate with their colleagues. Many elementary and middle schools use team teaching or teaming to provide a structure for collaboration among their teachers.

Small learning communities offer unique features and support the professional growth of the teachers. Middle school teaming is an example of small, professional learning communities. In middle school, the teaming concept can clarify the professional learning community functions while making them practitioners of their daily research (Fullan, 2005). The actual practice and reflection cycle of action research is sustainable and powerful. Servais and Sanders purport building and

sustaining teams to achieve goals increases the probability of obtaining the desired goals (2006).

Teacher collaboration is not an effort to solely improve teaching, but also to promote student success. An emphasis on professional learning and collaboration is an attempt to focus on student achievement as it relates to teacher relationships (DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T., 2006; Louis, 2006). Schools that emphasize a professional relationship among colleagues find improved teacher collaboration and increased levels of trust (Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), but researchers credit human and social resources for the improvements (Louis, 2006).

Collaboration between teachers emphasizes communication and input from more than one person. Teacher collaboration is voluntary, but the teachers must feel comfortable sharing with each other. Collaboration is needed and advocated, but the effects vary. However, teacher collaboration is excellent for teachers (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). The communication engages teachers to discuss topics of interest as equal members of a group.

The interest in using collaboration as a professional relationship to help school reform initiatives is becoming ambiguous in the 21st Century. If schools are to map out professional development time for collaborative efforts, the involvement of teachers cooperating with each other and learning from one another has the potential to yield positive outcomes (Friend & Cook, 2000). The collaboration will alter the teaching and learning and strengthen the curriculum and instruction delivered within the classrooms. Clearly, healthy forms of communication between teachers

concerning their content area will ultimately improve instruction (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

Professional Development

Researchers suggest professional development fosters learning that improves school reform efforts. Principals and school leadership teams are responsible for determining evaluations and professional development to meet the needs of their staff. The learning of the teachers in schools is the result collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, and professional development. The principal or school leader oversees the learning of their teachers which is known as professional development (Lambert, 2002).

Researchers suggest professional development practices have evolved with accountability efforts of NCLB. In the past, professional development programs were “too linear” and “characterized as *sit and get* sessions” in which teachers participated in activities to reveal the latest research by educational gurus (Klingner, 2004, p. 248). The professional development opportunities did not model the instructional strategies necessary to improve student performance (Zimmerman & May, 2007). The growth and development of teachers vary and teachers need different levels of professional development to increase their efficacy. Guskey (2002) argues that professional development opportunities used to be global and centered on the needs of the district rather than school groups or individuals. Effective professional development practices are diverse and integrated with activities followed by support. In addition, professional development should present opportunities for teachers and

instructional leaders to obtain additional information and classroom resources if applicable.

There are factors associated with professional development that improve schools. Research suggests professional development should enhance the instruction and learning in the classrooms. Stronge asserts that the effective staff development practices are collegial, socially structured and designed to meet the teacher's needs and the organizational goals (2002). The principal is the most influential person and determines if the teachers accept the change and implement the practices. According to Zimmerman and May (2007), the philosophy and attitude of the instructional leader influences the professional development to the teachers.

Collegial Support

Trust and cooperation among teachers is considered a form of collegial support. Collaborative relationships among teachers who respect each other and value other teacher's opinions foster trusting relationships. Duffy suggests schools with opportunities for systematic efforts of communication in schools can only nurture collaborative efforts for instructional improvement if trusting relationships already exist between some of the staff members (2003). Westheimer (1999) asserts that the explosion of professional learning communities in the late 1990s was "underconceptualized". According to Louis, research on school improvements has compiled a list of descriptive terms for organizing school collaboration (2006). School teachers have worked together to teach or discuss ideas for school growth. Schools that are improving in terms of student achievement are schools which include

structuring an organization that promotes communication and trusting relationships (Angelle, 2007).

A challenge for administrators is improving the communication so that teaching is not an isolated practice. The focus on professional learning communities assisted school leaders with “reengineering” their schools (Louis, 2006) and improving instruction (Schmoker, 2006). However, Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002) suggest that schools that desire to improve need to collectively concentrate on identifying and sustaining continuous improvement efforts for the entire organization instead of trying to restructure the organization.

Collegial support is the strength that is displayed from other staff members to help obtain the school’s mission. Support can come from administrators, teachers, or other staff members. Collegial support is cultivated and nourished. In schools where collegial support is prominent, teachers feel valued. They work cooperatively and take the initiative to help each other in times of trouble.

Unity of Purpose

An important determinant of whether or not schools reach their goals is unity of purpose. The unity of purpose is often written and displayed as the school’s mission statement. Normally, the mission statement is a phrase to depict the values and beliefs of the principal, teachers, parents, and community members. Ward contends that unity of purpose is “unified and operating with a mutual sense of purpose” (2005, p. 6). The unity of purpose is a vision shared by members involved in the success of the organization.

Shared visions inform internal and external stakeholders of the school's intentions. Many effective schools use the leadership's vision to create a school mission statement. Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, Levy, and Saunders (2008) suggest the school mission does not have to be dull and boring and long and descriptive. The statement should be focused and beneficial to all members of the institution. All staff members and students should have a clear understanding of the school's mission. Normally, the vision provides a foundation for outlining a direct instructional path for the teachers. Teacher performance within the school should support and reflect the mission statement.

Learning Partnerships

Researchers have found a rationale for learning partnerships in school improvement. Schools are seeking innovative methods to increase student performance to proficient levels. Students are reporting to schools with many issues and challenges that require support beyond the classroom. These barriers to learning are both academic and nonacademic. The obstacles are factors such as poor attitudes and difficult relationships (Anderson-Butcher, 2006). Schools are incorporating learning partnerships to address the needs of the students and their family members.

A learning partnership is a joint venture with a school and a business, organization, church, or agency used to help ensure all students receive an adequate education (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, Levy, & Saunders, 2008). Schools use an assortment of organizations in their communities to enhance the educational opportunity for students. Some schools use a mixture of businesses in close proximity to the school or they pinpoint a specific organization or agency for their

services and support. The relationships between schools and community partners are innovative ways in which to increase the community support needed for the overall success and achievement of the school.

Student Motivation

Research suggests that differences among school cultures affect student learning (Jones & Moreland, 2005; Shin, 2007). In addition, Barnett and McCormick (2004) postulate that there is a difference between performance and instruction when the students are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Students who receive instruction in cultures where they are motivated will perform better than students in cultures where they are less motivated. Instructional leadership traditionally focused on principals (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Smylie, Wenzel, & Fendt, 2003). The hierarchical view of instructional leadership includes the teacher as one of the key factors for increased student motivation which improves instruction (Mangin, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

An important connection exists between assessment and student motivation. According to Stiggins (2001), students are ultimately responsible for their learning. Superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents are significant to individual learning, but every student has a level of motivation. However, not all assessments are valid measures of the student's academic ability especially if the student lacked the motivation to do his/her best. Hancock (2007) examined and assessed students' motivation to learn. The participants were assessed in groups where the student could discuss the exam with his/her partner or the student was assessed individually. The results of Hancock's study revealed that students who tested in collaborative groups

had significantly higher levels of motivation than students who tested alone.

Hancock's study supported the concept that students need to collaborate and feel valued, a concept which builds their trust and motivates them to excel.

Research with motivation and achievement using urban adolescents found motivation to be correlated with achievement. The study targeted eighth- and ninth-grade students and focused on motivation and grade point averages. Common motivational factors include verbal praise, incentives, special rewards, and awards. Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards stimulate and encourage student achievement across the board. Duffy suggests "effective reward systems use a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards," (2003, p. 30). However, researchers have limited information on motivational variables in schools where African-Americans students preponderate (Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, 2007).

Students with high levels of motivation make higher grades than students with lower levels. In middle schools, students' willingness to attempt a task is a reflection of time and energy exerted to complete the task successfully (Moore, 2007). A motivational study found that students who are motivated and have an internal sense of responsibility attend classes on a regular basis (Friedman, Rodriquez, & McComb, 2001). The study found that students in high school and college who are motivated to achieve academically have motivational behaviors that develop with age and educational experiences. Students in elementary school and middle school have different motivational behaviors. In middle school, gender and age are factors that motivate academic success.

