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School Culture Survey Constructs and Student Achievement Relationships in Title I K-8 Schools

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School Culture Survey Constructs and Student Achievement Relationships in Title I K-8
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This dissertation was submitted by Carrol Hammonds under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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This quantitative study investigated the correlation between school culture constructs and student achievement in 160 Title I K-8 schools from four Local Education Agencies.

Title I schools receive funds from the federal government to fund programs and provide resources to help students meet rigorous standards on state assessments. School culture is defined as the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions.

This study aimed to determine if any relationship existed between school culture constructs and student achievement. Statistical analysis included preexisting data collected from the 2016 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey and 2014-2016 student achievement data from the North Carolina End-of-Grade tests.

The School Culture Survey constructs developed by Gruenert and Valentine (1998) were used to conduct a multilevel random intercept model for statistical analysis. Data analysis revealed a significant relationship between 2 of the 6 constructs related to school culture. Statistical analysis results revealed that Professional Development and Learning Partnership constructs had a significant relationship to student achievement. Both constructs had a p value of 0.00, which means a significant relationship exists between them and student achievement.

Based on the results, recommendations include (1) broadening sample to include more Title I schools; (2) conduct a study to see if non-Title I schools will have the same constructs that relate to student achievement, (3) conduct a study to evaluate Professional Development and Learning Partnership in Title I schools, (4) analyzing Title I Distinguished schools, and (5) conducting a qualitative study related to understanding Professional Development and Learning Partnership in Title I schools. Building capacity in Professional Learning and Learning Partnerships could be the key to making sustained changes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The phrases, "Ensuring that all students are college and career ready" and "Prepared for the 21st Century," have been used since the adoption of more rigorous and standards-based education in America. Providing an equitable education for all regardless of race and economic circumstances is essential. This chapter provides information about the current research regarding Title I schools and the problems they face. The theoretical framework for the research presented is primarily based on the work of Gruenert and Whitaker's (2015) description of school culture and its impact in schools. Their research is based in part on the Organizational Culture Theory and the researchers who have contributed to this body of work. The chapter ends with the purpose and the significance of the study and includes the research questions posed for this study.

Statement of the Problem

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was created to provide schools with funds to meet the various needs of students. Title I funds were created and given to schools meeting certain criteria for students who lived in and attended schools in economically disadvantaged areas. The purpose of Title I funds is to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1). Title I funds are given to State Educational Agencies (SEAs) who distribute them to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and public schools with a high number or percentage of economically disadvantaged children to meet academic standards (Federal Programs, n.d.). In North Carolina, the funds are mostly used for children in Grades K-8 with poverty rates above

40% to operate school-wide programs to improve instruction. The programs implemented must improve student achievement and include increasing parental involvement (Federal Programs, n.d.).

The Improving America's School Act of 1994 began accountability requirements for student performance based on student assessments, that later led to the creation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, ushering in stringent testing of students in Grades 3-8 in reading and math. Every state could create their own assessments to determine proficiency of students in reading, math, and science. In North Carolina, it led to the development of the North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) tests. The EOGs measure student proficiency in reading, math, and science standards. Based on performance, students receive a score of levels 1-5 for both reading, math, and science assessments. Students performing at achievement levels 4 and 5 have superior command of the knowledge and skills contained in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Students achieving a level 3 have a sufficient command of grade-level knowledge and skills. Students performing at a level 2 have partial command of the knowledge and skills; and students achieving a level 1 have a limited command of the knowledge and skills contained in the CCSS.

The newest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed into law on December 10, 2015. The ESEA has gone through several changes since its creation over 50 years ago. The latest version of the law requires that states,

> ensure equity and protections for disadvantaged and high-needs students teach all
> students with high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in
> college and careers provide vital inform to educators, families, students, and

communities through annual assessments that measure students' proficiency accountability and action taken to effect positive change for the lowest performing schools, where students are not making adequate progress, and where schools have low graduation rates over an extended time. (ESSA, n.d., p. 1)

As with all other education laws passed since 1965, districts and schools are held accountable for ensuring all students demonstrate proficiency in math, reading, and science standards regardless of their race or economic status. Part of the accountability requirement is for schools receiving Title I funds to show Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on standardized assessments (Federal Programs, n.d.). The U.S. Department of Education defined AYP as, "the amount of yearly improvement each Title I school, and district are expected to make to enable low-achieving children to meet high performance levels expected of all children" (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1). Each state determines what adequate progress is and it is based on their standardized assessments. Regardless of the state, they all follow these two guidelines in determining AYP:

> (1) an emphasis on accountability of schools and LEAs receiving Title I funds (i.e., whether they are making adequate progress toward enabling their children to meet the State's standards) rather than emphasizing the Title I program itself or even the yearly performance gains of participating children; and (2) a definition that holds LEAs and schools accountable for the amount of improvement they make each year. (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1)

Title I schools are particularly challenged to meet proficiency on standardized tests because of the population of students who attend. Title I schools receive funding because of the economically disadvantaged population they serve. The students who attend these schools are typically minorities. When schools fail to meet AYP, steps are

taken to improve the outcome on next year's assessments. The pressure on schools to meet their level of proficiency on standardized testing can affect the members of the organization.

The pressure on schools to meet proficiency and show improvement could have a positive or negative effect on its members. The positive impact could be an increase in collaboration and camaraderie among the organization to meet proficiency goals; however, the pressure to show proficiency can also negatively affect the organization. The pressure to reach proficiency standards comes from the SEA, which receives Title I funds and distributes them to LEAs. When schools fail to show adequate progress, their Title I funds are at risk. The pressure for these schools to show improvement creates a trickle-down effect starting with the SEA to the LEA, to the individual school leaders, then finally to the teachers in the schools. Ultimately, it is up to members of the organization to create the change needed for their students to show proficiency. Schools must come up with a plan of action to ensure they meet or exceed the standards the following year. The course of action schools take the following year varies from school to school. Schools create school improvement plans that entail how and when schools will enact improvements. Creating the change needed within the organization requires a thorough examination and evaluation of the makeup of its members, which directly impacts how the organization is functioning. Examining and evaluating the organization's culture can provide insight into the underlying issues that might inhibit the change needed for schools to show adequate yearly growth on state assessments.

Theoretical Framework

Much of the research on school culture is taken from Gruenert and Whitaker (2015). Their research behind school culture is based on the research of Organizational

Culture Theory developed by researchers Edgar Schein, Geert Hofstede, Clifford Geertz, Terry Deal, and Allen Kennedy. Cultures are made up of subcultures, defined as groups of individuals who have something in common. The subcultures influence their members' behaviors, either positively or negatively. Each subculture may have its own set of norms and routines. In schools, subcultures can develop into cliques. Subcultures form for several reasons; and per Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), "leaders would be wasting time trying to stop them from developing" (p. 33). How subcultures choose to respond to changes can influence the flourishment or failure of the school's vision. Leaders need to identify and acknowledge the power that a subculture can have and its influence on the fulfillment or failure of the school's vision. Leaders can recruit these subcultures and use them to persuade others. If leaders choose to ignore these groups, they can spread their opposition and ignore the leaders' vision. Collectively, "the stories, symbols, heroes, and rituals of the school will risk supporting something other than the school's core purpose: student learning" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 45).

Gruenert and Valentine (1998) developed the School Culture Survey (SCS), "an instrument designed to get a sense of how much their school culture is collaborative" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 80). Both researchers work at the Middle Level Leadership Center (MLLC) at the University of Missouri-Columbia and provide an array of school improvement instruments, including surveys about school culture, to organizations and schools nationwide. The SCS constructs were used along with the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) constructs to get a sense of how collaborative K-8 Title I schools are from four Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the same region in North Carolina. Title I schools included in this study are referred to as four LEAs in the same region in North Carolina.

Organizational Culture Theory

Organizational Culture Theory can be applied to this study because the values and beliefs of a school come from its members (teachers) and can affect the organization. An organization's culture is reflected in the day-to-day interactions with its members. Abelein (2013) wrote,

culture is all about the adults in the school building; culture and its correlation to academic excellence is about the relationship between the principal (and other administrators) and teachers. It is their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that create the normative glue. (p. 75)

An organization's culture can be defined as, "the way things are done around here" (Brown, 1998, p. 9). Organizational culture centers on a school's values and beliefs and how they shape its members. The members refer to the school's staff and how they shape the organization. Brown's (1998) definition of organizational culture refers to "the pattern of beliefs, values, and learned ways of coping with experiences that have developed over the course of an organization's history, which tends to be manifested in its material arrangement and in the behaviors of its members" (p. 9). Sun (2008) stated, "a successful organization should have strong cultures that can attract, hold, and reward people for performing roles and achieving goals, whereas strong cultures are usually characterized by dedication and co-operation in the service of common values" (p. 137).

Maull and Brown (2001) noted that organizational culture has four main themes. The first main theme is culture is a learned entity and is characterized as, "the way we do things around here" or "the way we think about things around here" (Maull & Brown, 2001, p. 3). In this first theme, culture is used to show how its members behave and

interact with one another. The second theme of culture is it is viewed as a belief system. An organization's beliefs guide its members' daily beliefs. The organization's beliefs develop into rules that guide everyday life. The third theme of culture is that it can be viewed as "mental programming." The final theme about culture is that it can be viewed as a strategy for developing change.

Models of Culture

The internal workings of an organization can be represented in the Hofstede (1991) Onion Diagram. Hofstede compared the layers of an onion to the many layers of an organization's culture. Hofstede divided the layers of culture into four main elements: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. These elements are included in the Onion Diagram (Figure 1).
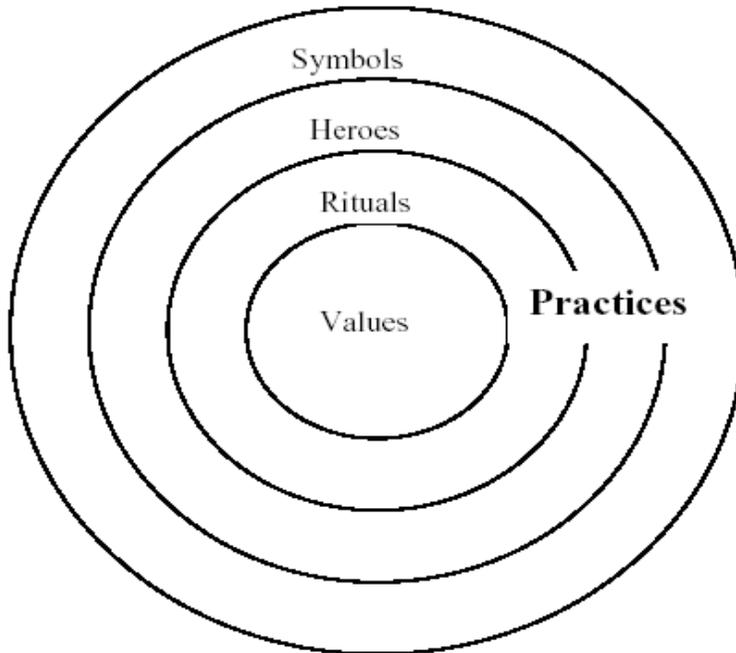
Figure 1. Hofstede (1991) Onion Diagram.

The Hofstede (1991) Onion Diagram shows the many layers of culture. Values are at the center of culture with rituals, heroes, and symbols encompassing it. An organization's practices are influenced by these many layers.

The Hofstede (1991) Onion Diagram places values at the core of culture. Values are related to the moral and ethical codes and can determine what people think ought to be done and identify "likes" and "dislikes" for its members. The rituals of a culture are essential collective activities in which the organization's members participate. The heroes of culture are those persons who possess characteristics that appeal to the organization. The symbols refer the gestures, words, and objects that have some significant meaning to the group.

Johnson and Scholes (1998) Culture Web

Johnson and Scholes (1998) created a cultural web (Figure 2) to further show the

interrelatedness of an organization's culture. The paradigm or commonly held beliefs

and values are the core of the organization; and the seven elements (routine, rituals,

stories, symbols, control systems, power structure, and organizational structure) could be

formed in the different developing periods of an organization (Sun, 2008).

Figure 2. Johnson and Scholes (1998) Cultural Web.

Johnson and Scholes's (1998) cultural web shows the seven key elements of

culture inter-linked (Sun, 2008).

Identifying the seven elements of culture is not sufficient for understanding and

measuring the culture of the organization. Along with Johnson and Scholes (1998), Sun

(2008) wrote that it is "also imperative to measure the impact that the culture has on the

everyday operations and workings of the organization and how the organization treats

staff and those should be key aspects when building a successful culture" (p. 139).

