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AN EVALUATION OF SCHOOL CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT

Jeremy D. Johns-Klein

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

March 2020

An Evaluation of School Culture and its Impact on Student Achievement

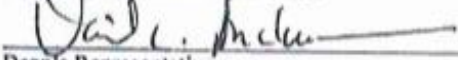
Submitted in partial fulfillment
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Doctor of Education
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Jeremy D. Johns-Klein
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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12-21-19
Date Approved

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This document was created for the dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement a major project within their school or district that relates to professional practice. The three foci of the project are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership
- Policy Advocacy

For the **Program Evaluation** focus, candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership** focus, candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy** focus, candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine if a school's culture impacts student academic achievement due to initial low attainment on state assessments and low graduation rates. The data collected provides both quantitative and qualitative information using a teacher survey, a teacher focus group, administrator interviews, and school achievement data. The results of the study indicate a need for stronger trust between teachers and administrators, increased professional development to support teaching and learning, and improved partnerships with the parents/guardians of the students. An additional result is that the school's culture for learning can impact the achievement levels of the students.

PREFACE

My educational background extends 16 years in the profession. I started my career as an elementary music specialist. Following this position, I was a high school band director for 8 years. During this teaching tenure, I began additional work as a professional development master trainer for the school district. I taught courses on how to incorporate curriculum in instruction, how to teach like a champion, and how to incorporate discipline in the secondary classroom. Following my years in the classroom, I held positions as an Assistant Principal for Student Affairs and Supervisor of Charter Schools, and have been an Assistant Principal for Curriculum for the past 5 years at two different high schools. Upon entering my current position, there was a need to initiate an examination on how the school's culture impacts student achievement, especially since the school was in the school district's turnaround status 3 years ago. As the person who oversees academic achievement, my role in the oversight of this study was not only crucial but was paramount in examining the current state of my school. The examination of the school's culture for learning was important to me as it would provide the information needed to enact organizational change to safeguard student learning. This study was also important to the school's stakeholders as it provided an opportunity for them (teachers and administrators) to share their perspective on the culture at school as well as to provide insight on what was and what wasn't working well.

The leadership lessons learned from this study evaluation have been resoundingly beneficial to my role as a school-based administrator. Throughout this process, I have learned that value of research design and the importance of acquiring information from multiple stakeholders to gain insight from their perceptions on the happenings on the school campus. Providing the opportunity for teacher voice also affirmed the importance of collaboration for the betterment of teaching and learning.

The experience taken from this study has made me a stronger scholar, a better educator, and more equipped instructional leader and administrator. Because of this, I solidify my mission that as educators, our purpose is to educate to the core of every student, providing them the access, the tools, and the means to learn to the highest level. As an instructional leader, I know now, even more than before, that an inspection of a need on campus can lead to organizational change that will have positive dividends on the school's community.

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I would like to acknowledge and thank the educators at ABC123 high school for dedicating tireless hours to educating the many students that walk the hallways each day. Thank you for educating to the core of who they are to help them become who they want to be. Moreover, thank you for the role you played in this research study.

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Thank you to Dr. Susan Moxley for the continuous encouraging words that allowed me to reflect and look through different lenses to not only better myself as a doctoral student, but as a school administrator as well. I am beyond grateful that you were my chair on this journey.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends who helped to make this study and doctorate a dream come true.

A special thank you filled with gratitude to my parents, Peter and Rose Klein, for the everlasting support and excitement over the years. Your encouraging words helped to keep me on track, even with my procrastination ways.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As school-based administrators, one of our primary roles is to lead and navigate our ship (school community) on the best course of action for optimal student achievement. As we traverse our school, the culture (way of work) and climate (pulse) of the school community can make an impact, both positive and negative, on the success of all stakeholders. With this, “a school’s culture is characterized by deeply rooted traditions, values, and beliefs, some of which are common across schools and some of which are unique and embedded in a particular school’s history and location” (Kruse and Louis, 2009, p. 3). If the aforementioned are not unified, then the moving of a school forward will be a tough journey, especially if the culture and the climate changes.

Every year, members of the school community (students, faculty and staff, and parents/guardians) complete surveys providing perspective on elements such as communication, safety, support, and student achievement. These surveys yield valuable information for the administration and school district to gain a perceptual understanding of how stakeholders feel and value the school, as well as how they feel they are valued. To personify this, “if culture is a school’s personality, climate is its attitude” (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 11). Moreover, the culture of a school may be felt and viewed through different lenses, causing a perspective shift where the perspective of the school’s culture is that stakeholder’s reality.