Research has determined motivation influences achievement. Many teachers develop and implement a classroom motivation plan. The motivation plan is a management plan. The plan includes instructional goals and outcomes. According to the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB), students need to be aware of their academic goals and their progress throughout the year. When students are attentive to their goals and their progress, they expect to actively participate in learning and take ownership of their improvement. Teachers can increase motivation in students through the use of extra-help opportunities. Students who feel a caring relationship with their teachers are not afraid to ask for clarification or help. The students who seek extra help have increased levels of improvement.

Academic motivation is the term educators use to refer to behaviors related to the motivation of students and their inner drive to achieve academically. Some students leave elementary school and lack the necessary academic skills to achieve in middle school. These students may lack academic motivation because of educational disservices in addition to generational issues such as parents and grandparents with little to no academic achievement and societal setbacks such as negative peer pressure. Examples of disservices and setbacks manifest themselves in situations such as social promotions or grandparents raising their grandchildren. Hard work can supercede many missing factors that lead to academic motivation, except for the necessary ingredient, that of innate academic skills. This is especially true of students performing at a level or more below their actual grade. At-risk students who do not have the motivation, commitment, and energy to achieve usually have low levels of academic motivation and the lowest grade point averages (GPAs).

A lack of motivation is a key reason for the failure of many students, and researchers have conducted various studies to explore this issue. Hatfield, for example, found that students who drop out of school list a lack of motivation as an important reason for their failure (2003). In another study, Moore purported that academic achievement can help at-risk students succeed academically and overcome obstacles (2007). Providing extra-credit as an incentive to motivate students is an ideal method to help students acquire high levels of academic motivation. This theory does not always apply to middle school students who are academically low-performing students. Teachers need to find motivational incentives that will assist students in changing their academic outcomes.

The innate intelligence of a student is useless if motivation is not present. Motivation is essential because it affects the students' willingness to try (Ray, Garavalia, & Murdock, 2003; Moore, 2007). Academic achievement does not improve from year to year without effort from the student. In another study, Dembo and Praks Seli (2004) conducted research that focused on students who were not motivated to excel academically. The students in their study resisted change to any interventions used to increase student achievement. Therefore, the researchers developed a four-step plan which includes observation and evaluation, goal setting and strategic planning, implementation and monitoring, and strategic-outcome monitoring that can be applied on a yearly basis.

Over the years, researchers have asserted that people in general have the need to achieve. Others who do not have the need to achieve do not seem to be appertained to achievement. People who contend to succeed or who strive for a

standard of excellence are motivated based on personality. Achievement motivation describes their need to excel. In education, this type of motivation is used to assist students in reaching their maximum academic capabilities. Achievement motivation has intrinsic and extrinsic aspects which reflect a sense of pride. When students are successful in school, they have a sense of self-respect and honor. Students who excel in certain subjects or areas usually continue to surpass others in those areas. However, when a student who has a history of poor performance experiences failure, it is difficult for him or her to maintain the motivation to do well in school.

Several studies have examined the relationship between intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and academic achievement. Henderlong and Lepper (2000) found that intrinsic motivation and academic achievement are positively correlated. Any decline in a child's intrinsic motivation will result in a decline in achievement. A study of the achievement beliefs in adolescents examined an individual's beliefs and the personal responsibility for their own learning. The participants adhered to difficulties and challenges when they perceived that their school had caring environments. The environment included teachers who cared for the students and took interest in their academic and psychosocial well-being (Bempechat, Boulay, Piergross, & Wenk, 2008).

In addition to the correlation between intrinsic motivation and achievement, studies have found a correlation between extrinsic motivation and academic achievement as well. Lepper, Corpus and Iyengar (2005) found that students who are motivated by extrinsic consequences perform better on standardized tests. Extrinsically motivated students increase academically on the college level (Lepper,

Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005). But the generalization that extrinsic motivation increases academic performance may not be amenable to elementary and middle school students (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). In another study, Dweck (1999) found that students who are motivated by extrinsic consequences are forced to perform in avoidance of challenges. Extrinsic motivation used in elementary school is very effective. Without common extrinsic motivation, some students would not follow through with their own inner motivation and would lose the opportunity to improve their grades. One of the most common forms of extrinsic motivation is grades. Students typically benefit from extrinsic motivation at various levels of education.

Recent research with motivation and student achievement identifies many variables that are predictors of increased student performance. Endya Stewart conducted a longitudinal study to analyze school structural variables that predict increased student achievement (2008). The variables include student effort, parent collaboration, parental support, positive peer interactions, trust, and school climate (Stewart, 2008). In an additional study, researchers found academic preparation, motivation, and teacher-student engagement predict success (Adelman, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Perceptions of students' educational experiences represent attribution factors which influence student achievement (Adelman, 2004). Students have to feel and understand a sense of value for their education. If students do not believe that their education is important, then their motives are not energized to achieve a goal. Social psychological researchers investigate the effects of goals on behaviors (Forgas,

Williams, & Von Hippel, 2004). Research supports that there is more to life than high-stakes testing. The overall achievement gap between Caucasians and African-American students is growing wider, and testing is the gatekeeper for the academic future of students. Educational leaders have to continue to look for social behaviors and success because there is no direct connection between IQ and success (Blankstein, 2003). In essence, it is beneficial for schools to find a direct association with a child's feelings, their motivation, and what makes them strive for success.

High-stakes testing is a much-used determinant of the success of students. As states strive to meet performance goals, many states implement programs to address Americans' underachievement in education. However, new school reform issues are now being met with ambivalence due to increased numbers of programs throughout the United States. School staff members are experiencing a fad of school reform initiatives. Simultaneously, teachers are experiencing a period of more accountability for student performance on standardized tests. Now is the time for a new strategy. Schools need to capitalize on what they already know and build from there. School leaders understand and have data to support the lack of motivation for achievement in many students.

An increasing concern with school leaders who have identified the lack of motivation has lead many leaders to analyze motivation. In the business world, goal-setting is a theory many industrial and organizational psychologists explore. Locke and Latham's (2004) core premise is that persons who set performance goals score higher than those who do not because of simple motivational explanations. Locke and Latham (2004) assert that there is a difference between non-conscious motivation and

conscious motivation. According to their study, students should set goals for their academic achievement. Students would benefit from having personal goals for individual academic performance goals. The goals should be conceptualized with student efforts and discussed with their teachers and family members.

Students who believe that their poor school performance is caused by factors out of their control do not hope for improvement. In contrast, if students believe their performance is the result of their poor study habits or personal reasons, they are more likely to exhibit perseverance (Weiner, 2000). For teachers, the implications of students' beliefs are key in regard to understanding and motivating students to succeed academically. Burke believes that when people think they are smart, they invest increased amounts of energy to prove their intelligence (2004).

School environments with students who are socially and emotionally healthy have a greater chance of producing students with increased academic achievement than schools with students who are socially and emotionally unhealthy. When focusing on the learning process, leaders must address five areas. First, all students have a readiness level. This level is what the students know when they enter the classroom. Second, leaders should consider the school culture and the classroom climate. Next, leaders should concentrate on the instructional strategies used in the classroom. Then, they must evaluate the content of the curriculum. Last, they must consider how socially and emotionally competent the student is to take the standardized test. Many leaders do not focus on the student reading level. They consider the readiness level as the teachers' responsibility and jump to step three.

The second area which addresses the school culture is an imperative area that many school leaders do not tackle.

Many researchers have found that cultures characterized by trust are cohesive and improve student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lewis, James, Hancock, & Hill-Jackson, 2008). Muijs and Harris (2007) assert that school culture is the key to school improvement as long as the culture is collaborative. Culture within a school affects how teachers view professional development and instructional leadership (Firestone & Louis, 1999; Mangin, 2005; Barbour, 2005). So, in order to improve schools, it is necessary to analyze school cultures to determine if there is a relationship between school cultures and overall student performance.

Student Achievement

The Nation's Report Card with state-by-state data has released results that depict improvements in reading and mathematics in the elementary grades. But, according to the U.S. Department of Education, the results suggest more intensive improvement must be made especially at the middle and high school levels. The majority of schools begin school reform efforts with changes in the curriculum and the instruction.

Systematic school reform is an innovative way to improve under-performing schools. School districts in the United States are challenged to find methods to implement immediate and continuous improvement techniques. Principals' leadership with effective schools has been shown to improve student achievement (DuFour, 2002). The research by Weller and Weller (2002) shows the influence of the

principal affects student achievement especially if the principal is an instructional leader. School reform efforts are addressing the efforts of the teachers and the variables influencing the outcomes of the principals' strategies.