Organizational culture aims to create the feeling of identity among its members and for

new members to understand acceptable behavior within it. To create efficient

organizations, the culture of the organization should not be overlooked. Culture

influences its members' motivation, morale, productivity, and efficiency (Sun, 2008).

Organizational culture can also help an organization reach success by improving its

performance, stories, symbols, and common values. The decisions an organization

makes might fall in line with outdated practices and strategies that inhibit its success.

Organizational culture influences the organization and can change it into a strong

successful culture or a weak one.

Title I Schools and Student Achievement

Title I schools have added pressure for their students to show proficiency in

reading, math, and science because showing improvement is tied to federal funding.

Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickerall (2009) stated, "schools, especially those

receiving Title I funds, are under tremendous pressure to abide by state and federal

academic regulations. It is therefore logical to consider school culture as an integral

element of achievement and part of the academic picture" (p. 190). If low-performing

schools identify their type of culture, it might shed light as to why their students perform

the way they do on standardized tests.

MacNeil and Prater (2009) found, "improvements in student achievement will

happen in schools with positive and professional cultures that reflect a positive school

climate" (p. 77). Teacher motivation plays an important part in student success. When

teachers are motivated, their students demonstrate improved performance and outcomes.

Principals seeking to improve student performance should focus on improving the culture

of the school by improving relationships between themselves and their teachers.

MacNeil and Prater (2009) conducted a study comprised of 29 schools using the

Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) and concluded that "exemplary schools were

found to possess healthier climates than acceptable schools, which reported lower

organizational health scores" (p. 75). There were no low-performing schools in the sample composed of high, middle, and elementary schools. The OHI survey measures organizational health by asking questions related to various aspects of the school environment. Eleven of the 80 questions comprising the OHI referred directly to the effective performance of the principal as rated by the teachers of the school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships, if any, that exist between culture and achievement in Title I K-8 schools. Staff in "low-income, low performing largely minority population schools work in a setting in which program implementation may be particularly challenging" (Malloy & Acock, 2014, p. 8). Studies have revealed that a positive school culture carries over to high student achievement scores, parent engagement, and community support. The literature suggests, "knowing the current strengths and needs of an organization prior to selecting and attempting to implement an innovation is essential" (Malloy & Acock, 2014, p. 8). Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002) wrote, "it is generally conceded that schools that function well is more likely to implement programs with fidelity and that very disorganized or poorly functioning schools have difficulty implementing new programs" (p. 35). When schools can implement new academic programs with fidelity, they might see student growth.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine culture and achievement differences to determine if any exist between K-8 Title I schools from four LEAs in the same region in North Carolina.

School cultural studies have been conducted at several levels of schools (elementary, middle, and high) to identify the type(s) of culture present; however, the

relationship between culture and achievement is under researched, especially among Title

I schools. A search of school culture studies revealed that many have been done in

organizations and higher education. Few studies have examined the correlation between

Title I schools and student achievement in North Carolina.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

1. What is the relationship between collaborative leadership and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between collaborative leadership and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

2. What is the relationship between teacher collaboration and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between teacher collaboration and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

3. What is the relationship between collegial support and student achievement in

   Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between collegial support and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

4. What is the relationship between professional development and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between professional development and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

5. What is the relationship between learning partnership and student

   achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between learning partnership and student

achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

6. What is the relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in from four LEAs in North Carolina?

$H_\circ$: There is no relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title I K-8 from four LEAs in North Carolina.

Definition of Terms

AYP. AYP as defined by a state describes the amount of yearly improvement each Title I school and district are expected to make to enable low-achieving children to meet high-performance levels expected of all children (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 offered "full educational opportunity" for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

North Carolina School Report Card. The North Carolina School Report Cards were developed in 2001 and provide information about public, charter, and alternative K-12 schools. Information is provided to the public about state, district, and county schools (North Carolina School Report Cards, n.d.).

NCTWCS. The NCTWCS is a biannual statewide survey of school based licensed educators to determine if they have the supports necessary for effective teaching (New Teacher Center, 2016a).

School climate. School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. (National School Climate Center, 2007a).

School culture. School culture is the social indoctrination of unwritten rules that people learn as they try to fit in a group or organization (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

SCS. The SCS developed by Gruenert and Valentine (1998) gives insight about the shared values/beliefs, patterns of behavior, and relationships in the school (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

Delimitations

This quantitative study was limited by only including Title I K-8 public schools from four LEAs. This study excluded all other schools within the region not meeting the criteria guidelines set forth by the researcher. The criteria for inclusion in the study were that schools must be identified as Title I and the grade span had to be K-8. Some schools included Grade 8 at the high school level. The four LEAs included charter schools. Charter schools were excluded from the study because they complete a modified version the NCTWCS.

Limitations

This quantitative study has potential weaknesses because the study used only quantitative data collected from surveys. The study did not include qualitative information that might provide more insight into the culture of the school. This study used data from the NCTWCS. Only certain constructs from the NCTWCS were included in the study and compared with SCS constructs.

Summary

Every organization has its own culture. The Organizational Culture Theory seeks to define what culture is and how its members are affected by it. The culture of an organization is multi layered and complex; however, every organization has some similarities that define it and shape its identity. As schools try to meet the demands of high stakes testing, they have begun to look at their culture as a means of school improvement. Title I schools have a hard time meeting the proficiency requirement in

reading, math, and science. An examination of Title I school culture provided valuable information about the relationship between specific culture constructs and student achievement. This information, in turn, provided potential recommendations for focusing on specific culture constructs found to have the strongest relationships to achievement. Chapter 2 further defines the types of school culture that could exist and how North Carolina has assessed school culture by administering the NCTWCS biannually. The chapter also identifies school culture studies and their findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

In this chapter, literature related to school culture is reported. A cursory search of the literature on Title I K-8 schools showed literature related to improving student achievement, retaining teachers, and programs related to improving schools. Searches conducted used keywords such as Title I schools, school culture, theories related to culture, and student achievement. The literature was then organized into subheadings to address the current literature related to school climate and why studying one's culture provides more insight into an organization. A connection between school culture and how it can affect school improvement initiatives is shared to show its importance in schools. Finally, literature about how North Carolina measures and analyzes school culture is cited to show how this state defines it and uses it to govern schools. Literature reviews provide an opportunity to examine and analyze the research surrounding school culture and how it affects its members and student achievement. The literature showed the school's need to examine school culture as a means of school improvement as measured by student achievement on high stakes standardized tests.

Determining School Climate and School Culture

When researching, literature pertaining to school culture and school climate appears. The two terms can be used to describe and examine the dynamics of a school. Since the two terms have relatable characteristics, literature is presented to highlight the differences between them and why assessing school culture reveals a clearer picture.

The importance of examining a school's climate was first mentioned over 100 years ago, with the work of Author Cecil Perry (1908) entitled, *The Management of City Schools* (Cohen et al., 2009; National School Climate Center, 2007a). Perry's findings

were cited several times in literature because Perry explained the role and responsibilities of a principal of an elementary school. Perry briefly mentioned the role principals play in a school's climate. Even though he only mentioned the term school climate sparingly, Perry's work would lead educators to begin researching and studying school climate starting in the 1950s. His work continued to be cited by researchers studying school climate (Cohen et al., 2009; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011). Since the 1950s, "the development of scientifically sound school climate assessment tools spurred a research tradition that has grown to this day" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 181).

Researchers Hapin and Croft began "a tradition of systemically studying the impact of school climate on student learning and development by developing the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ), which describes the organizational personality of the school" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 183). The OCDQ was widely used for years to measure school climate.

Since the 1970s, the terms school climate and school culture have been used interchangeably in research (Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2011). The two terms do have some similarities in relation to understanding an organization; however, certain aspects between the two differ. One way to better understand school culture is to contrast it to school climate. Though both play important roles in schools, "a school's climate is both a window into its culture and a learned response that the culture teaches new members" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 10). Figure 3 provides some behavioral differences between school culture and school climate. While the two terms been used interchangeably in research and have similarities, each has their own set of distinct qualities that make them different.

Culture…	Climate…
… is a group's personality.	… is a group's attitude.
… certain days of week gives permission to be miserable such as Monday's	… differs from day to day, and month to month.
… a limited way of thinking.	… produces a state of mind.
… takes years to evolve.	… change is made easily.
… is based on values and beliefs.	… is based one's perception.
… is "the way things are done here."	… is "the way we feel around here."
… a key determinant in whether improvement is possible or not.	… when positive change occurs, it's the first thing that improves.

Figure 3. Climate and Culture Differences.

Figure 3 shows some of the main differences between school culture and school climate. The two terms are often cited in the literature. A school's culture develops over time, whereas a school's climate changes from day to day (adapted from Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 99).

The major differences between school culture and school climate are that a school's culture takes times to evolve and school climate reflects the school's current conditions. Perceptions of school climate and school culture originate from the staff of the school. The administration and teachers collectively contribute to the school's climate and culture. The school's morale is "the degree of happiness among school staff is particularly reflective of a school's culture and has a very strong effect on school climate" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 11).

Unfortunately, after decades of studying school climate, the research reveals that "there is not one universally agreed-upon definition of school climate" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 196). Various practitioners and researchers use a range of terms to define school climate, "such as atmosphere, feeling, setting or milieu of the school" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 196). The National School Climate Center's goal is to promote positive and sustained

school climate. The National School Climate Center (2007a) defined school climate as, "referring to the quality and character of school life" (p. 1). School climate can be viewed in two ways: as a construct representing everyone in a school or as a primary function of the teachers or the students. School leaders play an important role in setting the morale of the school and how they care for their staff. Depending on the leader, "the school climate will reflect a change in morale, which itself can only occur if the culture allows it" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 103). Perry (1908) wrote, "the success of a school will depend on in large measure upon the intimacy that is established between the principal and his teacher" (pp. 78-79). Teacher attitudes, "as they are reflected in school climate surveys, have been found to vary directly with academic achievement" (Morris, 2008, p. 1). If intimacy is not established, "the school will be well run, but it will surely lack the finer element which we call atmosphere" (Perry, 1908, p. 79). Morris (2008) added,

> a positive school climate promotes cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust. A school's climate is an indicator of the school's culture, which determines the attitudes and behavior of the instructional staff, which then affects the performance of the school's students. (p. 5)

Morris (2008) reiterated the need to "look more closely at what school climate represents, and it reflects a deeper underlying condition-school culture" (p. 5). School climate is multidimensional and can give insight into the organization and the people involved; but to further examine an organization, one must examine its culture.

Assessing School Culture

School culture and its importance were not recognized until the 1930s. To gain more insight into an organization, one must examine the school's culture because it can

offer more insight into the organization's beliefs. A school's climate can change from day to day, but a school's culture is developed over time. Defining school climate is unclear because of its multidimensional nature, but a school culture can be defined. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) defined school culture as the "social indoctrination of unwritten rules that people learn as they try to fit in a particular group" (p. 6). Culture provides a school its identity and image: its brand. School culture provides the school and its members with an identity. School culture defines what it means to be normal (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). The members learn the normal routines and rituals of the organization. Barth (2002) concluded that "the school culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, the way we do things around here" (p. 7). Culture is how the members of an organization act in situations and is influenced by their values and beliefs. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) wrote that "just about everything that goes on in a school is a function of the school's culture to some degree" (p. 27). A school's culture can become evident in how its teachers act during meetings and day-to -day proceedings. The culture can convey to its members what and who they ought to celebrate, ignore, or anticipate happening in the organization (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). A school's culture "might not be as evident to those members who have been in it for a while" (Barth, 2002, p. 8). These members might not see its culture as would someone who is new to it.

A change in climate can occur immediately; a change in culture is a slow evolution because it cannot be easily changed (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). To change a school's culture, one must destroy the old one because culture is rooted in the morale and values. Morale is defined as, "the degree of happiness among the school staff is particularly reflective of a school's culture and has a very strong effect on school climate" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 11).

Even new schools already have a cultural identity that comes from its members. Every member brings their own cultural beliefs which interact with other members' systems of belief. Veteran teachers bring some of their past school years' culture with them to a new school, and new beginning teachers bring the values they were taught in school. Because such a culture is fragmented, it is easier to shape it into something new (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Deciding to make cultural changes may take many years to do, because it means changing a school's culture to reflect those new beliefs.

Cultures are made up of building blocks that form all the elements that make life comfortable, predictable, and safe for us. At work, its members come to depend on the people around them as they fulfill their culturally assigned roles. The following elements are especially instructive when analyzing a school's culture: climate; mission and vision; language; humor; routines, rituals, and ceremonies; norms; roles; symbols; stories; heroes; values; and beliefs (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 28).