The abovementioned also lends itself as a barometer of the mission of a school. As the Assistant Principal for Curriculum at ABC123 high school, this is especially important to me. Since our mission states that ABC123 high school will provide the

educational services, support, and caring environment needed to enable every student to become a productive citizen, having survey results that encompass these components allows me to reflect, reorganize, and enact as needed. If our educational environment is not beneficial to the learning that prepares students to become productive citizens, then we must reexamine our course of action; a course that serves a diverse group of students from all walks of life. Although the achievement levels of our students may vary, ABC123 high school works hard to provide all students with the tools, skills, resources, and learning opportunities necessary for a successful and productive life.

Problem Context

Student achievement should be the forefront focus of any school community. With this, however, achievement could be affected by the culture within a school. If the culture is not favorable to learning, then the achievement level of the students may falter. Other elements (possible side-effects) of poor culture across a school community could translate to unhappy teachers, behavioral problems among students, unmotivated students, disenfranchised parents/guardians, and less students ultimately graduating due to a lack of support on campus. Although there is not a program for culture, there is professional development that could aid in ensuring that the culture within a school is at the optimal level to support all stakeholders across the educational endeavor. Along with this, there are courses on how to develop teams, how to have fierce conversations, how to build trust and support, as well as how to provide and receive feedback, all of which are needed to have great a culture in a school. Putting this into context, if members that lead the school community are not armed with the resources to do such, then peak climate and culture that embraces student success will not come to fruition.

Two years ago, ABC123 high school was only graduating 75% of its students, which puts the problem context into perspective. In addition to the low graduation rate, only 23% of students were passing the English Language Arts Florida Standards Assessment (ELA FSA) during the 10th grade assessment year. Along with this, a new principal and I as the new Assistant Principal for Curriculum were appointed to the school. The shift in the administrative team was put in place to positively impact the school culture, with the intent to increase student academic achievement. This, in conjunction with professional development, allowed the school to move forward in an affirmative manner to optimize student academic achievement. By optimizing student achievement, more students passed the ELA FSA on the first try and more students graduated high school, thus developing more contributing citizens to the community.

Problem Statement

The culture, especially the culture for teaching and learning, of a school needs to be great for the learning environment in order to safeguard student achievement. Unfortunately, ABC123's school culture had not been at an optimal level as the school was in the district's turnaround status, meaning there was low achievement on state assessments as well as low rates for the number of students graduating from the school. In addition to this, there was not a comprehensive focus on teaching and learning, which created the need to turn the school around. This being the case, there was an immediate need to enhance the support for teaching to increase student learning. Support in lesson planning, especially with focus on student engagement and assessment, as well as heightened practices to reach and teach all students was a primary focus. Moreover, with these teaching and learning practices, consistent observation and classroom walkthrough

feedback in addition to instructional coaching cycles were critical elements needed for teacher support. With the implementation of professional development about and on the importance of the lesson planning process, teachers began to acknowledge that lesson plans are in place to provide sound instruction to all students.

As the aforesaid outlines, the problem at ABC123 high school was a combination of students not performing well on state assessments, only 75% of the students graduating with a high school diploma, the school's status of turnaround, and a boosted need to support teachers in the instructional process to ultimately support all students in the learning process. As the third Assistant Principal for Curriculum in the past three years and the Principal being the third in the past four, there was a great need to build trust and confidence with the faculty and staff. Although there is continued work to be done, once trust, confidence, and understanding were established, the school's culture, especially with the culture for learning, became more intact, safeguarding a positive impact on the school's community. As Muhammad notes, "a leader who understands how to cultivate this type of culture will place the school clearly on a path to improvement and sustainable growth" (Muhammad, 2009, p. 25). The path to improvement is a clear indication on how a school's culture is related to student learning. In the case for ABC123 high school, the relationship between the culture (for learning) and the increase in school grade points and graduation rate were paramount. The more confidence the teachers had in their delivery of instruction, the more confidence the students had in learning. Thus, creating more trust from all stakeholders in respect to the educational endeavor ABC123 was embarking on.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to find out if the quality of the culture at a school impacts the level of student achievement. Ultimately, I hope to increase awareness of the need to have positive levels of culture within a school to help students reach their highest levels of academic achievement. Within this process, I compared the results of a teacher survey, parent/guardian survey, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews to the results on points attained for school grade and the graduation rate across the last three years. I chose to examine these data points to draw a conclusion on the impact of a school's culture on student achievement. Moreover, the survey results allowed me to gain perceptual information from stakeholders, especially in the area of culture for learning. This data collection provided me with data points to examine if and how school culture impacts student academic achievement.