Teacher accountability suggests that teachers collaborate with their colleagues and instructional leaders to find innovative strategies to reach all students.

High-stakes accountability and the overall lack of improved test scores in middle schools have increased the responsibilities of the principal, and much of that burden has been delegated to the classroom teachers. Principals have the task of leading change to improve student achievement.

Academic achievement plays a role in self-efficacy and motivation. Students have to believe in themselves before they can be motivated to improve socially or academically (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008). Policies such as uniform dress codes reduce discipline problems while improving self-efficacy and student achievement (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008). In another study, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) suggest that improving student achievement multiplies when the collective efficacy beliefs of the teachers are increased. School leaders can hire good teachers, but what really improves student achievement are teachers who really believe that they can teach. Brown proposes that school leaders who retain teachers and train them to be effective leaders positively improve student achievement (2008).

Poverty-level explanations and socio-economic status labels have presumed that students do not achieve because of home and environmental limitations (West, Denton, & Reaney, 2000). Research indicates that students from low socioeconomic environments are not expected to achieve before formal school begins. Payne (2008)

suggests that students who speak informal grammar at home or communicate with casual language do not test well. The expectation of low achievement is a social-class perspective (Wiggins, 2007). Researchers contend that sometimes school districts are failing because of the student population served. Therefore, school reform efforts are unrealistic and unobtainable. However, Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender (2008) examined schools in low-income neighborhoods and found that students achieve if there are high levels of personalized relationships. Similarly, a study of Latino middle school students examined achievement and determined that the students with supportive perceptions, caring teachers, and positive school atmospheres promoted higher levels of academic achievement than schools with less supportive perceptions, less caring teachers and negative school atmospheres (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2008).

Joyner, Ben-Avie, and Comer (2004) observed that school environments with instructional excellence were mobilized from chaos to order. Similarly, Huffman and Hipp suggest that school improvement efforts work only if the schools are “recultured” and if the concentration on student learning is “reflective” (2003). The schools observed in both research situations placed an emphasis on instruction and attributed the gains to increased amounts of teacher collaboration. On the contrary, Diamond (2007) extended prior work on classroom instruction in Chicago and observed that the school’s external environment and its internal organization are linked to classroom instruction and achievement. Diamond concluded that accountability policies were mediated by teachers’ beliefs and a variety of artifacts within the school (2007). The individual and leadership acceptance of change

shaped the implementation of policies and programs for instruction. Schmoker argues that instruction is the primary determinant of student achievement (2006).

While researchers discuss the limited impact that district-level reform has on student achievement (Pritchard, Morrow, & Marshall, 2005), Eilers and Camacho (2007) note that the district-level support has to impact achievement since the district capacity supports school reform initiatives. Therefore, district support must make a difference, and the difference must be meaningful based on the degree of interaction between the schools and the district (Schmoker, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). Many researchers contest the concept of school resource expenditures and report the amount of money spent on school resources is not significant enough to affect student performance. They agree that school resources are often not used correctly, funding does not trickle down to classroom instruction, and neither resources nor funding impact achievement to significant degrees.

Researchers disagree on the significance of a relationship between school resources and student achievement. Effective school research has shown that schools with increased amounts of school resources have improved levels of test scores. In addition, schools with small classroom sizes have a positive effect on the atmosphere in middle schools (Gettys, 2003). On the other hand, researchers such as Kozol (2005) challenge the amount of school resources as insignificant to student test scores. The amount of per-pupil expenditures does not significantly relate to achievement (Wiggins, 2007). According to Condron and Roscigno (2003), some funding aimed at improving the quality of the school instruction is contingent upon student achievement.

NCLB has altered the use of data to make informed decisions for school reform efforts. The most important use of data is to analyze the schools data collectively to make informed decisions for an improved quality of education (Schmoker, 2001). School districts use aggregated data to compare differences among schools, but now need to find more purposeful uses of their district-wide data. Wiggans argues that comparisons between district differences is a waste of time and districts can utilize data better by examining inequities of school support across the district (2007). Schools with large numbers of subgroups are faced with barriers while implementing school reform methods. Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), states have enacted laws mandating school reform to significantly improve the achievement of all students.

Researchers offer various perspectives on the relative influence of educators in various roles on student achievement. The principal is ultimately responsible for student performance, but the teacher is more influential on increasing student performance. According to Fullan, the principal is responsible for leading staff members toward change that will improve student achievement (2001). Other research suggests the teacher is more influential than the principal with students (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). The teacher maintains the standard and the culture of the school (Lewis, James, Hancock, & Hill-Jackson, 2008). Other variables that *impact student achievement* are the *central administration of school districts* and the *organizational climate of middle schools*. Cawelti and Protheroe purport that the district office or central administration can help improve student achievement (2001). Most districts or central offices have consultants or staff members who analyze the

data from benchmarks and additional standardized tests. Districts can use this information to provide assistance, training, professional development or interventions with groups of struggling students. District personnel who are attentive to school reform efforts use district level or school-wide data to assist schools in improving the quality of education within the school district.

Researchers differ on the impact of other variables on student achievement. Using data from a large study completed for *AddHealth*, Farkas, Wilkinson, Schiller, and Frank researched differences in students' grades from class to class (2005). Examining the grades of students in advanced classes and regular classes, they concluded that there is a positive correlation between grades and student achievement (2005). On the other hand, Hynes studied middle schools in New York and found that there was no difference in student achievement scores or higher GPAs of students with parental involvement and without parental involvement (2006). In another view, Lewis, James, Hancock, and Hill-Jackson (2008) posit that students bring to the classroom cultural strengths that must be capitalized on and used as a "pedagogical bridge for academic success" (p. 143). Similarly, Hailikari, Nevgi, and Komulainen noted from their research study that a student's academic self-belief is a key determinant for academic success (2008).

Other researchers have examined school cultures and student achievement. Gruenert reported schools with collaborative cultures have enhanced levels of student achievement (2005). The relationship of the adults in the school is intangible and social conditions are important for teacher and student success. The relationship

between the adults within the school offer opportunities for growth, as well as the adult relationships with other district personnel.

In addition to the impact of students themselves, teachers, principals, and central administration, the organizational climate of middle schools affects student achievement. Tschannen-Moran et al. concluded that teachers who talk and share for school improvements will positively influence student achievement (2006). In addition, disengaged teachers who cannot connect with their students negatively impact student growth. There are administrators who will not implement programs as an effort to reform their schools if the majority of the teachers do not comply with the decisions. According to Slavin (2004), school-wide “buy-in” is imperative because if teachers are not inline with the reform efforts, they will resist the process of change.

Raising student achievement in the middle grades requires sustained effort from the principal and the stakeholders. According to Cooney and Bottoms (2003), there are three factors that contribute to enhanced student achievement in middle school: 1) students have an adult in the school who is their advisor; 2) students take challenging courses; 3) the parents of the students are involved in helping students plan for success beyond middle school. Students who have an adult to talk to or an advisor to communicate with are more likely to succeed than the student who has no one to exchange a few words with. Students who have collaborative relationships are motivated to succeed at higher levels than students who do not have a peer or collaborative relationship (Conchas & Rodriquez, 2008).

Students who have guidance programs that encourage students to take Algebra I in the middle grades have higher student achievement (Cooney & Bottoms, 2003).

Schools that teach students challenging studies in middle school to prepare them for high school improve student achievement; this achievement is sustained and continuous.

Earl and Katz assert that school leaders are able to use data to “take charge of change” and make decisions to positively improve the schools (2006, p. 14). The use of data is uncomfortable and difficult for some leaders. School reform efforts are implemented with decisions or processes intended to rectify situations. Many changes are made, but the absence of evaluation or monitoring depicts insignificant growth. Current school reform warrants proof or substantive reasoning to justify the changes (Earl & Katz, 2006). Similarly, Schmoker suggests schools concentrate on the process which determines what was or was not effective (1999). The process gives school leaders valid and reliable information that can be reexamined or adjusted.