When changing a culture, addressing these 12 factors is a good place to start, because it reflects a change in the members' behaviors and attitudes. "Over time, if these changes are sustained, the new behaviors or attitudes will become part of the new culture" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 29). Addressing these 12 factors first could allow for cultural change to occur.

The culture of a school is represented in the school's written and unwritten mission and vision. Every school has both versions, and each version affects how the school and its members function. The purpose of a mission tells the staff and students why they are there and is reflected in their beliefs and behaviors. A school's vision is an idea of what it hopes to eventually become. A school has a culture, but not all schools have a shared vision. The culture tells us about the school in its current state and the

direction it is going. School leaders should have a clear vision in order for a change in culture to occur. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) wrote, "cultures do not lead; leaders lead" (p. 31). A vision works best when a school can build upon past successes rather than past failures. By recognizing the current culture, the staff might be more receptive to a change in the current one.

The third factor related to assessing a school culture is examining a school's language. Every school has its own language and humor, distinguishing insiders from outsiders in the culture. Each group of teachers has its own set of language and acronyms used to communicate. The language used and the jokes laughed at let others know that they have been accepted by the group and also mean they have been accepted in the culture.

Every school culture has its own set of routines, rituals, and ceremonies. The "routines are those things we do every day to ensure that the school is efficiently run, by contrast, the rituals are stylized public expressions of our values and beliefs" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 25). Regularly held events/ceremonies, "are simply glorified rituals" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 35). Routines can become rituals and rituals can become ceremonies, and how they change is up to its members.

The norms of a school are the "unwritten rules that maintain coherence within a group, and they often trump the written rules" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 35). New members can fit into an existing group by learning its norms. Norms reflect what the school values. Schools looking to improve must recognize that "norms can make or break new initiatives, new employees, or new leaders" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 35). Norms help its members know their role in the organization. The roles its members play in the organization keep its members from stepping out of their role. Cultures also

have certain symbols such as words, gestures, pictures, or objects that are only recognized by its members.

A culture has stories which they tell to transfer information from person to person. The stories are shared to support the culture's belief systems. After a period, the stories told might lose their truth. Leaders can share and create stories that could be used to "give life to a vision; others use them to share what has happened in the past and what they hope for in the future and are essentially the culture's handbook" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 38).

Cultures have heroes who possess certain characteristics that the organization members value. Heroes are the subject of the stories that the organization members should look to for appropriate behaviors in the culture. Cultures also have villains who are those who will do anything that "does not align with the values and beliefs of the organization" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 40). Cultures have values that the organization members believe in. Values are learned over time which lead to their systems of beliefs which are "learned responses to threats made on the institution that influence how people think" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 40). An organization's values are reflected in their behaviors. A change in behavior could contribute to a change in culture if it remains constant over a period. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) wrote, "many scholars of culture believe that attempting to change a culture is extremely difficult, if not impossible, and that leaders actually hope to change behaviors in the hope that this will help to shift the culture as well" (p. 41).

Types of School Cultures

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) categorized school cultures into six types.

School culture type 1: The collaborative school culture. This type of school

culture is ideal because the focus is on student learning. Teachers share, work collaboratively, and are committed. Teacher beliefs are reflected in student achievement. When issues arise, systems are put in place to handle and resolve them effectively. A collaborative culture, "feels a bit like family, although individuals may not always get along, they will support each other when push comes to shove" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 52).

School culture type 2: Comfortable-collaborative. The second type of culture is collaborative and involves how the staff gets along with each other to teach effectively. Teachers generally get along with each other and strive not to hurt someone's feelings. Teachers might be aware of what others are doing, but important conversations about teaching practices and student achievement are avoided. The motto for comfortable-collaborative could be, "we are all fighting the same battle, so we need to get along" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 53).

School culture type: 3: Contrived-collegial. In contrived-collegial, the leadership is driving school improvement. The principal could introduce new approaches but tries to speed up change too quickly without buy-in from staff. Understanding the cultural change takes time and forcing change might be viewed as micromanaging. Principals need to understand that change in culture involves a change in mindset (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 54).

School culture type 4: Balkanized. A balkanized school culture is driven by the school's subcultures or cliques. The members of these cliques are like-minded individuals whose actions influence others in support or failure of new initiatives. Teachers in these stronger groups could undermine principal initiatives and recruit others to follow suit, dividing the school community (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 56).

School culture type 5: Fragmented. Interdependence is the driving force in a fragmented school culture. Teachers in a fragmented school culture are frequently left to their own devices. Any help from an outsider, including the principal, might be viewed as a sign of weakness and could put themselves at risk for getting fired. A lack of collaboration about what is best for student achievement is prevalent. A mentality of "every-man-for-himself" would describe fragmented school culture (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 57).

School culture type 6: Toxic. Toxic school cultures should be avoided because the focus is on all the negative aspects of the school. Toxic cultures begin with the negative mindsets of a few teachers. Toxic school mindset might not be shared by all staff members and it might not affect the mood of the place (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 59).

Positive School Culture

Barth (2002) wrote,

a school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the president of the country, the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have. (p. 9)

Educators (teachers and staff) play a critical role in promoting a positive school culture.

All cultures are incredibly resistant to change and make school improvement from within and from without usually futile; unless teachers and administrators act to change the culture of a school, all innovations, high standards, and high stakes tests must fit in and around existing elements of culture. They will remain superficial window dressing, incapable of making much of a difference (Barth, 2002).

Investing their time and effort in creating an encouraging environment can be a proactive approach that will result in effective and positive outcomes for all (National School Climate Center, 2007a). Teachers affect school climate by the way they treat all students equally regardless of ethnicity, gender, and disability. Teachers set a high expectation for all students' academic achievement.

Teachers who work in schools with a positive climate have a high affiliation among them. This type of environment fosters an environment where teachers can be creative and innovative. Teachers who had a greater affiliation reported higher usage of supplementary programs and activities. Malloy and Acock (2014) stated

> that perhaps when teachers perceive their school environments as supportive of their involvement in decision-making, they are more comfortable making their own determination of whether and how much to implement a program that is being introduced into the school, thus, potentially lowering levels of implementation. (p. 8)

Malloy and Acock (2014) indicated that "obtaining teacher buy-in for specific programs is likely to influence implementation" (p. 9). Malloy and Acock stated that schools can "implement a good-quality improvement plan and knowledgeable, data-driven decision making, but if the staff doesn't believe that things can be improved, it's not going to implement (changes) with the same depth or energy or commitment" (p. 1).

In toxic cultures, "unfortunately, they encourage individuals to see failures as the inevitable results of circumstances outside of their control rather than as opportunities for improvement" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 21). Per Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), "educators in healthy school cultures understand the power of failure and will actively search for these opportunities even if it means confronting their own disappointments" (p.

21). It is the culture that determines whether failures will constitute steps forward or backward for staff. A negative culture reinforces the idea that any dysfunction the school faces is totally normal. The slightest suggestion "that things should change at all could be viewed as a sacrilegious attack on the school's value system" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 21). Changing a culture into something different is the same as destroying the old one (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Gruenert and Whitaker wrote, "school leaders who decide to implement cultural change should understand that the culture may take many years to reflect new beliefs that guide behaviors to the point where they are like second nature" (p. 16).

Understanding a school culture is an "essential prerequisite for any internal or external change agent" (Stoll, 1998, p.12). In addition, Stoll wrote,

any school improvement initiatives, particularly those introduced by national and other policymakers, tend to emphasize what are described as empirical-rational change strategies. Those are based on the fundamental assumption that schools are rational places and that people within them will adopt proposed changes if it has been shown that it will benefit them. (p. 12)

The leadership of a school plays an important role in creating and adopting school improvement practices. School leaders can help change the culture of a school by installing new values and beliefs. These values and beliefs may change the school's current ones. Leaders can reculture the school. Morgan (1997, cited by Stoll, 1998), defined reculturing as,

a challenge of transforming mindsets, visions, paradigms, images, metaphors, beliefs, and shared meanings that sustain existing . . . realities and creating a detailed language and code of behavior through which the desired new reality can

be lived daily. . . . It is about inventing what amounts to a new way of life. (p. 48)

Reculturing involves challenging the way things are done at the school to bring about significant changes in culture. Reculturing focuses improving the problem-solving capacities of those in the organization and is a key component of school improvement. Reculturing involves changing the structures currently in place and introducing new innovations to create continuous learning and improvement. Reculturing involves going beyond those who work in the organization. Reculturing needs to involve the students and the communities in which they live. Stoll (1998) wrote that changing culture "requires an understanding of and respect for the different meaning and interpretation people bring to educational initiatives, and work to develop shared meaning underpinned by norms that will promote sustainable school improvement" (p. 10).

North Carolina Policies on School Culture

North Carolina has two general statutes related to bullying and harassing behavior, § 115C-407.15 and § 115C-407.16. The only other North Carolina legislation related to school climate is General Statute § 115C-407.17, which pertains to the prevention of school violence. All three North Carolina general statutes (Appendix A) address protecting students and school employees from bullying and harassing behavior by either students or other personnel. Doll (2010) wrote, "when states exclude climate from their measures of school quality systems, schools are not required to demonstrate their competence with measuring and promoting positive school climate" (p. 13).

None of the current North Carolina legislation specifically addresses school culture. This gap in current legislation is especially problematic, because state policy has become increasingly influential in guiding school reform efforts. When schools fail to

show proficiency on state assessments, steps are taken for these schools to meet

proficiency. Often, the schools that fail to meet proficiency are those in low-economic

locations. Many schools in these areas are designated as Title I and receive funds to put

things in place in hopes that this will help them take steps to meet proficiency. Schools

that are under pressure to show proficiency relate to the culture of the school. The

culture of the school needs to be a consideration when improving schools. One tool that

North Carolina uses to make informed decisions about school improvement is the

NCTWCS.

NCTWCS

North Carolina administers the NCTWCS, an anonymous statewide survey of

licensed school-based educators to assess teaching conditions at the school, district, and

state level in Grades K-12. It is administered to public, charter, and alternative schools.

The survey was first administered in 2002 as the result of the work of Governor Mike

Easley and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission. The

popularity of North Carolina's survey format and the constructs it addresses has been

replicated and now 12 states and districts nationwide administer similar surveys to their

teachers and administrators (New Teacher Center, 2016a).

The online anonymous survey collects teacher, principal, and other licensed

educator perceptions related to school culture in the areas of student achievement and

teacher retention. The biannual NCTWCS results are used to inform policies and

practices around school reform. Since the first administration of the survey in 2002,

"research from NCTWCS and across the nation over the past decade has demonstrated

that the presence of positive working conditions has a significant effect on school-wide

student achievement" (New Teacher Center, 2016b, p. 1). The research has also shown

that "teachers are twice as likely to want to remain working in schools where there is an

atmosphere of trust and they feel supported by school leadership" (New Teacher Center,

2016a, p. 1). The TWCS measures eight constructs of culture that were noted by

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) in the SCS constructs. The NCTWCS addresses eight

constructs related to school culture. The validity of the NCTWCS has shown that it

measures the eight theoretical constructs it was intended to capture. The reliability

testing for the NCTWCS shows that the survey produces similar results with similar

populations. Table 1 shows the reliability by construct.

Table 1

Reliability by Construct

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Time	0.861
Facilities and Resources	0.876
Community Support and Involvement	0.893
Managing Student Conduct	0.903
Teacher Leadership	0.939
School Leadership	0.948
Professional Development	0.956
Instructional Practices and Support	0.910

Note. The TWCS produces Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.86 to 0.96. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.00, the greater the internal consistency of the items on the scale. Alpha coefficients above 0.70 are considered acceptable (New Teacher Center , 2016a, p. 7).

NCTWCS Constructs

Working Conditions standard 1: Time. Standard one addresses how schools

protect teachers' time to allow for collaboration and providing effective instruction.

Standard one measures the extent to which teachers have regular time to collaborate

among teachers and school leadership to plan and coordinate instruction.

Working Conditions standard 2: Facilities and resources. Standard two

probes to discover if these areas are available to meet the needs of teachers and students.

This standard asks questions related to physical environment and work spaces to determine if they are accessible in order improve teaching and learning for all.

Working Conditions standard 3: Community support and involvement. Standard three measures how stakeholders outside of school such as parents, guardians, and community members support the school. The standard measures parental and community involvement and support because of their influences in shaping the school environment.

Working Conditions standard 4: Managing student conduct. Standard four involves how schools address student conduct issues and ensure a safe environment. Standard four measures how effective the policies and procedures are and how well teachers implement and enforce them. Having policies and procedures in place to address student conduct issues can create and factor into a school having a positive culture (New Teacher Center, 2016b, p. 2).