Over the past school year, I have become aware of the need to conduct a deeper analysis of culture due to the problem of our new administrative team increasing the expectations for teaching and learning. Since I have the grand role of overseeing curriculum, I am afforded the chance to dialogue with students, faculty and staff, and parents/guardians on a regular basis. Through these interactions and conversations, the way these stakeholders feel, and their perception of the school needed to be examined for impact on student achievement.

The process of examining ABC123 high school's culture impact on student achievement lent itself to possible change related to student learning. According to Deal and Peterson (2009), this change would:

Attain high standards for student learning where teachers focus on diverse learning needs, from the most highly successful college bound to those who will find meaningful jobs in the trades, service sector, or other places of work following graduation where time and attention are spent working and learning across the board (Deal and Peterson, 2009, p. 65).

In the end, if this process elicits change, ABC123 high school will become an educational setting where “in schools with strong cultures, students receive a continual message that nothing is as important-or as engaging-as learning” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 164). If change does not occur to promote a strong school culture, then the culture for learning will not support students reaching and/or surpassing their academic potential.

The purpose of the evaluation was to find out if the quality of the culture at a school impacts the level of student achievement. As noted in in the text, *Building Strong School Culture*, Krause and Louis (2009) explain that, “without a clear diagnosis of your school’s culture, you and your staff may not make the best choices about how to adapt to internal and external pressures” (Krause and Louis, 2009, p. 43). Here, the way of work and the pulse of ABC123 high school needed to be examined to ensure success for all.

Rationale

As a school-based administrator and instructional leader, I strive to ensure all members of my school community are surrounded with the supports to allow them to teach, learn, and serve to their full capacity, respectively. Because of this, I chose to evaluate school culture and the relationship with student achievement to surface any gaps to the forefront of my administrative work. As stated in the introduction, we must lead and navigate our ship to the best course of action. With this mentality, every day we are

at school is another opportunity to make an impact on the lives of our stakeholders, move the school forward, and ultimately graduate 100% of our students. The process of evaluating culture and the impact on student achievement revolves around “routines, norms, roles, symbols, values, and beliefs” (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 28). These factors, which are important elements of a school’s function, can influence the culture of a school. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) state “climate and culture are both constructs that we use to describe how we interact with our environment. Culture influences our values and beliefs; climate constitutes those values and beliefs in action” (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 22). If the culture of my school in respect to optimal learning and graduation rates did not increase, then the moving of the school forward and out of turnaround status would not have come to culmination. Since I embrace the school district’s vision of preparing students for life, I would have been doing a disservice to our school community if I couldn’t enhance the values and belief to support and increase graduation rates.

School culture can impact critical issues for functions of a school, which is important to the school’s community. I collected data from a survey for teachers, a teacher focus group, parent/guardian surveys (though the data was minimal), and administrator interviews. Along with these data collection activities, I reviewed graduation rates and school grade points. The results provided insight on where the “real purpose is to illuminate the difference in perception and the ways in which the school culture might contribute to those differences” (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 103). These differences were important to discuss as they created solid conversation, action plans, and goals for all members of the school community to not only be on the same

page, but to keep student learning at the head of the administrative team's work. When this takes place, an unyielding recipe is created for success which has positive dividends on the school, the district, and the community.

Engaging the school stakeholders afforded me the opportunity to gain insight and perspective from multiple groups, who may or may not have different mindsets in respect to how school culture impacts student achievement. For instance, the parent/guardian group would have provided (if more survey responses were received) an outsider view on how our school embraces school culture and what student achievement means to them. Since ABC123 is a high school, parents/guardians often have a more disconnected view from the true happenings on campus. Nonetheless, their survey results would have yielded information that would have informed how involved they feel they are in the education of their child.

The teacher groups, both through the survey and focus group, provided information on the inside standpoint of our school's culture, the support provided to and for one another, as well as how the achievement level of our students is impacted. These results also allowed me to gain a pulse on and if the teaching staff is moving in the direction that fosters the mission and vision of our administrative team.