Appropriate use of data is the beginning of the improvement process within schools. Decision-making is a leadership strategy used as a problem solving approach to enhance schools. Hess and Robinson purport using data is a systematic way of improving the quality of educational services (2006). Accountability concerns situate principals as the consumers of data to make informed decisions. Being confident and sure about using data to make a decision is complex. Katz, Sutherland, and Earl purport that using data to make an informed decision is an art (2005). Data used in schools is categorized as hard data or soft data (Hess & Robinson, 2006). Hard data are quantitative and uses attendance, grades, discipline, and standardized test. Soft data are qualitative and uses attitudes, observations, interviews and even

surveys. Data usage requires understanding the data and making an intuitive interpretation. The decisions are made to depict the future which the leadership has envisioned. Leadership teams can use data to boost the schools rather than distort and destroy them.

High-performing schools are structured and molded to succeed. Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender studied high schools and determined schools are “successful by design,” (2008, p. 16). During their study, Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender identified three key features to successful schools. The first key feature is *personalization*. Schools that have high degrees of personalization exhibit healthy long-term relationships with the community and stakeholders. The next key feature is *rigorous and relevant instruction*. They report that students who are exposed to rigorous standards and higher levels of academia have higher student achievement than students who are not exposed to rigorous standards (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008). The third key feature of successful schools is *professional learning and collaboration*.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Student achievement is measured individually and collectively as a school performance score is reported; the federal reporting standard, as prescribed in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, is Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The AYP is public information. It is reported, using state testing data, in a uniform nationwide format. It is arguable that school culture has an important impact on the AYP. According to the theory of organizational culture, the analysis of school culture can be approached through the study of its components. Every school has a culture, and

that culture influences the learning environment and the achievement of students (Fullan, 2001). For this study, effective middle school culture sub-factors from the teacher's standpoint are examined in relation to AYP outcomes.

Adequate Yearly Progress outcomes measure the improvement of the education of all students in every school. That improvement, according to Danielson (2002), is the primary mission of the school system. The objectives of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are to have the schools accountable for student success through standardized testing (Gruenert, 2005). The state-wide testing results are aggregated in scores that can be used to compare states to each other. States have implemented the AYP to display their measure of academic progress toward the goal of 100% of the students achieving a proficient score in reading/language arts and math. There is controversy with aspects of AYP and the fact that many states do not yet have even 50% of their schools making AYP. School systems refusing to use efforts towards improvement are doing a disservice to students, and according to Grogan (2004) the schools are "wrong." In contrast to the complaints with AYP, the accountability of AYP impels school systems to achieve academic success for all students.

When referring to NCLB, Adequate Yearly Progress is not the only form of measurement. While AYP is a nation-wide measurement of the school's rating in terms of proficiency, states often add their own performance designations to indicate the growth from year to year. State level accreditation status is a state-wide measurement for schools to calculate growth based on their student achievement. In many instances, the performance descriptors become a basis for sanctions or rewards.

In Georgia, the middle school students take the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). The schools receive a rating for the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards. The Georgia Single Statewide Accountability System (SSAS) recognizes schools that make the highest gains in improvement from year to year. The Georgia schools report state-wide improvements on the school report cards as Performance Highlights. The improvement measures the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard scale score.

In North Carolina, the middle school students take the North Carolina Check List for Academic Standards (NCCLAS). Schools receive a performance rating to indicate the percentage of students performing at grade level. The performance designations are an Honor School of Excellence, a School of Excellence, a School of Distinction, a School of Progress, No Recognition, Priority School, and Low Performing School. An Honor School of Excellence must have at least 90% of the students passing the test at grade level and the school making AYP for the year. A School of Excellence has at least 90% of the students passing the test at grade level. A School of Distinction has at least 80% of the students passing the test at grade level. A School of Progress has at least 60% of the students passing the test at grade level. A Priority School has 50% to 60% of the students passing the test at grade level. A Low Performing School has less than 50% of the students passing the test at grade level.

Additionally, North Carolina schools receive an Expected Growth Rating which categorizes the learning from year to year. Schools can fall into one of three categories, such as Schools of High Growth, Schools of Expected Growth, or

Expected Growth Not Achieved. The teachers at a school of high growth will receive a bonus of up to \$1500. The teachers at a school of expected growth will receive a bonus of up to \$750.

In South Carolina, the middle school students take the Palmetto Challenge Achievement Test (PACT). The schools receive an improvement rating. The ratings are classified as Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, or Unsatisfactory. Schools that receive an Excellent rating substantially exceed the standards for progress based on the national goal for all students to be proficient by 2010. The schools that receive a Good Rating have a performance level which exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 goal for all students to score proficient. The schools that have an Average Rating meet the standards for progress toward the 2010 goal. Schools that are Below Average are in jeopardy of not meeting the standards for progress toward the goal. Schools that have an Unsatisfactory Rating fail to meet the standards for progress toward the 2010 goal.

Summary

In summary, the concept of culture is difficult to define, but there is broad consensus that culture shapes and molds a system in which individuals function and perform. Anthropologists have developed many different definitions. In school settings, useful advances in understanding organizational culture have occurred. There are many elements that compose the culture of schools. Organizational culture has captured the attention of many school leaders because of its potential to improve school performance. Schools with positive cultures and students who are motivated are more likely to perform better academically (Jones & Moreland, 2005). Meeting the mandates of accountability in today's public school systems requires a shift in the culture of most schools. These mandates must be answered in part by a concentration on high-stakes testing and improved student achievement. The analysis of school culture through the study of its components can contribute to an understanding of its relationship to student achievement, and to additional strategies for improving student achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine middle school culture and its relationship to school performance. Valentine identified six factors associated with middle school culture, including collective leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships (MLLC, n.d.). School cultures are unique. Valentine's six factors provide insight about the shared values, beliefs, and patterns of behavior within the school. Key to Valentine's work is the emphasis placed on "shared." One person alone cannot impact an entire culture. It takes many influences to directly impact a culture. These six factors were used to investigate the research issues profiled in the next section.

This chapter contains information regarding the research design that was used in this study. The research methodology includes a survey to query middle school teachers regarding their perspectives on school culture and their schools' NCLB and state accreditation status. Descriptions of the instruments used are presented in this chapter. The rationale for the procedures for selecting the sample and collecting the data are included. Even though the principal has the primary leadership role or responsibility for school culture, that responsibility is shared with teachers and key stakeholders. The teacher in his/her daily interaction with the students significantly affects or impacts school culture.

Research Design

A nonexperimental, quantitative research method was used to utilize the experiment and survey strategies for gathering data and yielding statistical results.

The key research questions for this study were:

1. Is there a relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and student performance?
2. Do Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) predict AYP outcomes?
3. Do Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) predict the state-level school accreditation status?

The research hypotheses that were tested:

1. There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and student performance.
2. There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and the degree to which schools meet AYP targets.

3. There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and the state-level accreditation status of schools.

The dependent variable for Question 1 is student performance, as manifested in the percentage of students achieving a proficient score in reading/language arts and mathematics. The independent variables for Question 1 are the six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships). In Question 2, the dependent variable is the school's status relative to AYP targets and the independent variables are the six factors of school culture. In Question 3, the dependent variables are the six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships). The independent variable for Question 3 is the state-level accreditation status of schools.

Sampling Plan

Teachers who are assigned to middle schools in public schools districts located in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia were included in the population. A random sample of middle school teachers were asked to participate in the study. The sample was stratified based on AYP targets, the school location, and the poverty status of students. A proportional sample of schools were developed to determine the number of schools, as well as a ratio of total schools that met

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets and total schools that failed to meet AYP targets.

Data were obtained from two sources: state department web-sites and a survey instrument. State department web-sites were examined in order to obtain school report cards with school location, performance categories, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data. The researcher requested permission to use a Likert-scale-survey instrument for which validity and reliability scores were obtained. After approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (Appendix A), the researcher used a mailing list, obtained from the state department web-sites, to send surveys to teachers at the middle schools. Data were collected from teachers using a school culture survey instrument designed to address the research questions. Teachers were mailed a packet including an information letter (Appendix B), a school culture survey (Appendix C), and a pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope to return the survey. The school culture surveys were colored-coded. Surveys sent to Georgia were buff-colored, the surveys sent to North Carolina were gray, and the surveys sent to South Carolina were light blue. The pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes were printed with an address titled School Culture Survey and a two-letter state code followed by a numerical digit to represent the school.

Some state department web-sites have links to school web-sites which list teacher e-mail addresses. Schools that returned several surveys but not enough according to the power analysis, were sent an on-line survey. Every school did not have a web-site with teacher e-mail addresses, so these schools were sent postcards (Appendix D). The returned surveys were scored using a School Culture Survey

Scoring Scale. The results were analyzed in SPSS in relation to student achievement, AYP targets, and state accreditation status.