Working Conditions standard 5: Teacher leadership. Standard five rates if teachers have opportunities to demonstrate leadership. The teacher leadership, "emerges from teachers' collaboration and decision making" (New Teacher Center, 2016b, p. 3). Also, this standard asks teachers to rate how or if any involvement occurs in the decision-making processes at the school. The standard probes to see if the decision-making processes are effective and allow for participation by all teachers.

Working Conditions standard 6: School leadership. Standard six refers to how clearly administrators articulate the vision for the school to teachers. School leadership and teachers work together to develop a vision for the school. The vision the leadership has for the school and its members drives the vision for the school. The leadership must create a trusting and open environment where teachers can contribute to the decision-

making process. Teachers must also work in an environment where they can communicate to leadership to their ideas and suggestions to improve teaching and learning. School leadership should also involve parents and the community in communicating the school's vision.

Working Conditions standard 7: Professional development. Standard seven measures the quality and availability of learning opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge of the areas they teach. Teachers should have consistent opportunities to learn and grow in their profession. The professional development provided is tied to the needs of teachers. The professional development should provide teachers with instructional practices that impact student learning.

Working Conditions standard 8: Instructional practices and support. Standard eight measures the data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning. Teachers use assessments, both formative and summative, to drive instruction to meet the needs of students. Teachers work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to collaborate and communicate on the best instructional practices.

The Working Condition standards address elements that are addressed when assessing culture per Gruenert and Whitaker (2015). Gruenert and Whitaker's (2015) elements addressed when measuring school culture are mission and vision, norms, values, beliefs, and roles. The specific constructs that align to both the NCTWCS and the SCS are addressed in the next chapter.

School Culture and School Improvement in Title I Schools

Title I, formerly known as Chapter 1, is part of the "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on

challenging Sate academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1). The original purpose of Tile 1 was to "provide additional resources to states and localities for remedial education for children in poverty" (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1). In 1994, "Tile 1 shifted the program's emphasis from remedial education to helping all disadvantaged children reach rigorous state academic standards expected of all children" (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1.). Reaching minimum proficiency on state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments can be accomplished by meeting 12 different areas (Appendix B).

Title I funds "can be used for instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and program improvement. In return, school districts and states must meet accountability requirements for raising student performance" (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1). In North Carolina, "this program provides financial assistance to SEAs to LEAs and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 1).

Individual public schools with poverty rates above 40% may use Title I funds, along with other Federal, State, and local funds, to operate a "school-wide program" to upgrade the instructional program for the whole school. Schools with poverty rates below 40 percent, or those choosing not to operate a school-wide program, offer a "targeted assistance program" in which the school identifies students who are failing, or most at-risk of failing, to meet the State's challenging performance standards, then designs, in consultation with parents, staff, and district staff, an instructional program to meet the needs of those students. Both schoolwide and targeted assistance programs must be based on effective means of

improving student achievement and include strategies to support parental

involvement. (Federal Programs, n.d., p. 1)

School Culture fits well into this policy-supported movement because culture is a

holistic concept; it can only be measured or changed from all angles and elements of a

school (Collaborative Cultures, n.d.). The sanctions and technical assistance associated

with NCLB apply to only the schools that receive Title I funds; therefore, the decisions

that states make regarding how to help failing schools improve affect the most in-need

students. These policy decisions provide opportunities for important issues like school

climate to become state-, district-, and school-level priorities in schools needing attention

(National School Climate Center, 2007b).

When states exclude school culture from their measures of school quality systems,

schools are not required to demonstrate their competence with measuring and promoting

positive school culture. Given the high stakes of schools not aligning their policies to

state frameworks, schools are unlikely to pursue school climate policies voluntarily

(National School Climate Center, 2007a). Schools, especially those receiving Title I

funds, are under tremendous pressure to abide by state and federal academic regulations.

It is therefore logical to consider school culture as an integral element of achievement and

part of the academic picture (National School Climate Center, 2007a).

Staff in low-income, low-performing, largely minority population schools provide

a setting in which program implementation may be particularly challenging (Malloy &

Acock, 2014). Per Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002), "it is generally conceded that

schools that function well are more likely to implement programs with fidelity and that

very disorganized or poorly functioning schools have difficulty implementing new

programs" (p. 15). Knowing the current strengths and needs of an organization prior to

selecting and attempting to implement an innovation is essential (Malloy & Acock, 2014).

School Culture Studies

Schools that have resolved to improve their culture have had success in other areas as well. Schools that received the National School of Character (NSOC) recognition believe "a true school of character has a school culture that requires the best students and teachers in both realms-doing one's best work and being one's best ethical self" (Character Education Partnership, 2010, p. 6). In 2010, Character Education Partnership conducted a study of 100 recipient schools over a 12-year period, and the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level on state tests rose significantly.

Winners of the U.S. Department of Education Model Professional Development Awards talked about how the Intermediate School in Arizona focused on cultural issues before addressing student learning. Their study revealed that "nothing was going to change in that school until they changed their cultures" (Collaborative Cultures, n.d., p. 27). Their process of change began by having each grade level discuss their frustrations.

A study of 3,100 schools from 1981 to 2006 using the School Culture Triage Survey found a connection between school culture and student achievement. Wagner (2006) revealed that "culture influences everything that happens in a school" (p. 41). The study conducted by Phillips (1993) also found a connection between school culture and staff satisfaction, parent involvement, and support from the community. Using the same survey, Melton-Shutt (2002) surveyed 66 elementary schools in Kentucky and used the survey to find a relationship between state assessment scores. The results revealed, "the higher the score on the survey, the higher the state assessment score, and the lower, the survey score, the lower the state assessment score" (Wagner, 2006, p. 42). A study of 61

schools in Florida provided results like the Melton-Shutt findings: "The higher the students scored on Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test in reading, the lower the survey score and the lower the reading scores the higher the survey score" (Wagner, 2006, p. 42). The four studies revealed that a positive school culture carries over to high student achievement scores, parent engagement, and community support.

Summary and Conclusions

School culture is often used synonymously with school climate; however, school culture is used to determine how a school runs. The climate of a school is easier to change because it can vary from day to day. The literature refers to school culture as the "way we do things around here" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 19). Every school has a culture whether it has been open only a year or many.

School culture has been considered as a way of improving schools in the last 40 years. Over this time span, results have shown the benefits of having a positive school culture. Results have shown that student achievement and morale among staff improve in a positive cultural environment. Every member of an organization brings or adds to the culture. There are several different types of school culture; but ideally, schools function best in a positive environment. North Carolina currently has no specific statutes related to school culture. The TWCS administered every 2 years does address many dimensions of school culture. Measuring a school culture and utilizing this analysis to prioritize needs could lead to improvements within the school.

School improvement is especially difficult for low-performing schools. Low-performing schools often are also low income and receive Title I funds meant for improvement. Title I monies fund programs to help students show proficiency on state assessments. When schools fail to meet proficiency, more money is used to fund

programs when the underlying cause of the success or failure of a school could lie in its culture. Several studies have surveyed schools to rate their culture. Those studies have shown that schools with positive culture had high student achievement scores; however, it is not known how measuring school culture in a low-performing school might give insight into areas to improve that will impact student achievement. A study of Title I school cultures could reveal solutions to improving them.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study examined the cultural constructs in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina and student achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant relationship between school culture and student achievement.

A quantitative study was developed to examine the relationship between school culture and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools. Included in this chapter are participants, instrumentation, research design and procedures, and data analysis. A quasi-experimental design was used because the study used preexisting data.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

1. What is the relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

2. What is the relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

3. What is the relationship between collegial support and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

   H_o: There is no relationship between collegial support and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

4. What is the relationship between professional development and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

$H_\circ$: There is no relationship between professional development and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

5. What is the relationship between learning partnership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina?

$H_\circ$: There is no relationship between learning partnership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

6. What is the relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in from four LEAs in North Carolina?

$H_\circ$: There is no relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title I K-8 from four LEAs in North Carolina.

Sample

This correlational study included preexisting data collected from Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs from the same region in North Carolina. This region of schools is made of 160 elementary and middle Title I K-8 schools. This region was included in this study because it has several Title I schools which would provide a large sampling. The LEAs included in this study ranged from very small with only a few Title I schools to very large school districts with several Title I schools included in them. The LEAs represented have economically challenged and diverse populations of residents. The LEAs include areas that are rural and urban, but all have a population of students who attend K-8 schools and receive Title I funds based on their economic status.

Instruments

The two instruments used for analysis were the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 North Carolina School Report Cards and items from the 2016 NCTWCS aligned to Gruenert and Valentine's (1998) SCS.

North Carolina School Report Card

Annually, student performance on state tests is made available to the public on the North Carolina School Report Card. The public can access the site to find out how all North Carolina school districts and individual schools performed on state assessments. The information made available on the School Report Card includes the school's profile, school performance on state assessments, information on the quality of teachers, and school safety reports that include the number of incidents that occurred during the school year. The information the researcher utilized focused on student performance on state assessments.

Specifically, the data included in the study were the student proficiency percentages on the EOG in reading, math, and science. The correlational study examined student performance on the reading comprehension EOG (Grades 3-5), math EOG (Grades 3-5), and science EOG (Grades 5 and 8). EOG data were used from the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years to align with the years covered by the 2016 NCTWCS, a biannual assessment. Based on student performance and schools meeting AYP, each school is given a letter grade ranging from A to F based on the school growth and achievement levels for the school year.

2016 NCTWCS

The NCTWCS is administered to licensed teachers biannually to provide information about working conditions and teacher retention. The NCTWCS is based on the New Teacher Center (2015) Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey. To access the survey, teachers are given a code to log in and answer several questions based on a 5-point Likert scale for multiple constructs. Once all scores have been entered, each construct has a percentage. The higher the percentage, the more

teachers agreed with the statement. A list of the constructs and their reliability is listed in

Table 2. Results from the NCTWCS are used by policymakers in North Carolina to make

informed decisions about improving working conditions for educators.

Table 2

NCTWCS Constructs Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Time	0.861
Facilities and Resources	0.876
Community Support and Involvement	0.893
Managing Student Conduct	0.903
Teacher Leadership	0.939
School Leadership	0.948
Professional Development	0.956
Instructional Practices and Support	0.910

Note. The reliability analyses for the NCTWCS produce Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.86 to 0.96. Alphas normally range between 0.00 and 1.00. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.00, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. Alpha coefficients above 0.70 are considered acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

SCS Constructs and NCTWCS Alignment

Using information from both surveys, the researcher created an alignment table to

show the correlation between the six SCS constructs and NCTWCS items. Candidates in

a doctoral program in a local university validated this alignment. All candidates had used

both instruments in their own research and work. Specifically, the candidates reviewed

the researcher's table and made suggestions about which NCTWCS items were best

suited in SCS constructs. Creating the alignment for each construct is detailed below.

SCS construct 1: Collaborative leadership alignment. The collaborative

leadership construct measures the degree to which school leaders establish and maintain

collaborative relationships with school staff. The rationale for including survey items

from the NCTWCS was that these survey items aligned with collaborative leadership

because they were related to the administration and leadership of the school. After

reviewing the NCTWCS items, five of them aligned with the collaborative leadership

construct.

Table 3

Collaborative Leadership Construct and NCTWCS Items

SCS Construct – Collaborative Leadership
Description: Collaborative Leadership measures the degree to which school leaders establish and maintain collaborative relationships with school staff. The leader's value teachers' ideas, seek input, engage staff in decision-making, and trust the professional judgment of the staff. Leaders support, and reward risk-taking and innovative ideas designed to improve education for the students. Leaders reinforce the sharing of ideas and effective practices among all staff.

Rationale	Items included in this construct because the items are related to the leadership of the school. NCTWCS items related to the administration and leadership of the school are included in this category.
TWCS Constructs	NCTWCS Items
School Leadership	a. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the school. c. The school leadership consistently supports teachers. e. The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.
Teacher Leadership	a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts. b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction

Note. Alignment table between SCS Collaborative Leadership construct and NCTWCS items.

SCS construct 2: Teacher collaboration. The teacher collaboration construct

measures the degree to which teachers engage in dialogue that helps to fulfill the vision

of the school. The rationale for including specific NCTWCS items is that these items

referred to teacher interaction with one another. After reviewing NCTWCS items, 11

aligned with teacher collaboration.

Table 4

Teacher Collaboration Construct and NCTWCS Items

SCS Construct – Teacher Collaboration
Description: Teacher Collaboration measures the degree to which teachers engage in constructive dialogue that furthers the educational vision of the school. Teachers across the school plan together, observe and discuss teaching practices, evaluate programs, and develop an awareness of the practices and programs of other teachers.