The interviews with the administrators enabled me to understand their viewpoint of school culture and how this culture impacts student achievement. By conducting the individual interviews, I was able to extract individual beliefs to align them to the core beliefs of the administrative team. This information was particularly important to garnish as it allowed me to understand even more the perceptions of where the administrators think we were in respect to a strong culture for learning and where they envision us to go.

Ultimately, the more positive the school culture, the more student academic achievement will take place. The positive school culture needs to embrace support for all stakeholders and more succinctly, great academic support for our students. The more systems of support that are in the place, the more students will obtain their high school diploma, which will have an everlasting impact on the ABC123 school community as more students will be prepared for life after high school

As noted by professional observations and by way of the research collected from the above school members, the critical issues associated with and related to school culture and its impact on student achievement revolve around expectations for teaching and learning, in addition to the trust entrenched between the administrative team and the faculty and staff. In this case, if the culture for learning is not one that supports sound pedagogy techniques to engage and assess all students in the learning process, then student academic achievement will not be optimal. In respect to ABC123 high school, conversations around expectations for learning with professional development to support teaching and learning expectations were incorporated into the way of work at school. The more support and opportunities to grow that were provided to the teachers, the more the trust between members of the school's team became intact. Although there is still work to do in respect to the trust among the teachers and administrators, this critical factor impacting culture and student learning has begun to increase over time.

Each day, more reliance is established, providing a greater culture in the school, which in turn creates a greater culture in the classroom. When this occurs, a greater culture for learning is founded, which is important to the students, teachers, and faculty and staff of ABC123 high school. The "why" supporting the importance of student

learning is to provide the students with the tools to productively embark on the chapter in their life post high school. If the school's culture does not support the transition to the students' next stage, then ABC123 would not be preparing students for life.

Not only is this study important to the building stakeholders (students and staff) at ABC123 high school, but it is as well for the school district and the community at large. The study will contribute to the school district by providing information on ways school culture impacts student academic achievement. As the school district states, "the goal is to have 90% of students graduate by 2020. The more students who graduate with a high school diploma, the more students who are on track to pursue careers and college which will lead to a stable and productive community for our future" (Hillsborough County Public Schools). Since the school district is striving for 90% graduation by 2020, the research in this study will be able to identify how school culture can either negatively or positively impact this goal. Ultimately, the research supports the school district's vision of preparing student for life.

In addition to the school district's vision, this study of analyzing the impact school culture has on student academic achievement directly aligns to the district strategic plan, especially with two of the four priorities: increase graduation rates and build strong culture and relationships. As the district strategic plan outlines, "HCPS expects 100% of its students to graduate. It is, with this in mind, that the district will closely monitor leading indicators for graduation success and intervene when students' performance puts them at risk of not graduating" (Hillsborough County Public School, 2018, p. 15). Along with this increase graduation rate priority, the study helps to support the school district's desire to ensure there is a strong culture with the community. Here,

“to ensure a strong culture exists district-wide and relationships are built with internal and external stakeholders, HCPS will strive to foster a sense of pride and satisfaction among students, families, employees, and partners” (Hillsborough County Public School, 2018, p. 15). The two strategic plan priorities are the pillars of the intended research and support the need to “accomplish goals that matter to the community” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 100). That is, making sure students are prepared to be productive and contributing citizens post high school graduation.

Goals of the Program Evaluation

My intended goal for the program evaluation was to evaluate the current culture at my school and investigate any possible relationship to student academic achievement.

An evaluation on my school’s culture allowed for an analysis of the way stakeholders feel and if the environment in which they either teach, learn, or serve has an impact on student achievement. The benefit, or goal, for such an evaluation would afford the administrative team the opportunity to address and fix possible pitfalls, which would elicit more support for faculty and staff, resulting in positively impacting the success for all students. The process of evaluation could also help the administrative team since “reaching agreement about how the culture needs to be changed is a first but critical step on the road to improving student learning” (Kruse and Louis, 2009, p. 43). Without an agreement across the team, the course of action will not be clear and transparent, which will cause a break in the endeavor.

The program (school culture and the impact on student achievement) evaluation goals are related to student learning in the area for culture for learning. Here, “if the instructional levers help to make sure teachers are teaching as effectively as possible,

student culture makes sure students build the habits of mind and heart that allow their learning to fly” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 168). If these two elements come to fruition, the capacity for high levels of teaching and learning will come to culmination, resulting in ideal school culture that embraces successful student achievement through enhanced graduation rates and increased student academic achievement on all state assessments.