Instrumentation

Survey Instrument

The study used the School Culture Survey (SCS) designed by Jerry Valentine, Ph D. (MLLC, 2006). The SCS was originally designed by Gruenert and Valentine in 1998. The SCS was developed to inspect the staff and their insight toward the characteristics of the ethos of middle schools. Developed with the aid of responses from 632 teachers among 27 middle schools, the survey was part of an initiative from the Missouri Center for School Improvement's Project Achieving Successes through School Improvement Site Teams (ASSIST).

The SCS instrument is a Likert-scale-survey which consists of 35 items (Appendix E). The questionnaire is rated ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. A neutral point (3) is indicated to allow the participants to respond to items for which they do not have an opinion. A factor analysis determined the following factors: Collaborative leadership, Teacher collaboration, Professional development, Unity of purpose, Collegial support, and Learning partnerships. The questions are categorized in association with the dimensions of school culture. Collaborative leadership is associated with questions 2, 7, 11, 14, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, and 34; Teacher collaboration with questions 3, 8, 15, 23, 29, and 33; Professional development with questions 1, 9, 16, 24, and 30; Unity of purpose with questions 5, 12, 19, 27, and 31; Collegial support with questions 4, 10, 17, and 25; and Learning partnerships with questions 6, 13, 21, and 35 (See, Table 1).

Survey responses were analyzed from all three states. A power analysis was conducted to determine that at least eight responses were necessary from every school. After data collection, a mean score was used from every school for each question. The surveys were analyzed according to institutions instead of individual teacher responses. The student assessment scores across the states are not equivalent, but their methods of reporting scores are similar. Therefore, the percentage of students passing the reading and math scores were used to analyze the data. In addition, the school performance ratings are labeled differently from state to state. The performance designations in North Carolina and South Carolina had similar ratings, but the designations in Georgia were totally different. The performance designations were grouped into two categories based on the percentage of students passing at the performance level. The two groups are adequate/good progress or inadequate progress.

Validity and Reliability

The reliability of the School Culture Survey (MLLC, n.d.) was determined by calculating Cronbach alpha coefficients. The questionnaire has been tested in various research projects and dissertations throughout the United States. The reliability of the SCS coefficients was analyzed with Cronbach Alpha values. The alpha coefficient for collaborative leadership (.910) had the highest coefficient and learning partnerships (.658) has the lowest coefficient. The alpha coefficients are included in Table 1.

Table 1

School Culture Survey Subscale

Subscale	Items on Questionnaire	Coefficients
Collaborative Leadership	2, 7, 11, 14, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, and 34	.910
Teacher Collaboration	3, 8, 15, 23, 29, and 33	.834
Professional Development	1, 9, 16, 24, and 30	.867
Unity of Purpose	5, 12, 19, 27, and 31	.821
Collegial Support	4, 10, 17, and 25	.796
Learning Partnerships	6, 13, 21, and 35	.658

Analysis

A multiple regression was used to analyze the data for the first hypothesis. A comparison was made between the numbers of AYP objectives met and the six school factors. A standard multiple linear regression was conducted to analyze which factors, if any, predict AYP outcomes for the second hypothesis. A Multivariate one-way analysis (MANOVA) was used to analyze the significance of the six factors to student achievement as determined by the performance categories of student achievement. A Likert-scale instrument was used to measure school culture.

Summary

Researchers have identified school culture as a tool for controlling the aspects of a school's environment while improving student achievement (Goldring & Knox, 2002). Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this middle school study to be a quantitative research design. Teachers were surveyed in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina to determine findings reported from the teacher's perspective about the strength of school culture. The results of the school culture survey were scored and examined in relation to Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Middle schools in the twenty-first century are challenged to improve instruction and student achievement while adhering to the NCLB mandates. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the analysis of data used to examine middle school cultures and student performance. Teachers and the six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) were the units of analysis. The analyses contain data frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for sample participants. Inferential analyses depict the relationships between variables. The statistical methods used were descriptive statistics, multiple linear regressions, and a multivariate one way analysis. Tables summarizing the results of the findings are contained in this chapter.

Few empirical studies have been conducted to determine the impact of factors associated with school culture and student performance. This study explores the quantitative measures of Valentine's six factors of school culture in relation to student achievement. The results of this analysis did not reveal any relationships at all among variables of school culture and school performance descriptors.

This study was conducted using information from middle schools in three southeastern states, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The three research questions were answered through the use of questionnaires completed by 443 teachers from 48 middle schools. Eight middle schools from Georgia, twenty-six schools from

North Carolina, and thirteen middle schools from South Carolina were used in the study. Twenty-six questionnaires were incomplete and could not be used in this study. The questionnaire was the School Culture Survey designed by Dr. Jerry Valentine. Permission to use the thirty-five question Likert-scale survey was obtained prior to data collection. Teachers across the three southeastern states were mailed surveys or sent an on-line survey via their school e-mail address. Once the data were collected, the surveys were analyzed in Excel and then SPSS (version 16).

Statistical Analysis

A total of 415 respondents from 47 different schools participated in the study. The descriptive statistics for the schools' achievement data are listed in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Eighteen (38.3%) of the schools met their AYP target, and 29 (61.7%) did not meet their AYP target. A majority (31, 66.0%) of the schools had a state-accreditation status that was adequate/good. With respect to socio-economic status, this majority had 48.7% free-lunch socio-economic status (SES), encompassed grades 6-8, had an average enrollment of 635, and had two to five ethnic sub-groups.

In tables 2, 3, 4, and 5, sub-titles are used to provide comprehensive details of the school used in this study. Schools have AYP sub-groups to represent their student population. Schools meet their AYP targets if the school has an AYP ratio equivalent to one. In other words, the AYP ratio determines the AYP target. Schools have performance designations that are classified differently in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The performance designations were grouped as adequate or inadequate to represent common state accreditation groups. The amount of free or reduced lunch is reported as SES. The free lunch status represents the percentage of

students receiving free or reduced lunch. The grades taught at the school are listed as the grade level. Finally, the enrollment is the total number of students attending the school as listed on the school's report card.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for South Carolina

AYP Ratios	AYP Target	State Accreditation	SES	Grade Level	Enrollment
9/17	No	Inadequate	90	6-8	379
9/17	No	Inadequate	75	6-8	442
13/21	No	Inadequate	60	6-8	658
19/29	No	Inadequate	38	6-8	909
10/17	No	Inadequate	72	6-8	354
17/27	No	Inadequate	40	6-8	791
19/25	No	Adequate	32	6-8	891
15/21	No	Adequate	55	6-8	471
14/21	No	Inadequate	64	6-6	636
15/21	No	Adequate	45	6-8	477
13/17	No	Inadequate	53	6-8	376
10/17	No	Inadequate	91	7-9	465
19/29	No	Inadequate	64	6-8	662

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for North Carolina

AYP Ratios	AYP Target	State Accreditation	SES	Grade Level	Enrollment
13/13	Yes	Adequate	32	7-8	193
19/25	No	Adequate	24	6-8	619
18/21	No	Inadequate	30	6-10	586
17/17	Yes	Inadequate	90	6-8	200
19/21	No	Adequate	35	6-8	458
27/27	Yes	Adequate	47	6-8	425
27/27	Yes	Adequate	36	6-8	457
17/21	No	Adequate	41	6-8	649
16/21	No	Inadequate	23	6-8	542
20/21	No	Adequate	43	6-8	868
19/21	No	Adequate	39	6-8	807
25/25	Yes	Adequate	47	6-8	830
13/13	Yes	Adequate	66	6-8	1117
17/17	Yes	Inadequate	21	6-8	550
22/29	No	Adequate	47	6-8	742
29/29	Yes	Adequate	33	6-8	426
12/13	No	Adequate	12	6-8	686
15/25	No	Adequate	14	6-8	939
19/29	No	Inadequate	47	6-8	340

Table 3 (continued).