Rationale	Items included is this construct refer to teachers' engagement with one another.
TWCS Constructs	NCTWCS Items
Time	b. Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues
Teacher Leadership	a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts. b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction. c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues. d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles. f. In this school, we take steps to solve problems. g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.
Professional Development	j. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.
Instructional Practices and Support	g. Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how student work is assessed. h. Teachers know what students learn in each of their classes. i. Teachers have knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by others

Note. Alignment table between SCS Teacher Collaboration construct and NCTWCS items.

SCS construct 3: Collegial support. The collegial support construct measures

the degree to which teachers work together effectively. This construct asks teachers to

rate whether they trust each other, value other's ideas, and work with one another as they

accomplish the tasks of the school organization. The rationale for including specific

NCTWCS items is that they refer to the teachers and how they work together. There

were seven items from the NCTWCS that aligned with Collegial support.

Table 5

Collegial Support Construct and NCTWCS Items

SCS Construct – Collegial Support
Description: Collegial Support measures the degree to which teachers work together effectively. Teachers trust each other, value each other's ideas, and assist each other as they work to accomplish the tasks of the school organization.

Rationale	Items included in this construct refer to teachers and how they work together to share ideas.
TWCS Constructs	NCTWCS Items
School Leadership	b. Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them e. Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction. g. Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.
Instructional Practices and Support	d. Teachers believe almost every student has the potential to do well on assignments. g. Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction. i. Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy). j. Teachers use digital content and resources in their instruction.

Note. Alignment table between SCS Collegial Support construct and NCTWCS items.

SCS construct 4: Professional development alignment. The professional development construct items on the NCTWCS measure the degree to which teachers value the personal development and school-wide improvement offerings provided at their schools. The rationale for including 12 NCTWCS items is they all are related to professional development offered at the school level.

Table 6

Professional Development Construct and NCTWCS Items

SCS Construct – Professional Development
Description: Professional Development measures the degree to which teacher's value continuous personal development and school-wide improvement. Teachers seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, organizations, and other professional sources to maintain current knowledge, particularly current knowledge about instructional practices.

Rationale	Items included in this construct are about the professional development that is provided at the school.
TWCS Constructs	NCTWCS Items
Professional Development	a. Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school. b. An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development. c. Professional development offerings are data driven. e. Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge. f. Teachers have sufficient training to fully utilize instructional technology. g. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice. h. In this school, follow up is provided from professional development. i. Professional development is evaluated, and results are communicated to teachers. j. Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs. k. Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning. l. Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs. m. Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.

Note. Alignment table between SCS Professional Development construct and NCTWCS items.

SCS construct 5: Learning partnership. The fifth SCS construct included in

the alignment table is learning partnership. This construct measures the degree to which

all stakeholders (teachers, parents, and the community) work together for the common

good of the student. Learning partnerships involve communication between teachers and

parents sharing expectations regularly about student performance. Items from the

NCTWCS were included from both the community support and involvement and the

facilities and resources constructs. Together, there were 10 survey items included that

form these two NCTWCS constructs. Both constructs measure how schools work with

parents and other community members to support student learning. The rationale for

including NCTWCS items was because they referred to how the school, parents, and

community work together.

Table 7

Learning Partnership Construct and NCTWCS Items

SCS Construct – Learning Partnership	
Description: Learning Partnership measures the degree to which teachers, parents, community, and students work together for the common good of the student. Parents and teachers share common expectations and communicate frequently about student performance. Parents trust teachers and students generally accept responsibility for their schooling. Community members and parents trust and support teachers in the success of students	
Rationale	Items included in this construct refer to how the school, parents, and the community work together.
TWCS Constructs	NCTWCS Items
Community Support and Involvement	a. Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school. b. This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community. c. This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement. d. Teachers provide parent/guardians with useful information about student learning. e. Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school. f. Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students. g. Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students. h. The community we serve is support of this school
Facilities and Resources	c. Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, devices, printers, software and internet access. e. Teachers have sufficient assess to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens, etc.

Note. Alignment table between SCS Learning Partnership construct and NCTWCS items.

SCS construct 6: Unity of purpose. The sixth and final SCS construct included in the alignment table was unity of purpose which refers to the degree to which teachers work together towards the common mission of the school. Unity of purpose involves teachers understanding, supporting, and performing towards fulfilling this mission. There were four NCTWCS constructs included: managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support; for a total of 14 survey items. The rationale for including the NCTWCS items was because they refer to how teachers work towards fulfilling the common mission of the school.

Table 8

Unity of Purpose Construct and NCTWCS Items

SCS Construct – Unity of Purpose	
Description: Unity of Purpose measures the degree to which teachers work toward a common mission for the school. Teachers understand, support, and perform in accordance with that mission.	
Rationale	Items in this construct refer to how teachers work towards fulfilling the mission of the school.
TWCS Constructs	NCTWCS Items
Managing Student Conduct	c. Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by the faculty. d. School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct e. School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom. f. Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct. g. The faculty work in school environment that is safe.
Teacher Leadership	e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems. f. In this school, we take steps to solve problems
School Leadership	a. The faculty and staff have a shared vision. i. The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school. j. The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.
Professional Development	d. Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.
Instructional Practices and Support	e. Teachers believe what is taught makes a difference in students' lives. f. Teachers require students to work hard. h. Teachers know what students learn in each of their classes.

Note. Alignment table between SCS Unity of Purpose construct and NCTWCS items.

Data were collected and entered into an Excel document. An alignment table was

created from the data collected. The 160 Title I K-8 schools' responses to the 2016

NCTWCS items were collected. School responses to the survey items are measured as a

percentage. In total, 58 survey items and school responses to them were included in the alignment table. Once the table was created, the researcher sent the table to Gardner-Webb University doctoral candidates for validation. The students made suggestions about the TWCS items and their placement under the six SCS constructs. After the table was validated, the researcher used their suggestions to create the final SCS and NCTWCS alignment table.

Research Design and Procedures

A quantitative, correlational research design was chosen for this study because it showed the relationships among variables. The variables included in the study were student performance data on EOG tests and school average percentages to their responses on the 58 TWCS items aligned to the SCS constructs. A correlational design uses the "correlational statistic to describe and measure the degree or association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores" (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). The results determined if any relationship exists between school culture constructs and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools from four LEAs in North Carolina.

Determining the relationship between SCS constructs and NCTWCS items in Title I K-8 schools. The same procedure will be repeated for each of the six SCS constructs.

Compile data from the 2016 NCTWCS 58 items in Title I K-8 schools		Find the percentage average for the construct items		Based on the results, determine the relationship between each of the six SCS constructs and NCTWCS items in Title 1 K-8 schools.
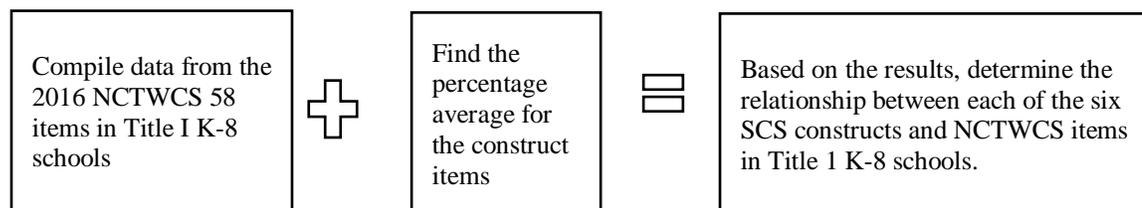
Determining the relationship between each SCS construct and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools.

Compare the schools' results from the t-Test analysis of SCS and NCTWCS items		Student achievement from Title I K-8 schools' results on the EOG in grades 3-8 from 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 as reported in the NC School Report Card		Analysis will determine the correlation between student achievement and School Culture Survey constructs in Title I K-8 schools
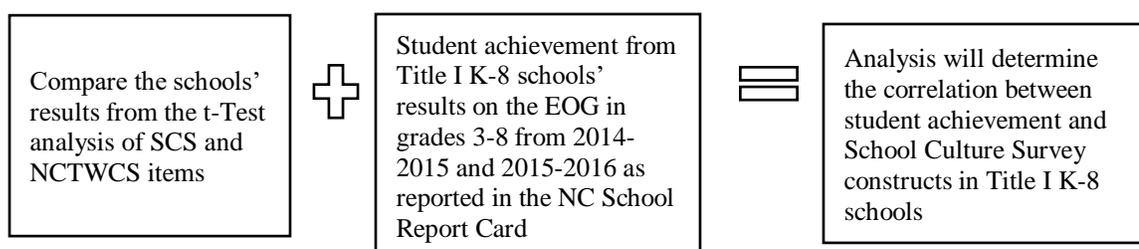
Figure 4. Research Procedures.

Note. Visual representation of determining the relationship between each SCS construct and NCTWCS items. A visual of student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina and its relationship to SCS constructs. The SPSS tool be applied to each of the six school culture constructs measured by the SCS.

Data Analysis

A quantitative analysis of the six SCS constructs and the 58 NCTWCS items was performed using a multilevel random intercept model to determine the relationships between culture and student achievement in Title I schools. A multilevel random intercept model was used for data analysis. Multilevel models are statistical models that are appropriate for data that are nested, which means the data for the participants are organized at more than one level. The data included in the research involved collecting data from Title I schools: both their student performance data which is Level 1 and their responses from the 2016 NCTWCS items which Level 2. Random intercept models can answer questions about the relationship between a group of explanatory variables.

Explanatory variables are components used to further explain the relationship between variables.

To conduct a multilevel random intercept model, the dataset for the sampling had to be compiled. The researcher prepared the NCTWCS data for the 160 Title I schools. The six SCS constructs (teacher collaboration, unity of purpose, collaborative leadership, professional development, managing student conduct, and learning partnership) were used to sort the NCTWCS items into one of the constructs. The 160 schools and their responses to the NCTWCS items were averaged.

Student achievement data were collected from the North Carolina School Report Card site. This resource reports student performance data for all public and charter schools. The data are disaggregated by county. The researcher downloaded the LEA data included in the study in an Excel document. Only Title I K-8 schools were included. An overall proficiency score for reading, math, and science for Grades 3-8 is reported in a separate category. An average of the proficiency scores for each grade and subject area was created. The state has the data already in this format, but the proficiency scores for each grade and subject area are available also. The researcher used an average of proficiency scores for the grades and subject areas.

A graduate assistant at the University of Florida in Research and Evaluation Methodology in the School of Human Development and Organizational Education assisted the researcher with utilizing the multilevel random intercept model for data analysis and interpretation.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school culture constructs and student achievement of Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina

using quantitative analysis. The correlational study included 160 Title I schools to determine differences in culture and student achievement on the EOG tests. The data from the sample were analyzed using a multilevel random intercept model, which is appropriate for determining the relationship among variables. Specific data related to the findings are reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find the relationship, if any, between student achievement on EOG assessments and specific school culture constructs in Title I K-8 schools. Presented in this chapter are results and statistical analyses of the data collected for the research study. The researcher aimed to answer six research questions and test null hypotheses for each of the SCS constructs. To answer the research questions and null hypotheses, the researcher conducted a quantitative analysis using a multilevel random intercept model. This type of analysis was chosen because it considers that the data were nested and clustered between student achievement and NCTWCS items.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings based on the statistical analysis of student achievement and school responses to NCTWCS items grouped by school culture construct. The information presented in this chapter gives details about each of the research questions and null hypotheses and the analysis of the data to answer the questions. Following findings for each of the research questions, the researcher provides an overall analysis of the study.

Description of the Sample

This study included preexisting data collected from 160 Title I K-8 public schools from four LEAs in the same region in North Carolina. The data collected were from the 2016 NCTWCS and the 2014-2015, 2015-2015 North Carolina Report Cards which report student performance on the North Carolina EOG assessments in English language arts, math, and science in Grades K-8. The schools' percentage proficient scores for each assessment were used. When a student achieves a level 3, 4, or 5, they are proficient on

those standards for that grade level. These four LEAs were chosen because there are several Title I schools both at the elementary and middle levels and they would provide a large sampling to determine if there was a relationship between school culture constructs and student achievement. Table 9 shows the number of elementary and middle schools that were included in the study.

Table 9

Participating LEAs K-8 Title I Schools

LEA	Title I Elementary Schools	Title I Middle Schools	Total Schools
1	25	9	34
2	15	6	21
3	15	9	24
4	60	21	81
Total	115	45	160

Note. The LEAs included in the study and the number of elementary and middle schools are represented.

The researcher proposed to include 16 LEAs with a total of 308 Title I K-8 middle and high schools. The number of schools included in the study changed because of data collection. The data from the NCTWCS was not disaggregated in a way to query for certain items. Data for each school had to be entered manually. The time this manual data entry would have taken was prohibitive for a single researcher. Instead, the researcher chose the LEAs with the highest number of Title I elementary and middle schools.