In addition, the goals related to student learning revolve around academic achievement. Since student achievement is at the forefront of our day-to-day work, the culture in which the work is done needs to support the academic endeavor, hopefully leading to great success for all. The text, *Shaping School Culture*, notes that “the culture of an enterprise plays a dominant role in exemplary performance” (Deal and Peterson, 2009, p. 1). If a school does not have a positive culture in which all stakeholders feel supported, appreciated, and acknowledged, then the academic potential (student learning) may not be tapped and certainly may not be reached.

Primary Research Questions

The primary questions that drove my evaluation research are:

1. How do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians describe school culture?
2. What do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report is working well with the culture of the school?
3. What do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report is not working well with the culture of the school?

4. What do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report as the greatest challenge(s) with the school's culture? How can we address these challenges?

In addition to the primary questions, I have secondary questions that I investigated. These questions allowed me to gather information pertaining to the culture of the administrative team and if there was perceived academic support at my school.

Secondary Research Questions

1. According to the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians, how does the culture of the school impact learning?
2. According to the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians, how does the culture of the administrative team impact student achievement?
3. According to the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians, how adequate (or not) is the support to improve school culture and academic achievement?

The primary and secondary questions were designed to capture the stakeholder's perceptions on both school culture and student achievement. These along with the questions asked on the surveys, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews provided data to decipher if school culture does indeed impact student learning.

Conclusion

By examining the results of the teacher survey questions and the questions asked in the teacher focus group and administrator interviews, as well as the school achievement points and graduation data, I was able to identify successes and disconnects

and develop action plans for change. Without the data, I would not have perception from the stakeholders in a collected and identified manner. This information is needed so school culture can be addressed to secure the greatest achievement for students. It's important to note that "culture represents the unwritten mission of the school-it tells students and staff why they are there" (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 30). If members of my school community were not invested for the same purpose of improving student academic achievement, then the results could have been moving the ship (school) to the wrong course of action. Ultimately, the study helped to identify critical factors related to school culture on its impact on student achievement as well as the goals related to the needed change, which helped to unite the school community through a shared mission of increasing the academic achievement levels of all students, resulting in more students graduating from ABC123 high school.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

School administrators have the immense task of ensuring the school environment is one that embraces trust, transparency, solid communication, professional and instructional support, academic support, and a strong relationship with all stakeholders. These elements combined make up the school culture, which can be an effective element of the school's success. Ultimately, in the case of schools, culture plays a dominant role in the excellent performance of student academics (Deal and Peterson, 2009). With this and in building or shaping a positive school culture, there are pillars or themes that help to ensure the culture is developing appropriately. For the purposes of the literature review, these themes or main bodies of literature are: Leadership Models, Perceptions, and Shaping of School Culture.

Leadership Models

Since school culture is something that can look different from school to school, there is literature that showcases different models that schools can study, learn from, and incorporate. One model that infuses a solution-focused theme is the Shacer's theoretical counseling model (Froeschie & Nix, 2009). This model focuses on strengths and successes as opposed to focusing on problems, where there is a spotlight on the positive, through means such as complementing and encouraging so individuals can change behavior. In addition, this model encourages collaboration among stakeholders to have a solution-focused way of work through positive leadership, collaboration between stakeholders (counselors, teachers, and principals), and an improved guidance program where there is support so guidance staff can work collaboratively with the faculty and the administration (Froeschie & Nix, 2009). By having a collaborative school culture where

all stakeholders have input, teachers and students will feel more supported. Moreover, if the school focuses on ways to improve through encouragement, helpful solutions will come to completion resulting in triumph for all.

Another way to model school culture is via a performance framework through the work of Ohlson, Swanson, Adams-Manning, and Byrd (2016), where the framework revolves around inputs, processes, and outputs. Inputs refer to quality of the teacher, processes refer to the practices of educational leadership and the mechanisms of a collaborative school culture, and outputs refer to the number of suspensions and excessive absences (Ohlson et al., 2016).