AYP Ratios	AYP Target	State Accreditation	SES	Grade Level	Enrollment
17/17	Yes	Adequate	20	6-8	314
19/25	No	Adequate	43	6-8	614
29/29	Yes	Adequate	42	6-8	982
21/21	Yes	Adequate	35	6-8	666
19/21	No	Adequate	33	6-8	1093
35/35	Yes	Adequate	49	6-8	811
29/29	Yes	Adequate	33	6-8	494

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Georgia

AYP Ratios	AYP Target	State Accreditation	SES	Grade Level	Enrollment
9/9	Yes	Adequate	55	6-8	644
8/9	No	Adequate	46	6-8	830
16/16	Yes	Inadequate	71	6-8	1799
16/16	Yes	Adequate	83	6-8	832
7/7	Yes	Adequate	83	6-8	375
12/12	Yes	Adequate	57	6-8	608
10/11	No	Adequate	55	6-8	534
12/12	Yes	Adequate	76	6-8	280

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for School Achievement Variables

Variable	n	%
AYP Target		
Yes	18	38.3
No	29	61.7
State-Accreditation Status		
Adequate/Good Progress	31	66.0
Inadequate Progress	16	34.0

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Middle Schools

Sub-Groups	M
Economically Disadvantaged	48.7
Enrollment	634.5
Ethnicity Subgroups	4
Students with Disabilities	59%
English Language Learners	37%
Attendance Rate	94%

The first research question focused on school culture and the relationship with student achievement. Student achievement from the sample population was

expressed in content area categories. For this study, the achievement scores in mathematics and reading or English language arts (ELA) were analyzed. The first research hypothesis was stated as follows: There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and student performance. Student performance was operationalized by standardized test scores in reading and mathematics. This distinction in test scores yielded two sub-parts for Hypothesis 1, reading/English language arts and mathematics.

For the first sub-part of Hypothesis 1, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) were statistically significant predictors of the percentage of students above basic on ELA assessments. The descriptive statistics for the criterion and the predictor variables are listed in Table 7. The SCS instrument is a Likert-scale survey which consists of 35 items. The questionnaire ratings ranged from 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. A neutral point (3) allowed the participants to respond to items for which they do not have an opinion. When the percentage of students who score basic and above in ELA were combined and averaged, the mean was above 50% ($M=65.76$, $SD=16.12$). The six factors associated with school culture were averaged. The highest value of the factors was *professional development* ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.54$), and *learning partnerships* received the lowest value ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.47$).

The data were screened for outliers prior to analysis. Participants with a standardized residual greater than +/-3 are considered outliers within the regression model. The standardized residuals indicated that there were no outliers in the data. Review of the variance inflation factors and tolerance levels did not reveal evidence of multicollinearity. Lastly, a plot of standardized residuals did not reveal a model of heteroscedasticity.

The omnibus model was not a significant predictor of the percentage of students who were above basic in ELA, $F(6, 40) = 0.97, p > .05, R^2 = .13$. This indicates that together the predictors did not account for a significant amount of variation in the criterion. The regression coefficients are listed in Table 8. The coefficients indicated that none of the predictors were significant within this model.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 1, Part A (N=47)

Variable	M	SD
Percentage Above Basic ELA	65.76	18.12
Collaborative Leadership	3.39	0.49
Teacher Collaboration	3.27	0.51
Professional Development	3.89	0.54
Unity of Purpose	3.81	0.58
Collegial Support	3.85	0.39
Learning Partnerships	3.24	0.47

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree

Table 8

Regression Coefficients for Research Question 1, Part B (N=47)

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Collaborative Leadership	2.57	8.97	0.07	0.29	.776
Teacher Collaboration	-14.27	8.93	-0.40	-1.60	.118
Professional Development	3.46	13.12	0.10	0.26	.793
Unity of Purpose	-6.21	10.80	-0.20	-0.58	.568
Collegial Support	23.22	13.73	0.50	1.69	.099
Learning Partnerships	2.61	7.19	0.07	0.36	.719

For the second part of the first research hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if Valentine's six factors were statistically significant predictors of the percentage of students above basic in mathematics. The descriptive statistics for the criterion and the predictor variables are listed in Table 9. When the percentage of students who score basic and above in mathematics were combined and averaged, the mean was much greater than 50% ($M=71.52$, $SD=11.71$).

The data were screened for outliers prior to analysis. Participants with a standardized residual greater than ± 3 are considered outliers within the regression model. The standardized residuals revealed one outlier in the data. The outlier was removed. Review of the variance inflation factors and tolerance levels did not reveal evidence of multicollinearity. Lastly, a plot of standardized residuals did not reveal a model of heteroscedasticity.

The omnibus model was not a significant predictor of the percentage of students who were above basic in Mathematics, $F(6, 39) = 1.20, p > .05, R^2 = .16$. This result indicates that together the predictors did not account for a significant amount of variation in the criterion. The regression coefficients are listed in Table 10. The coefficients indicated that none of the predictors were significant within this model.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 1, Part B (N=46)

Variable	M	SD
Percentage Above Basic Math	71.52	11.71
Collaborative Leadership	3.38	0.49
Teacher Collaboration	3.26	0.52
Professional Development	3.89	0.54
Unity of Purpose	3.80	0.58
Collegial Support	3.85	0.39
Learning Partnerships	3.23	0.47

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree

Table 10

Regression Coefficients for Research Question 1, Part B

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Collaborative Leadership	-3.20	5.71	-0.13	-0.56	.578
Teacher Collaboration	0.17	5.70	0.01	0.03	.976
Professional Development	-5.28	8.43	-0.24	-0.63	.535
Unity of Purpose	4.34	6.96	0.22	0.62	.536
Collegial Support	6.50	8.76	0.22	0.74	.462
Learning Partnerships	7.64	4.60	0.31	1.66	.105

The second research question hypothesis was stated as follows: There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors of school culture (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and the degree to which schools meet AYP targets.

A logistic regression was conducted to determine if the six factors of school culture were statistically significant predictors of AYP outcomes. The following recoding scheme was used for the criterion: AYP status (0 = AYP targets not met: 1 = AYP targets met).

The standardized residuals did not reveal any outliers in the data. The variance inflation factors and tolerance levels did not reveal evidence of multicollinearity. The classification table is presented in Table 11. Twenty-nine schools did not meet the AYP target, and 18 did. Thus, if one guessed that every

- school would not meet AYP standards, one would classify 61.7% of the schools correctly by chance. The omnibus model was not a significant predictor of whether or not a school met the AYP targets, $\chi^2(6) = 4.67$, $R^2 = .13$, $p = .587$. The model correctly predicted that 82.8% of the schools did not meet their AYP targets for an overall classification percentage of 66%, slightly better than chance of 50%. However, the model was able to correctly classify only 38.9% of the schools that did meet their AYP targets. The coefficients are listed in Table 12. The coefficients indicate that none of the predictors were significant in this model.

Table 11

Classification Table for Research Question 2

Observed		AYP Status		Predicted Percentage Correct
		No	Yes	
AYP Status	No	24	5	82.8
	Yes	11	7	38.9
Overall Percentage				66.0

Table 12

Regression Coefficients for Research Question 2

Predictor	95.0% C.I. for							
	EXP(B)							
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Collaborative Leadership	- 0.83	1.13	0.53	1	.466	0.44	0.05	4.04
Teacher Collaboration	- 1.09	1.08	1.02	1	.312	0.34	0.04	2.78
Professional Development	1.13	1.61	0.49	1	.484	3.09	0.13	72.21
Unity of Purpose	1.17	1.28	0.83	1	.361	3.23	0.26	39.94
Collegial Support	- 0.18	1.60	0.01	1	.913	0.84	0.04	19.45
Learning Partnerships	0.08	0.87	0.01	1	.923	1.09	0.20	6.01

The third research hypothesis reads as follows: There will be a significant relationship between Valentine's six factors (collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships) and the state-level accreditation status of schools. A one-way MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the two state-level accreditation groups (adequate/good progress and inadequate progress) and the six factors of

school culture. The means and the standard deviations of each dependent variable by accreditation status are listed in

Table 13.