The student achievement scores were taken from the North Carolina Public Schools website from the Accountability Services Division section. The data results were downloaded for the 2014-2016 school years. The researcher filtered the results for the LEAs and Title I schools used in the study. An overall average proficient score for each of the 160 Title I schools was included in the equation to calculate the relationship between student achievement and school culture constructs. An overall proficiency score

is given for reading, math, and science. The state has the data already in this format, but the proficiency scores for each grade and subject areas are available also. The researcher used an average of proficiency scores for the grades and subject areas. Proficiency scores are reported as percentages. Proficiency is calculated as those students who scored a level 3, 4, or 5 on either the reading, math, and science EOG. A percent proficient score is given for the number of students in that grade level who achieved those levels. The percentage proficient scores were then averaged for each subject and used in the study.

Statistical Analysis

Table 10

SCS Constructs and Student Achievement Correlation

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	t value	Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)	-4.69	11.65	144.98	-0.40	0.69
Collaborative Leadership	-0.31	0.18	151.38	-1.77	0.08
Teacher Collaboration	0.30	0.33	152.67	0.89	0.38
Collegial Support	0.42	0.27	150.91	1.55	0.12
Professional Development	-0.61	0.15	152.73	-4.16	0.00
Learning Partnership	0.62	0.09	150.38	6.68	0.00
Unity of Purpose	0.20	0.17	150.38	1.22	0.22

Note. The table shows the SCS constructs and its correlation to student achievement. The Interclass Correlation (ICC) amongst the constructs was 0.21. The intercepts row shows how closely related the variables are to one another.

Table 10 shows the results of the data using a multilevel random intercept model. The data include the six SCS constructs and their correlation to student achievement. The estimate category is variance or a measure of how far a dataset is spread out from the mean. Variance factors into the standard error of deviation. The standard deviation is 11.65, and the numbers under that category refer to how close each SCS construct is to it. The p value or probability value tests if null hypothesis is true for each of the SCS constructs. A p value below 0.05 indicates significance and above 0.05 indicates no

significance. Analysis of the data for each research question follows.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1 asked, "What is the relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina?" The quantitative data associated with Research Question 1 examined five items from the NCTWCS and student performance on the EOGs from the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. The percentages ranged from 45.2% to 98.1%. The mean for collaborative leadership was 81.4%. The analysis showed that the correlation between collaborative leadership and student achievement was 0.08, which means there was not a significant correlation between collaborative leadership and student achievement. The standard error of deviation was .018.

The Null Hypothesis for Research Question 1 was, "There is no relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina." The data analysis showed there was no relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement.

Research Question 2 asked, "What is the relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina?" Analysis of the data included 11 items from the NCTWCS and student achievement data on the EOGs. The percentages ranged from 57.2% to 98.3%. The mean for teacher collaboration was 83.7%. The data analysis showed there was no significant correlation between teacher collaboration and student achievement. The p value was 0.38. The standard error of deviation was 0.33.

The Null Hypothesis for Research Question 2 was, "There is no relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region

in North Carolina." The null hypotheses for Research Question 2 was correct.

Research Question 3 asked, "What is the relationship between collegial support and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools a region in North Carolina?" Data from the NCTWCS examined seven items related to collegial support and student achievement data. The percentages ranged from 66.2% to 97.3%. The mean for collegial support was 86.3%. Data analysis showed that there was no significant correlation between collegial support and student achievement. The p value was 0.12, and the standard error of deviation was 0.27.

The Null Hypothesis for Research Question 3 was, "There is no relationship between collegial support and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina." The null hypothesis for Research Question 3 was correct.

Research Question 4 asked, "What is the relationship between professional development and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina?" Twelve items from the NCTWCS were used and correlated with student achievement data from the EOG. The percentages ranged from 55.7% to 97%. The mean for professional development was 79.2%. Data analysis showed that there was significant correlation between professional development and student achievement. The p value was 0.00, which means that there is a strong correlation between the two. The standard of deviation was 0.15.

The Null Hypothesis for Research Question 4 was, "There is no relationship between professional development and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina." The null hypothesis was incorrect for the relationship between the two.

Research Question 5 asked, "What is the relationship between learning

partnership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools a region in North Carolina?"
There were 10 items used from the TWCS and were correlated with student achievement data. The percentages ranged from 43.2% to 98.1%. The mean for learning partnership was 81.3%. Data analysis showed that a significant relationship existed between learning partnership and student achievement. The p value was 0.00.

The Null Hypothesis for Research Question 5 was, "There is no relationship between learning partnership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina." The data analysis showed that the null hypothesis for Research Question 5 was incorrect.

Research Question 6 asked, "What is the relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title 1 K-8 in a region in North Carolina?" There were 14 items used from the NCTWCS and correlated with student achievement data on the EOG. The percentages ranged from 48% to 98.3%. The mean for unity of purpose was 82.2%. The p value was 0.22, which means that there was not a significant relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement.

The Null Hypothesis for Research Question 6 was, "There is no relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title I K-8 in a region in North Carolina." The null hypothesis was correct.

Summary

Data analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the six SCS constructs and student achievement. The analysis showed that professional development and learning partnership had the highest relationship and effect on student achievement in 160 Title I K-8 schools. A significant relationship between the constructs and student achievement had a p value of 0.00. The other four constructs did not show a significant

relationship between them and student achievement.

Chapter 5 includes research around school culture constructs and student achievement recommendations for Title I schools.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine school culture constructs and their relationship to student achievement in Title I K-8 schools in a region in North Carolina. Previous school culture studies have been conducted and analyzed in elementary, middle, and high schools; however, insight into Title I schools has been under researched. Even fewer studies have examined Title I schools and the correlation that might exist to student achievement. The previous chapter discussed the quantitative analysis of the results after a multilevel random effect model was applied to the data to show if there was a significant relationship between school culture constructs and student achievement.

This chapter provides a summary of the quantitative findings related to the relationship between school culture constructs and student achievement, discussion of the results, limitations, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Much of the research behind culture in schools used in this study came from the work of Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) and their research on school culture. In their book, Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) defined school culture through six specific constructs. The culture of a school is defined as the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions. The culture of a school is influenced by the six school culture constructs: collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, collegial support, professional development, learning partnership, and unity of purpose. The Organizational Culture Theory was also applied to this study. Organizational Culture Theory can be applied to this study because the values and beliefs of a school come from its members (teachers)

and can affect the organization. An organization's culture can be defined as, "the way things are done around here" (Brown, 1998, p. 9). Organizational culture centers on a school's values and beliefs and how they shape its members. At the center of a culture are its values. The values of a school encompass any and every decision that is made within the organization.

This study aimed to examine the relationship between school culture constructs as defined by Gruenert and Valentine (1998) and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools. This was accomplished by aligning the NCTWCS to Gruenert and Valentine's SCS and using data related to the aligned 2016 NCTWCS items as well as student achievement data from the 2014-2016 EOG assessments in reading, math, and, science in Grades 3-8. The student achievement data were collected from four LEAs for a total of 160 Title I K-8 schools. The following research questions were examined, and their findings are presented.

The first research question asked, "what is the relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools four LEAs in North Carolina?" The results showed that collaborative leadership in Title I schools had little effect on student achievement. Collaborative leadership includes the school leaders creating and maintaining relationships with school staff. The leaders in the school value teacher input and include them in decision-making. In collaborative leadership, there is a sense of trust and teachers can use their professional judgment to make decisions in the best interest of students. The quantitative analysis revealed that the p value between collaborative leadership and student achievement was 0.08, which was the closest to being significant of the six constructs of school culture. Abelein (2013) wrote, "culture is all about the adults in the school building; culture and its correlation to academic excellence is about

the relationship between the principal (and other administrators) and teachers" (p. 75); therefore, the null hypothesis, "there is no relationship between collaborative leadership and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools," is accepted based on the results of the statistical analysis.

The second research question, "what is the relationship between teacher collaboration and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools," measured how teachers work together to fulfill the vision of the school. Effective teacher collaboration involves planning and sharing practices. In terms of its relationship to student achievement, the p value was 0.38. Research included in this study discusses how the members of the school play a significant role in school culture. A school's culture is shaped and influenced by its members. Its members have their own beliefs and values that contribute to the makeup of the school's culture.

The third research question asked what the relationship between collegial support and student achievement is. Collegial support involves how well teachers work effectively together. Teachers must have trust and value the ideas of others. Culture is shaped by the members of the organization; however, in terms of student achievement, with a p value of 0.12, collegial support was not significantly associated. The null hypothesis for the third research question, "there is no relationship between collegial support and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools," is accepted based on statistical analysis.

The statistical analysis did reveal two constructs that had a significant effect on student achievement in Title I K-8 schools, namely professional development and learning partnership. Both constructs had the same p value of 0.00, which means there is a significant relationship to student achievement. Professional development involves

seeking continuous personal development and school-wide improvement. The teachers

seek out opportunities for continuous growth and increase their current knowledge. In

North Carolina, when schools fail to meet proficiency standards, they often must

implement new initiatives and programs to raise achievement. Gottfredson and

Gottfredson (2002) wrote, "it is generally conceded that schools that function well are

likely to implement programs with fidelity and that very disorganized or poorly

functioning schools have difficulty implementing new programs" (p. 5). The culture of

the school must be one that is open and receptive to changes and work that must be done

to support student learning. The null hypothesis, "there is no relationship between

professional development and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools," is rejected

based on statistical analysis.

Learning partnership is a collaborative effort between teachers, parents,

community, and students working together for the common good of the student.

Common shared expectations are evident between parents and teachers and are

communicated frequently. Studies have revealed that a positive school culture carries

over to student high achievement scores, increased parent engagement, and community

support. The null hypothesis, "there is no relationship between learning partnership and

student achievement in Title I K-8 schools," is rejected based on statistical analysis. The

analysis showed a significant relationship between learning partnership and student

achievement. Learning partnership was one of two constructs that showed a relationship

between the two.

In reviewing the statistical analysis for the final research question examining the

relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title 1 K-8 schools, the

p value was 0.22. The unity of purpose construct measures the degree to which teachers

work together toward a common mission of the school. The relationship between it and student achievement was not significant. The null hypothesis, "there is no relationship between unity of purpose and student achievement in Title I K-8 schools," is accepted based on statistical analysis.

Limitations

A limitation related to study was only preexisting data from the NCTWCS and the North Carolina EOG assessment results from the four LEAs were used. By using only preexisting data to measure the relationship between school culture and student achievement, there might be other factors that influence it. School culture is multidimensional and its members play an important role in it. The statistical analysis results could further be strengthened by revealing other factors that can attribute to schools meeting or not meet proficiency on standardized assessments. The results revealed that certain school culture constructs, specifically professional development and learning partnerships, attributed to student achievement in the 160 Title I schools; however, other factors such as teacher retention and program initiatives also play a part in schools from year to year.

Delimitations

There were several limitations to this study, one of which was sample size. The study included 160 Title I schools from four LEAs. In Chapter 3, the researcher proposed using 360 Title I schools from 16 LEAs; however, when it came to data collection, the researcher chose to reduce the number of LEAs to only the four largest. By doing this, the sample size decreased to 160 Title I schools but was still large enough to answer the researcher's questions.

Implications for Practice

Following the findings of the study, the researcher has recommendations for Title I schools to improve professional development and learning partnerships. Implementing change can be difficult for Title I schools because of the requirement to show proficiency on state assessments. To help Title I schools meet this requirement, they receive federal funding to implement programs to raise student achievement. The researcher's findings revealed a significant relationship between two of the six SCS constructs: professional development and learning partnership; thus, recommendations for Title I schools in the areas of professional development and learning partnership may raise student achievement. The recommendations suggested are research based and can be implemented into existing school processes. This section concludes with a recommendation about how to build capacity in Title I schools to implement the needed changes to raise student achievement.

Professional Development

The professional development school culture construct measures the degree to which teachers seek continuous personal development and school-wide improvement initiatives. Through seminars, organizations, and other professional sources, teachers gain new skills and raise their knowledge about instructional practices. ESSA (n.d.), which replaced the NCLB legislation, set new standards and requirements for schools to show proficient command of CCSS. To help schools meet these requirements, Title II, Part A, Supporting Effective Instruction funds are available. Title II, Part A are grants used for "the development, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive programs and activities to address the learning needs of all students, including children with disabilities, English learners, and gifted and talented students through effective

instruction" (Title II Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction, n.d., p. 1). The funds can be used to support and implement activities to improve student achievement. These activities can include ongoing, targeted professional development to educators and school leaders. As part of the requirements of the ESSA, State Boards of Education (SBE) had to submit plans to the U.S. Department of Education about the activities and actions they would implement in order to be compliant with legislation. On September 7, 2017, the North Carolina SBE submitted its consolidated plan for implementing the requirements of ESSA beginning in the 2017-2018 school year. The plan includes a section about how the SBE will use the Title II, Part A grants for professional development. In the plan, North Carolina has adopted the Standards for Professional Learning developed by Learning Forward (n.d.). Learning Forward is an organization that helps schools plan, implement, and measure high-quality professional learning to impact student learning. Learning Forward focuses entirely on creating and developing resources and materials for professional development.

The Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, n.d.) were developed to guide professional development for educators and school leaders. Learning Forward (n.d.) uses the term professional learning instead of professional development in their resources. They use the term professional learning because educators must take an active role in their learning. The professional learning standards are evidence based and can be used to ensure effective professional learning for all educators. The standards are used to develop and plan meaningful professional learning to ensure success for all students.

Table 11

Seven Standards for Professional Learning

Standard	Description
Learning Communities	Learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment
Leadership	Skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning
Resources	Prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning
Data	A variety of sources are used and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning
Learning Designs	Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes
Implementation	Applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change
Outcomes	Outcomes align with educator performance and student curriculum standards

Note. Learning Forward (n.d.) developed these seven standards for professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students. When the standards are implemented fully, educators can develop professional learning to increase student achievement.

At the center of the professional learning standards are the educators. Learning Forward (n.d.) believes if you raise the understanding and knowledge of educators, effective change in student achievement will occur. Learning Forward views professional learning as a cycle where educators identify practices for improvement and are then allowed time to apply the new learning, and finally they can implement it in their teaching practices.

Since the needs of Title I schools vary, Learning Forward (n.d.) knows that professional learning is not the only answer to raising student achievement; however, the researcher's finding showed a significant correlation between professional development

and student achievement. Since North Carolina has adopted the Standards for

Professional Learning (Learning Forward, n.d.) on September 7, 2017, it is a

recommendation that North Carolina Title I K-8 schools consider likewise how to

incorporate them in their school improvement plans. A recommendation from Learning

Forward about school leaders and educators who develop and plan professional learning

is the need for them to become familiar with the standards.

For effective professional learning to occur, Standards for Professional Learning

(Learning Forward, n.d.) has four prerequisites.

1. Educators committed to all students is the foundation of effective professional

   learning. As professionals, they are committed to continuous improvement.

   They seek opportunities to deepen their knowledge, skills, and practices.

   They are aware of their skills and the need to keep them sharp and change

   with the times. Educators know that skills erode over time; and to make

   positive change, they need to seek out opportunities to increase skills and

   incorporate them into their classroom.

2. Educators involved in professional learning come to the sessions ready to

   learn. High quality professional learning is relevant and useful to participant

   needs. A higher level of engagement is reported when participants are

   receptive to what is being presented.

3. There are various levels of experience among educators. Harnessing the

   educators' level of expertise and allowing them to collaborate with one

   another can create positive attitudes towards professional learning.

4. Educators learn in various ways and at different rates. Professional learning

   must address these differences. Creating different learning experiences could

lead to educators seeking out other learning opportunities.

Incorporating the seven professional learning standards could lead to better planned and purposeful professional learning. Increasing teacher levels of knowledge has been shown to benefit students in the end (Learning Forward, n.d.). Teachers need time to incorporate the new learning into their instructional practices until they are comfortable. The Standards for Professional Learning is a valuable resource for Title I schools looking to improve professional development offerings to increase student achievement.

Learning Partnership

Learning partnership was the second school culture construct to show a significant relationship to student achievement. Learning partnership measures the degree to which teachers, parents, community, and students work together in the best interest of the student. Learning partnership involves teachers and parents sharing common expectations and communicating frequently about student performance. The members of the community and parents have a level of trust and support teachers for the overall success of the student. Student success is at the center of this construct. The passage of ESSA in 2015 has also affected how schools show their partnership between school and home. The language in ESSA has changed from calling it parent involvement to parent and family engagement. From here on, the researcher will refer to learning partnership as parent and family engagement.

Schools that receive Title I funds are required to implement programs, activities, and procedures to involve all parents and family members in Title I programs. Title I schools must

1. Hold an annual meeting in which all parents shall be invited and encouraged

to attend and inform parents of their school's participation in Title I and to

explain the program requirements and the right of the parents to be involved.

2. Offer additional meetings at convenient times with Title I funds,

transportation, childcare, or home visits, as such services relate to parental

involvement.

3. Review and offer improvement of the program in an organized, ongoing, and

timely way of Title I programs.

Parent and family involvement can be difficult in Title I schools. Some of the

common reasons for this difficulty include but are not limited to families holding

multiple jobs and having no time to participate, limited or no English, or unfavorable past

experiences in their interactions between teachers and school. The researcher offers

evidence-based suggestions for Title I schools to increase parent and family involvement

in the sections that follow.

North Carolina Public Schools Resource

One tool that is available to Title I schools to increase parent and community

partnerships is from the public schools of North Carolina. The *Parent and Family*

Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in North

Carolina Schools (Parents, Family and Community Information, n.d.) is a resource in the

form of a toolkit. The toolkit is a program describing a two-step process for improving

parent and family engagement. The toolkit uses a series of surveys to assess and evaluate

current practices and plan where the school wants to be. This two-step process involves

using the Family and Community Engagement in Schools (FACES) Assessment and the

FACES Action Plan and the School-Family-Community Resource Guide (these two

resources are used concurrently).

The FACES Assessment measures eight components of parent and family involvement: communication, advocacy and decision-making, community collaboration, parenting, student health, student learning, training, and volunteering. After each survey, a rubric is provided with a list of resources for each of the eight components. The resource guide provided in the toolkit offers a sample action plan with persons responsible for each area and the targeted audience. An action plan with the FACES Assessment is intended for use by school leaders, faculty, and relevant staff. The FACES Assessment concludes with the statement,

> ever increasingly, school leaders and educators are recognizing this reality: schooling requires a partnership between schools and their families and community members. It is unlikely that *sustained* student achievement will happen without it. Otherwise schools may continue to experience difficulty raising student achievement. (Parents, Family and Community Information, n.d., p. 5)

The goal after assessing and evaluating is to increase parent and family engagement so two groups can begin working together to raise student achievement.

SEDL

A second resource Title I schools can utilize to improve parent and family engagement is from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. In 2007, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory changed its name to just SEDL. SEDL is a nonprofit education research, development, and dissemination organization based in Austin, Texas. SEDL's mission is to strengthen the connections among research, policy, and practice to improve outcomes for all learners. SEDL created a resource in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education called *Partners in Education: A*

Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnership (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The document is not a blueprint but rather a framework for building capacity among schools and families. It lays out the goals and conditions necessary for parent and family involvement to flourish. The four components of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework include (a) The Challenge, (b) Opportunity Conditions, (c) Policy and Program Goals, and (d) Family and Staff Capacity Outcome**s.**

Challenges

A 2008 report by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education reported that "family engagement was the weakest area of compliance by states" (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 5). Educators have a desire to work with families to build a stronger relationship between school and home, but few know how to effectively do so. A disconnect is created between the two when done ineffectively. Some challenges include families facing difficulties in attending events or not knowing how to engage in productive partnerships with teachers. Both teachers and families have limited knowledge of how to have an effective partnership with one another. In schools, "a poor execution of family engagement initiatives and programs over the years" (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p.5) further adds to the challenges. Also, a lack of ongoing opportunities to build the partnership is another challenge mentioned. Once opportunities are created for effect and productive interactions, teachers and families can begin to create a partnership that supports student achievement.

Opportunity Conditions

Opportunity conditions is the second component to the Dual Capacity-Building Framework. The second component focuses on the many types of effective capacity-building opportunities schools can create. The favorable conditions to implement in the

second component are divided into two conditions: process conditions and organizational

conditions. Both must be considered when creating effective school-family partnership

opportunities.

Process conditions are key to effectively building the capacities for families and

teachers to support student achievement and school improvement. The initiatives created

to foster the opportunity conditions are

1. Linked to district and school achievement goals. Families are also aware of

   the teaching and learning goals for students.

2. Rational and built on respectful and trusting relationships between school and

   home.

3. Develop intellectual and social areas. The participants feel empowered and

   confident about transforming their school and neighborhood. Participants

   develop skills and share their learning with others.

4. Collective/collaborative to bring staff and families together to create learning

   environments that promote communication among teachers and families.

5. Interactive where families are presented with new skills and resources.

   Participants are given an opportunity to apply new skills.

Organizational conditions are those schools create to successfully implement and

sustain family engagement. The initiatives must be (a) systemic in nature and

purposefully designed to meet educational goals, (b) integrated as part of professional

development to build capacity for teachers and families, and (c) sustained with funding to

provide adequate resources.

Policies and Program Goals

The third component of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework is implementing

policy and program goals for effective parent and family engagement. Partnerships

between school and families can develop if only both have the capacity to engage

effectively. Schools need to focus on more than the families themselves. SEDL

recommends that schools and families be trained in how to build the capacity to engage

in the partnership. To build capacity, the framework created the 4Cs.

1. Capabilities: Schools and families need to build their knowledge base in order
   to have the skills needed to help their child.

2. Connections: Mutual trust and respect are needed to network together and
   keep lines of communication open.

3. Confidence: between teachers and families so they feel comfortable engaging
   in the activity.

4. Cognition: Families need to view themselves as equal partners in their child's
   education.

Staff and Family Partnership Outcomes

Once the 4Cs are established, the fourth and final component of the Dual

Capacity-Building Framework is the Staff and Family Partnership Outcomes. When this

final component is implemented, schools can begin to engage in partnerships that

increase student achievement.

SEDL knows that The Dual Capacity-Building Framework is not a one-size-fits-

all solution for building and increasing family partnerships. SEDL provides a framework

for schools to build sustained capacity in this area. The Framework reveals that "in order

for family-school partnerships to succeed, the adults responsible for children's education

must learn and grow, just as they support learning and growth among students" (Mapp &

Kuttner, 2013, p. 25).

National PTA Standards

One additional resource available to Title I schools to increase parent and family

engagement is to incorporate the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) standards.

Developed in 2007, the PTA National Standards (n.d.) for Family-School Partnerships is

a resource used to build school/family relationships to focus on student success. The six

standards are listed in Table 12.

Table 12

PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Standard	Description
1	Welcome All Families into the School Community-Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.
2	Communicate Effectively-Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.
3	Support Student Success-Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.
4	Speak Up for Every Child-Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.
5	Share Power-Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.
6	Collaborate with Community-Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Note. The National Standards were developed to meet the growing need for families and schools to work together for student success. The standards are meant to be implemented at the school level because that is where the school and community come together to create this partnership. (Title II Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction, n.d.)

Implementing the National Standards

The National PTA provides an implementation guide including a six-step process for incorporating the standards into existing PTAs or for schools without PTAs so they can be used to encourage families and schools to partner together. The implementation process begins with assessing the school's level of family engagement. The resource suggests creating a team to create an action plan to tackle areas of growth. This resource provides a list of action steps and resources for every step of the implementation process. Title I schools will find this to be an easy resource to use to evaluate and grow their current family-school partnerships.

Building Capacity to Improve School Culture

Changing a school's culture from where it is to where you want it to be is not an easy process. The process of changing one's culture does not happen overnight because it is embedded in its members, and every aspect of the school is a result of it. A school's culture develops over time and factors, both externally and internally, play an important role. Two resources available for schools to move their culture from where it is to where they want it to be are Gruenert and Whitaker's (2017) *School Culture Recharged, Strategies to Energize Your Staff and Culture* and Muhammad's (2009) *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*; both focus on the culture you currently have and its members and how to harness it to move a school towards the culture you want. Both resources understand that for a culture to transform, it begins with the individuals who contribute to a productive one or a toxic one. When considering implementing strategies for improving professional development and learning partnerships, two texts provide information in these areas.

School Culture Recharged **Recommendations**

The purpose of *School Culture Recharged* (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017) is to help schools use the culture they currently have and the people to bring about change. Gruenert and Whitaker (2017) recognized that changing a culture "starts with strong leadership, but the movement cannot happen without a supporting cast" (p. 11). The leader plays a major role in shaping and changing culture. The leader establishes the norms of a culture. A school leader "must assume that the people who work at the school will do the right thing with students even when no one is looking" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017, p. 47).