Though I am not evaluating student suspensions and absences, the review of this literature showcased how teacher collaboration is a key factor with school culture. By collaborating, teachers can support the needs of students (both academic and behavior), which would ultimately decrease suspensions and get students to school more often, inciting a positive change that can increase academics. These inputs allow for greater support across the board. This could be knowing students, lesson planning to keep students engaged, or even work on classroom management. Through the processes of teacher collaboration, students have more hands-on deck to help support and push their academic needs, allowing for greater positive outputs and a decrease with the negative (suspensions and excessive absences) that could take place.

As noted with the above two models, solutions and collaboration are both fruitful elements to a school's culture impact on student achievement. Along with these, teacher effectiveness can play a vital role in the academic achievement of students. Another model for school culture is known as the Widget Effect and comes from the work of

Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, Keeling, Schunck, Palcisco, & Morgan (2009). The research in this model address the differences in the effectiveness of teachers and makes recommendations that can certainly benefit the school's culture to enhance student academic achievement. These recommendations (Weisberg et al., 2009, pp. 27-30) could get rid of the Widget Effect to produce more effective teachers to aid in student success. Recommendations such as an adoption of a comprehensive performance system, training for evaluators on the teacher performance evaluation system, and using evaluations to inform decision making around teaching and learning, could all benefit and impact the culture for learning.

I find the aforesaid recommendations to be wonderful assets for a district to close the gap of ineffective teachers at school sites, especially in the case of low performing schools. By training the evaluators on the evaluation system, the elements of effective teaching will be learned which can be used to retain or dismiss staff. The more informed the evaluator, or administer is, the greater the fidelity in the evaluation of an effective/ineffective teacher. All evaluators must embark on rubric training and be calibrated often to ensure there is objectivity in the observation and evaluation process. Along with this, the idea of providing professional development to help underperforming teachers is paramount to their success, as well as to the success of the students.

Since the evaluation and observation can be a make-it or break-it process for the teachers, the way in which it is handled can impact school culture. Since some teachers have a flawed view of the evaluation process and/or have skewed expectations, it's important to have a culture of transparency through the evaluation process where both the teacher and evaluator have a clear understanding of the evaluation tool being used.

Perceptions

As I often tell my faculty, other's perceptions of the school's culture and student achievement is those stakeholder's reality of the educational system that is in place to educate their youth at our school. Although the perceptions may not be 100% accurate, they do provide an opportunity to look at our practice or way of work through a different lens, allowing us to shift our mindset which is what the literature available has allowed me to do. The first article of this type of review comes from the work of Nichols & Nichols (2014), where they discuss student academic achievement and school climate based on the gender of the administrator. The article states that "there are gender specific assumptions regarding female administrators' ability and competence to perform the role" (Nichols & Nichols, 2014, p. 31). Although I don't feel it's appropriate to assign assumptions based off gender, the results of the school survey stated that the leadership effectiveness of the female principals is less than that of their male counterparts as rated by their teachers (Nichols & Nichols, 2014). Even though the male principals were rated as being more effective in their leadership, the students across the schools scored the same on state exams. For them, it did not matter if the principal was male or female. The only difference in how the students scored was the level of socioeconomic status. Unfortunately, the lower the status, the lower the test scores. This is often the case within schools alike.

The article also notes that "for the items on the school climate survey that measured effective leadership as indicated by their staff, male principals (16) averaged 4.25 and female principals (18) averaged 3.95, suggesting a significant difference" (Nichols & Nichols, 2014, p. 31). With these findings, it's important to note that 88% of

the 847 teachers who participated in the survey were female. In addition to the teacher perception findings, students passed state exams equally regardless of the principal gender” (Nichols & Nichols, 2014). Since the article showcased a difference in leadership effectiveness between male and female principals but did not conclude a difference in the test scores of students, I wonder if there is a different school culture for the teacher than that of the students. Rather, are the students being impacted differently than the teachers? This article is a great resource to provide a foundation or perspective shift for schools to develop wonderings about the true happenings at school sites under the leadership of principals, regardless of their gender, to ensure a culture is established to support the academic achievement of all students.