Box's test was not significant, suggesting that the covariance matrices of the dependent variables were equal across the groups. Levene's test was not significant for any of the dependent variables, suggesting that the groups had equal error variances on these variables. The MANOVA failed to reveal a significant global multivariate difference on the dependent variables by state-level accreditation group, $F(6, 40) = 0.35, p > .05$ ($\eta^2 = .05$, power = .13). Univariate ANOVAs post hoc tests were not conducted because the overall multivariate effect was not significant.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations for Research Question 3

Dependent Variable	Accreditation Group	M	SD	n
Collaborative Leadership	Adequate/Good Progress	3.36	0.53	31
	Inadequate Progress	3.45	0.39	16
	Total	3.39	0.49	47
Teacher Collaboration	Adequate/Good Progress	3.29	0.52	31
	Inadequate Progress	3.23	0.52	16
	Total	3.27	0.51	47
Professional Development	Adequate/Good Progress	3.90	0.55	31
	Inadequate Progress	3.87	0.52	16
	Total	3.89	0.54	47

Dependent Variable	Accreditation Group	M	SD	n
Collegial Support	Adequate/Good Progress	3.80	0.59	31
	Inadequate Progress	3.83	0.57	16
	Total	3.81	0.58	47
Unity of Purpose	Adequate/Good Progress	3.85	0.37	31
	Inadequate Progress	3.84	0.43	16
	Total	3.85	0.39	47
Learning Partnerships	Adequate/Good Progress	3.24	0.52	31
	Inadequate Progress	3.23	0.36	16
	Total	3.24	0.47	47

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree

Summary

In summary, the statistical analyses examined the relationships between Valentine's six factors of school culture and student performance, AYP status, and state-level accreditation factors. First, there was not a significant relationship between any of the factors of school culture and student performance. In essence, the six factors of school culture were not significant predictors of student performance in reading/English language arts and Mathematics. Next, a regression analysis was conducted to determine if the six factors of school culture predict AYP outcomes in schools. The analysis did not predict the school's AYP target. Finally, a one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference between the state-

level accreditation statuses on collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships on Valentine's six factors. The MANOVA did not reveal a difference. Thus, all three hypotheses were rejected.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether factors of school cultures are related to the instruction of students and school performance. Researchers have identified factors of strong cultures that enable organizations to attain their goals. In school settings, the purposes, norms, and values that staff members bring to their schools constitute school culture. School cultures have distinct characteristics that mold and shape the school's atmosphere and depict the quality of the school's learning environment.

Summary

The concept of school culture has garnered and sustained attention from school leaders for more than 20 years. However, the use of organizational culture in the late 1990s was extended to the educational setting to help leaders understand why some schools succeed and other schools do not succeed. Most of the literature on culture comes from two categories: a culture from a corporate viewpoint and a culture from a school's perception. Early studies of organizational culture indicate that there are advantages to understanding culture and using its components to improve the quality of an organization. There is also evidence of studies using aspects of school culture to improve the quality of the teaching and learning in elementary and high schools. There was limited evidence, however, of studies that used quantitative measures of school culture on the middle school level. This study used Jerry Valentine's School Culture Survey to examine school cultures in middle schools in relation to student performance there.

In response to the gaps in literature, this study was designed to address the limitations for school leaders interested in improving student achievement at the middle school level. Many schools are meeting the mandates of NCLB on the elementary level, but many states have only a small percentage of middle schools making AYP. Middle level years are the bridge between elementary and high school, and students change mentally and physically during middle school. This study was conceptualized with theories from Piaget, Maslow's Hierarchy, Heider's Attribution Theory, and Kanter's Empowerment Theory to address the individual needs of students during this period of significant change in the lives of students.

This study was designed to address three questions related to school cultures and student achievement. The following questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a relationship between Valentine's six factors, collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships, and student performance?
2. Do Valentine's six factors of school culture, collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships predict AYP outcomes?
3. Do Valentine's six factors of school culture, collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships, predict the state-level school-accreditation status?

This study investigated the relationship between school cultures and student achievement in middle level schools in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Valentine's six factors are used in this study to determine if there is a relationship

between school performance and the factors of school culture. It specifically examined the relationship between school cultures and AYP performance. Additionally, the research examined the six factors in relation to the state-level accreditation status of schools.

Discussion of Findings

For research question 1, “Is there a relationship between Valentine’s six factors of school culture, collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships, and student performance?”, a multiple regression was conducted. The results indicated that there is not a statistically significant relationship between the six factors and student performance as operationalized by standardized test scores in reading/ language arts and mathematics.

The absence of a relationship appears to contradict the perspectives of many who write on the topic of school culture. The literature suggests that “ middle schools with positive cultures have higher levels of student achievement in reading and mathematics” (Hoy, Sabo, & Barnes as cited in Roney, Anfara, & Brown, 2008, p. 110). Reading and mathematics are the foundations for literacy in school curricula. According to Balfanz & MacIver, many students are unable to find success in high school as the result of an inadequate middle school educational experience (2000). Research suggests that a healthy school culture provides students with a positive or “adequate” middle school experience.

Additional middle school research indicates schools are not successfully addressing the needs of students. According to Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and

Petzko, *unsuccessful middle-level students are often found in middle schools with low socio-economic status and high levels of students with special needs (2004)*. The results from this research hypothesis address a key challenge of middle schools: improving student performance. Student performance is a national issue with multiple challenges, very little significant research or specific answers. But what is known is that schools are not attending to providing instruction for the development of the middle school child while concentrating on improving student achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Research from this study did not reveal relationships among variables of school culture and school performance descriptors. Again, this absence of relationship appears to contradict the perspectives of many who write on this topic.

For research hypothesis 2, “Do Valentine’s six factors of school culture predict AYP outcomes?”, a binary logistical regression was conducted to determine if Valentine’s six factors predict the AYP targets. The results indicated that the six factors did not statistically significantly predict AYP outcomes. Therefore, the components of school culture as delineated in this study did not predict the AYP targets. According to research from Margaret Goertz (2005), there are four challenges associated with the educational policies of NCLB. Goertz determined that the challenges are limited to assessment, accountability provisions, special needs students, and the capacity to improve.

These findings are not surprising due to the small number of middle schools making their AYP targets. The literature suggests there are many schools that do not make adequate yearly progress. Irons and Harris purport that schools are deficient in

the resources to provide sufficient improvement (2007). Every year, the number of schools making AYP should increase, but the statistics do not reveal the projected increase from year to year. The critical review of NCLB in individual states has many school policy leaders viewing the mandates of NCLB differently. According to the literature, NCLB is a mixture of national directives with a variety of dissimilar responses from the states (Ryan, 2004). The federal legislation has determined specific targets, but the states' methods of reaching the targets differ from state to state. Individual states have their own standards, their own tests, and their own method for students to score proficient. AYP is considered a gray area and many states have recalculated their scores of proficiency so that more districts can meet the goals and make AYP (Dillon, 2003).

Adequate Yearly Progress is a controversial subject among many school practitioners. Schools across the nation either meet or do not meet their AYP targets. Schools that do not meet their targets are grouped into one failing category. There is no difference between the school that misses its targets by one objective and the school that misses its targets by 10 objectives. Ryan states NCLB “unintentionally promotes racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic segregation” (2004, p. 961). Many schools have multiple subgroups, and some states are not reporting correct information and excluding students who fit in other subgroups. The controversy surrounding AYP needs clarification and additional data. Thus, the lack of a relationship between school culture and AYP status is not necessarily surprising, nor can it automatically be concluded that this lack of a relationship means that culture is irrelevant with respect to student performance.

Research hypothesis 3 stated, “Do Valentine’s six factors of school culture predict the state-level accreditation status of schools?” A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the state accreditation groups and the components of school culture. The state-level accreditation groups were not predicted by the factors of school culture. The MANOVA failed to reveal a significant difference on the factors of school culture.

Another controversial issue is that every state has a different state-level accreditation system. Many middle schools are low-performing, and the state-level accreditation title differs by state. It is recorded that some states have requested the federal government to revise the mandates of NCLB so that some schools can experience success without a negative label (McBeath, Reyes, & Ehrlander, 2007). These findings are noteworthy because they affirm that there is no difference in a high-performing school and a low-performing school as it relates to the factors of school culture. There are status and levels given to schools in terms of AYP and state accreditation which would seemingly impact school culture. However, the research from this study did not support this correlation.