One suggested activity for changing a culture is an activity called Leadership by the Numbers (LBN). This activity is intended to help people understand leadership by using mathematics. LBN provides a way to discuss, compare, and contrast events and how they influence leadership. To change a culture or part of a culture, an event needs to occur. Gruenert and Whitaker (2017) stated that "cultures are changed by events, not attitudes" (p. 48). The event to help change a culture can be a significant one that might last weeks or months or a low impact event with a shorter time frame. The impact of the event is rated on a scale from 1 to 20, with 20 being the strongest. If the magnitude of a new event is weak, the culture persists. If the magnitude of a new event persists, the culture changes.

Both the current culture and the next culture exist on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the strongest. Those involved in this activity rank the event between the current culture and the next culture. The team would need to continue to monitor the event(s) to gauge if their culture is moving towards the next culture.

Transforming School Culture

No culture can change without addressing the members making it up. Muhammad's (2009) work focused on the role PLCs play in school improvement. Muhammad addressed the resistance leaders can face when bringing about cultural changes.

Muhammad (2009) suggested educators and their goals fall into four categories as seen in Table 13.

Table 13

The Four Types of Educators and Their Goals

Educator Classification	Organizational Goal
Believer	Academic success for each student
Tweener	Organizational stability
Survivor	Emotional and mental survival
Fundamentalist	Maintaining the status quo

Note. Each type of educator has their own way of behaving and interaction with the school, students, and one another to create a divided school culture (Muhammad, 2009).

Transforming School Culture helps leaders "understand why school have such a difficult time changing when members of the culture cannot accept new paradigms that do not mesh with the traditional operation of schools" (Muhammad, 2009, p. 99). Schools wanting to improve in this area have three areas of action:

1. Developing a systematic and school-wide focus on learning.

2. Celebrating the success of all stakeholders.

3. Creating systems of support for Tweeners.

Systematic and School-wide Focus on Learning

Creating lasting and sustained changes to school culture that focuses on student learning begins with the "school leader demanding that the organization focus on student

learning. Leaders who are highly effective are skilled at focusing the entire organization on this purpose" (Muhammad, 2009, p. 100). Shifting school focus on student achievement begins with having a clear vision. A school's vision is developed by the leadership and is fulfilled by its members. Muhammad (2009) provided some strategies for developing a clear vision that has input from every type of educator. This activity is conducted whole group. The steps for creating a consensus about the schools' vision are

1. State the purpose of the activity.

2. Share current student performance and demographic data.

3. Divide the staff into discussion groups with a set of questions to consider. Be sure to mention eliminating "I think, I feel, and I believe" from the discussion.

The rich discussion should lead the staff to a consensus about the school's vision. Its members should take ownership of the new vision because they were involved in the process. A school should then examine polices and eliminate those not aligned with the new vision.

Celebrating the Success of All Stakeholders

Celebrating school staff is another activity schools can use to help its members move towards the culture they want. Celebrating learning signals what the school values about learning. In Chapter 2, the research of Hofstede (1991), Johnson and Scholes (1998), Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), were noted because they discussed the importance of rituals and ceremonies in organizations and how they shape culture. Celebrating success moves the staff from focusing only on the negative. This activity also builds collaboration among the staff. Every type of educator can benefit from celebrating the positive and move them towards a culture that is focus on celebrating student achievement.

Support for Tweeners

Muhammad (2009) referred to a group of educators as Tweeners. Tweeners are those whose views are in the middle between believers and fundamentalists about issues related to the school and its culture. These educators might be new teachers to education or the school. They are trying to find their role and they can contribute to the school. They can lean more towards the believers or the other way towards the fundamentalists. Identifying and supporting these teachers is crucial if you want to move your school's culture. One way to support this group could be through effective mentoring. Traditional mentoring is usually paring a newcomer with a veteran teacher. Muhammad suggested forming a new teacher committee made up of various believers. Each member of the committee is chosen for a specific purpose in the newcomer's development. Adopting a mentoring approach like this one could lead to higher retention rates among the new staff members.

Summary

Suggestions for improving professional development and learning partnership in Title I schools were presented. Research-based strategies were presented because they have shown to impact student achievement positively. The passage of the 2015 ESSA impacted professional development. The new legislation required states to submit how they are going to meet these new requirements. In response, North Carolina submitted its plan in 2017 in which they adopted the Standards for Professional Learning created by Learning Forward (n.d.). Adopting the professional standards have shown to raise the level of knowledge of educators and have a positive impact on student achievement.

Learning partnership goal is to bridge the gap between school and home.

Three recommendations were presented and have shown to impact both educators and

families. All the recommendations focus on the student first and involve all stakeholders working together for student success. Improving professional development and learning partnership cannot happen without considering the current culture of the school and its members. Two references, *School Culture Recharged* (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017) and *Transforming School Culture* (Muhammad, 2009), provided strategies for utilizing the culture you have and its members to effect change to increase student achievement in Title I schools.

Suggestions for Future Research

The results of the study have revealed several implications for future research. This section entails recommendations for research in the following areas: (a) broadening sample to include more Title I schools; (b) conduct a study to see if non-Title I schools will have the same constructs that relate to student achievement, and (c) conduct a study to evaluate professional development and learning partnership in Title I schools.

The study examined school culture and its correlation to student achievement in four LEAs for a total of 160 schools. The researcher suggests conducting a study where all Title I K-8 schools in North Carolina are included. By including more schools in the study, the results from this study can be compared to determine which constructs have significant impact on student achievement. Also, a study could examine Title I schools by regions or districts. By disaggregating the data by regions and districts, the results could be used for comparison purposes to find out which constructs impacted school culture the greatest.

A second recommendation for future research would be to conduct a study that compared Title I and non-Title I schools in regions and districts. The researcher's study only included sampling from Title I schools. Including non-Title I schools in a study

would create comparison opportunities between Title I and non-Title I K-8 schools. The comparisons could give insight into which constructs are the same or different in their correlation to student achievement.

A third recommendation would be to analyze the constructs that had the most significant relationship between school culture constructs and student achievement for schools who want to use it for school improvement purposes. The two constructs, professional development and learning partnership, revealed these two had a significant correlation to student achievement. The researcher would recommend a mixed-methods examination of issues related to professional development and learning partnership in Title I schools.

Studies have shown that professional development is most helpful when it is embedded, ongoing, and linked to data. Title I schools could evaluate professional development offered and determine its effectiveness. Data collected could be used to create a professional development plan for school improvement to increase teacher levels of knowledge and raise student achievement.

The second construct to examine in Title I schools is learning partnership and its relationship between teachers, parents, the community, and students. Title I schools have a daunting task of meeting proficiency standards each year. Oftentimes, this work is taken on at the school level between leadership and teachers. Title I schools need to find ways to increase the relationship between parents and the community.

A fourth recommendation for future research involves analyzing exemplary Title I schools to non-exemplary Title I schools to reveal which SCS constructs trend the same way. The National Title I Distinguished Schools program identifies and recognizes Title I schools which meet high standards and demonstrate school effectiveness in six

categories:

- Teaching and learning based on the state curriculum.

- Use of research-based instructional strategies.

- Providing opportunities for all students to achieve.

- Creating partnerships with parents, families, and the community.

- Implementing research-based professional development.

- Innovation and modeling for other schools.

Since 1996, North Carolina has recognized Title I schools that demonstrate effectiveness in the six categories. Schools designated this honor show at least 80% proficiency in reading and math and making AYP for 2 years. These schools also are recognized for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.

By gathering and analyzing Title I distinguished schools, NCTWCS results, and student achievement data, it would identify which SCS constructs had the greatest effect on student achievement. The data can then be analyzed against Title I schools not designated as distinguished.

A final recommendation involves conducting a qualitative study related to understanding professional development and learning partnership in Title I K-8 schools. A quantitative study of Title I schools revealed those two constructs had the greatest effect on student achievement. A quantitative study only reveals part of the reasons why professional development and learning partnership influence student achievement.

A qualitative study would provide an opportunity to have input from teachers about quality and effectiveness of professional development offerings at their school. Title I schools could focus on planning professional development that meets the needs of

the school and the teachers.

In terms of learning partnership, a qualitative study would provide information about the families and the communities the Title I schools serve. Title I schools have a great deal of obstacles in their way that can affect student achievement. Involving families and communities in their efforts to meet state standards in reading, math, and science could be the key to Title I schools moving in the right direction. Evaluating the partnership between schools and communities could reveal areas of growth.

Conclusion

Title I schools have an arduous task of showing proficiency on standardized assessments. These schools serve students with the greatest needs in some of the most economically challenged neighborhoods. Title I schools could consider school improvement that involved examining the culture of their school to determine areas of improvement to raise student achievement.

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Appendix A

North Carolina General Statutes

§ 115C-407.15. Bullying and harassing behavior.
Article 29C.
School Violence Prevention.
 (a)   As used in this Article, "bullying or harassing behavior" is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, and that:
(1)   Places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or
(2)   Creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits. For purposes of this section, "hostile environment" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.
Bullying or harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to, acts reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.
(b)   No student or school employee shall be subjected to bullying or harassing behavior by school employees or students.
(c)   No person shall engage in any act of reprisal or retaliation against a victim, witness, or a person with reliable information about an act of bullying or harassing behavior.
(d)   A school employee who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student or school employee has been subject to any act of bullying or harassing behavior shall report the incident to the appropriate school official.
(e)   A student or volunteer who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student or school employee has been subject to any act of bullying or harassing behavior should report the incident to the appropriate school official. (2009-212, s. 1; 2009-570, s. 39.)

§ 115C-407.16. Policy against bullying or harassing behavior.
(a)   Before December 31, 2009, each local school administrative unit shall adopt a policy prohibiting bullying or harassing behavior.
(b)   The policy shall contain, at a minimum, the following components:
(1)   A statement prohibiting bullying or harassing behavior.
(2)   A definition of bullying or harassing behavior no less inclusive than that set forth in this Article.
(3)   A description of the type of behavior expected for each student and school employee.

(4)   Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who commits an act of bullying or harassment.

(5)   A procedure for reporting an act of bullying or harassment, including a provision that permits a person to report such an act anonymously. This shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

(6)   A procedure for prompt investigation of reports of serious violations and complaints of any act of bullying or harassment, identifying either the principal or the principal's designee as the person responsible for the investigation.

(7)   A statement that prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying or harassment, and the consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation.

(8)   A statement of how the policy is to be disseminated and publicized, including notice that the policy applies to participation in school-sponsored functions.

(c)   Nothing in this Article shall prohibit a local school administrative unit from adopting a policy that includes components beyond the minimum components provided in this section or that is more inclusive than the requirements of this Article.

(d)   At the beginning of each school year, the principal shall provide the local school administrative unit's policy prohibiting bullying and harassing behavior, including cyber-bullying, to staff, students, and parents as defined in G.S. 115C-390.1(b)(8). Notice of the local policy shall appear in any school unit publication that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools within the school unit and in any student and school employee handbook.

(e)   Information regarding the local policy against bullying or harassing behavior shall be incorporated into a school's employee training program.

(f)   To the extent funds are appropriated for these purposes, a local school administrative unit shall, by March 1, 2010, provide training on the local policy to school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students. (2009-212, s. 1; 2009-570, s. 39; 2014-100, s. 8.32(a).)

§ 115C-407.17. Prevention of school violence.

Schools shall develop and implement methods and strategies for promoting school environments that are free of bullying or harassing behavior. (2009-212, s. 1; 2009-570, s. 39.)

Appendix B

School Culture Survey Constructs

School Culture Survey
Factor Definitions with Items Grouped by Factors

Collaborative Leadership: the degree to which school leaders establish and maintain collaborative relationships with school staff.

   2. Leaders value teachers' ideas.
   7. Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.
11. Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.
14. Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.
18. Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.
20. Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.
22. My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.
26. Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.
28. Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.
32. Administrators protect instruction and planning time.
34. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.

Teacher Collaboration: the degree to which teachers engage in constructive dialogue that furthers the educational vision of the school.

   3. Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects.
   8. Teachers spend considerable time planning together.
15. Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.
23. Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.
29. Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.
33. Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.

Professional Development: the degree to which teacher's value continuous personal development and school-wide improvement.

   1. Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.
   9. Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.
16. Professional development is valued by the faculty.
24. Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.
30. The faculty values school improvement.

<u>Unity of Purpose</u>: the degree to which teachers work toward a common mission for the school.

    5. Teachers support the mission of the school.
  12. The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.
  19. Teachers understand the mission of the school.
  27. The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.
  31. Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.

<u>Collegial Support</u>: the degree to which teachers work together effectively.

    4. Teachers trust each other.
  10. Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.
  17. Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.
  25. Teachers work cooperatively in groups.

<u>Learning Partnership</u>: the degree to which teachers, parents, and the students work together for the common good of the student.

    6. Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.
  13. Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.
  21. Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.
  35. Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example they engage mentally in class and complete homework assignments.