Limitations

During the research investigation, there were limitations that should be addressed in future related research studies. Although the same number of surveys was sent to schools in each state, the researcher received more responses from schools in North Carolina. The schools in North Carolina sent six surveys for every one survey received from Georgia and South Carolina. A similar study may focus on a

larger sample in Georgia and South Carolina. In the same vein, this study was limited to a quantitative study. A qualitative portion may provide the researcher with examples of a more in-depth view of the elements of school culture.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The many factors associated with school culture are imbedded in the daily operations of school management and the planning and delivery of instruction. This study did not provide conclusive evidence that school culture can predict student performance or AYP status. However, this inconclusive evidence is inconsistent with the results of the researcher's analysis of a significant body of literature on the topic. According to research, school culture may be analyzed to provide school districts, school leaders, and all stakeholders with an alternative way of thinking about how to improve the school's atmosphere which impacts the individualized student performance (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, (2004). Therefore, the following recommendations for policy and practice are proposed:

- Examine the affect of school culture by grade levels or PLCs to determine factors which are common among small areas of students that are improving or not improving.
- Continuously create opportunities for all staff members to collaborate and build positive relationships.
- Provide some staff development for individualized or grade level growth as opposed to all school-wide professional development.
- Facilitate ways for community members to play integral roles with the staff, parents, and students.

- Have school leaders reflectively analyze their leadership roles to determine if they promote change.
- Have school leaders consider focusing on leadership practices that are devoted to school improvement, including dimensions of school culture.
- Have school districts consider finding leaders who embrace leadership roles beyond traditional management, including those dimensions of leadership that relate to creating positive school culture.

This study offers information about middle schools and student achievement.

Reflective practitioners can use the recommendations to assist with their ongoing pursuit of improved school culture and increased academic performance. As stated in Chapter II, the school principal is ultimately responsible for the school's success (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2004). That individual, the school, leadership team, the faculty and staff, and the school community should work together to find innovative strategies to re-culture their smaller school teams. Once strategies are implemented, the growth may slow and be minimal, but if designed and implemented correctly, change may well occur.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study did not yield significant relationships between factors of school culture and student performance. However, the study did not include a large teacher population in South Carolina and Georgia. More surveys were returned from North Carolina than other states. Some researchers may consider the sample from North Carolina an over-sample in comparison to the number of surveys from Georgia and South Carolina, but the fact that the response was as limited as it was suggests the

need for a more expansive response. Thus, a study of all the middle schools within a state may provide a data set that might yield more useful results and provide school, district, and state leaders with useful information on the topic of school culture and student performance.

A study of middle schools within one state may provide information for states according to their style of state-wide accountability systems. Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina have three different state-wide assessments. The assessments cover similar national standards, but the tests have different performance levels. The level of proficiency is not the same for every state. South Carolina is considered to have a rigorous test and the calculation of educational measurement is dissimilar to the other states. The performance on state accreditation metrics across the states is very diverse. Therefore, there is a rationale for a single state study by addressing the differences in state assessments and accountability systems.

This study was limited to three southeastern states. An additional study may be suitable among another group of states, a different region, or even a nationwide sample. A different geographical study may provide results that can be generalized to larger populations and schools. The school culture survey has been previously used in other states. Another research study in Indiana found school culture had a significant relationship with student achievement (Fraley, 2007). This study used 27 schools, but only seven schools were middle schools. The mean scores for the six factors in the other studies were higher than the mean scores obtained in this study, except the mean for *professional development*.

Another limitation to the study was the number of schools used within the study. Four hundred fifteen surveys were returned from teachers to analyze the study, but the research designed required the usage of a mean score from each school. The number of schools or institutions used in the study was only 47. Therefore, the number of schools is not a very large sample. Replicating this study with 60 or more schools may reveal a different outcome. The number of questionnaires returned from each school is also a limitation. This study used schools from which the researcher was able to obtain eight or more responses. A study that surveys all teachers within the school may provide more useful results and additional insight for individual schools.

Finally, culture was examined through quantitative research, but can also be explored with qualitative designs. A qualitative component may provide school leaders with characteristics or a model of concepts that may be emulative of their school settings. A qualitative component would add to the dearth of knowledge on effective and successful middle schools.

Summary

Culture is an element applicable to every school or organization. Theories have been developed around the concept of culture. Organizational culture and school culture are not new concepts, but they are gaining increased attention in the twenty-first century. The accountability mandates of the NCLB era challenge all school leaders to improve student achievement. Strong, positive school cultures are the result of principals fostering communication with all staff members and

cultivating professional learning communities (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, et al., 2006).

According to Wagner et al., school leaders shape the culture and their leadership can lead to improved school performance (2006). School leadership makes a difference (Cotton, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Contrary to the expectation of prevailing research in large numbers of articles, this research study did not find the factors of school culture significant predictors of student performance and AYP outcomes. Improving student achievement requires the concentration of many basic principles, which may include additional elements other than the six factors of school culture. Hopefully, the replication of the research design consistent with the recommendations in the previous section can yield additional insights into the impact of culture upon achievement.

APPENDIX A



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
 Tel: 601.266.6820
 Fax: 601.266.5509
 www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee 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: 29021202

PROJECT TITLE: Middle School Cultures and Student Achievement

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 02/01/09 to 02/01/10

PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation or Thesis

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Nichel Holland Swindler

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & Research

FUNDING AGENCY: N/A

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 02/23/09 to 02/22/10

Lawrence A. Hosman

 Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
 HSPRC Chair

2-25-09

 Date

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL CULTURE SURVEY

Form 4-98

To what degree do these statements describe the conditions at your school?

Rate each statement on the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Leaders value teachers' ideas.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. Teachers trust each other.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Teachers support the mission of the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. Teachers spend considerable time planning together.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. Professional development is valued by the faculty.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. Teachers understand the mission of the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
20. Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.	①	②	③	④	⑤
23. Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤
24. Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	①	②	③	④	⑤
25. Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	①	②	③	④	⑤
26. Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	①	②	③	④	⑤
27. The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.	①	②	③	④	⑤
28. Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤
29. Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.	①	②	③	④	⑤
30. The faculty values school improvement.	①	②	③	④	⑤
31. Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
32. Administrators protect instruction and planning time.	①	②	③	④	⑤
33. Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.	①	②	③	④	⑤
34. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	①	②	③	④	⑤
35. Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example they engage mentally in class and complete homework assignments.	①	②	③	④	⑤

APPENDIX C

Research Participant Consent Form
Middle School Cultures and Student Achievement
The University of Southern Mississippi

Participant's Name _____

Research Project Description:

You are being asked to participate in a study related to school cultures and student achievement. Your participation involves answering a 35-item questionnaire about your experiences with teaching and returning it. Research has established that addressing the components of teaching in relation to school culture can improve individual student performance. This study is designed to increase the understanding of middle school cultures that facilitate learning.

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled **Middle School Cultures and Student Achievement**. All procedures to be followed and their purpose were explained in the research project description. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, that might be expected.

Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to Nichel Swindler at 803.312.4257. This project and this consent form have 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 participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Dr. # 5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601.266.6820.

Signature of participant

Date

APPENDIX D

March 2009

Dear Participant,

You recently received a school culture survey package. This is a second request to please fill out the survey and return it. If you have already completed the survey, then please disregard this notice.

Thank you.

Nichel Swindler,

Doctoral Student
The University of Southern Mississippi
nswindler@hotmail.com

APPENDIX E

Novell WebAccess - Windows Internet Explorer

Address bar: <http://webmail.richlandone.org/gmail/valentine/jerryw@missouri.edu/15802308.msc?mailFolderId=6&FirstUpdateDate=1>

Search: Search

Navigation: Elections '08, CNN, Senate Race News, Barack Obama, Barack Obama

General: More troops needed to defeat insurgents

Mail Message

Reply, Read Later

Mail Properties

From: "Valentine, Jerry W." <Valentine@missouri.edu> Saturday - August 23, 2008 12:49 PM
 To: "NICHEL SWINDLER" <nswindler@richlandone.org>
 Subject: RE: School Culture Survey
 Attachments: Mime.822 (2888 bytes) [View] [Save As]

Nichel
 You have permission to use the SCS for your dissertation research. I wish you the best with your study.
 Jerry Valentine

Jerry W. Valentine, Ph.D.
 Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
 Director, Middle Level Leadership Center
 211 Hill Hall
 University of Missouri
 Columbia, MO 65211
 (573) 882-0944

-----Original Message-----
 From: NICHEL SWINDLER [mailto:nswindler@richlandone.org]
 Sent: Friday, August 22, 2008 1:52 PM
 To: Valentine, Jerry W.
 Subject: School Culture Survey

Dr. Valentine,

I am requesting permission to use the School Culture Survey for my dissertation research. Attached is a copy of my Pre-Proposal.

Sincerely,

Internet | Protected Modes On | 100% | Yahoo! Search

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