As with perceptions on gender specific principal roles, there are perceptions with leadership styles. The literature review here comes from the work of Shouppe & Pate (2010), where they examine how student achievement is impacted by leadership styles and the behaviors of teachers. The article states “research on school effectiveness, school climate, and student achievement all reveal that effective schools depend largely on the quality of school leadership” (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1994, p. 3). The authors further note that the more leaders work to ensuring an optimistic culture for learning, the more engaged both the student and teachers will be in the learning process. Simply stated, if school leaders do not have a positive culture that fosters support, then teachers may not instruct to their full capacity, causing a potential decline in student academic success. Although the latter seems to be concrete, the article (Shouppe & Pate, 2010) provides different insights on the relationship among principal leadership style, school culture, and student achievement. The study in the article did not find a strong relationship between

the climate at the school and student achievement but did note a strong connection between the openness of the principal and the climate at the school. Along with this, and interesting to note, the study did not find differences with the academic performance of students and the level of openness of the school climates (Shouppe & Pate, 2010).

In respect to the academic achievement, I find it thought-provoking that there was not a difference between open and closed school climates. To help me understand this, I would like to know the socioeconomic breakdown of the students, as well as the teaching experience at the school sites. Along with this, I wonder what the open and close climates look like in the classrooms. All in all, and with the data presented, it seems that this study did not find a correlation to school climate and student achievement, which has me scratching my head, or rather looking at school culture through a different lens.

Perspective is key when examining the impact school culture has on student achievement. Another piece of literature that supports a mindset change is from Ali & Siddiqui (2016), where they examine the environment of learning as a forecaster of the academic achievement of students. The article states, “positive school climate means such type of environment in which students, teachers, parents, and all the members of community have such kind of link in which teaching and learning become satisfied and long lasting” (Ali & Siddiqui, 2016, p. 105). The idea here is that if all the stakeholders within a school are a community of one, then teaching and learning will be sustainable. The findings are from the data collected using a questionnaire to assess the perceptions of students in concern to the effect the learning environment has on their achievement. The data (Ali & Siddiqui, 2016,) collected showcases that student achievement is impacted by teacher behavior, an increase in student achievement is due to an increase in the learning

environment, and that the more positive the climate is at a school, the more positive levels of student achievement will occur.

The main conclusion is that the school climate, learning environment, the curriculum, and the behaviors of teachers do impact the academic achievement of students. The more increased and positive these elements are, the more increased and positive the achievement level(s) of the students will be. With this and due to the findings above, the questions set forth for the research study were answered with positive correlations.

Another perspective on school culture perception comes from Urick and Bowers (2014) where the purpose of their research was to look at how the principal perception impacts student achievement in the high school setting. Since the principal is the captain of the school ship, it's vital that he or she clearly communicate the expectations around student achievement and the means in which one can reach success. These perceptions are often different than those of students, where students often times do not truly grasp the importance of reaching and exceeding their academic potential.

As the article recaps, by focusing on morale with students and teachers and by making student learning a high priority, principals can impact the achievement of students (Urick & Bowers, 2014). If the principal leads a good charge, students and teachers alike may be more apt to change their perspective (if needed) to a new mindset that fosters academic excellence.

When speaking about perceptions or the view of others to my faculty and staff, I often frame the conversation around changing the lens or glasses in which they are “viewing” what is being discussed. I also tell them that I, at times, have perceptions that

force me to change my lens to make sure that I have the clearest view possible. An article to support such a view comes from the work of Chang (2003) with her report, *Shaping Positive School Culture: Judgments of School Administrators*. The purpose of the study was to examine the school leader views of their school culture. For the study, forty-one school leaders from Indiana participated in two three-hour workshops where they discussed diversity and read case studies (Chang, 2003). At the beginning of the workshops, surveys were given to assess areas of school culture. The results (Chang, 2003) from the thirty-nine administrators that responded note that all schools have an atmosphere that is friendly. Furthermore, most of the administrators report that teachers felt supportive by administrators and that relationship building with the school community is an important skill for school-based leadership teams to have. With these results, school leaders can read and assess the school culture to make decisions if the school culture needs to be shaped. When another viewpoint is given, one's ability to shift perspective and mindset becomes more paramount with the potential need for school culture change. Chang (2003) concludes that "a school climate that stimulates personal growth, enhances positive self-image of the school, and promotes achievement is a necessity for excellence to occur" (Chang, 2003, p. 9). The more a school culture can foster these important characteristics, the greater the potential for school-wide success, leaving little need to rebuild or shape the school culture in a different direction. The personal growth can be compared to the school-wide growth, demonstrating whether or not all members of the school community are on the same page. Hopefully, the comparison will show a parallel between all, highlighting that the school culture can have positive dividends on student achievement.

Shaping of School Culture

As I have outlined in the abovementioned section, there is literature to support school culture models, as well as to give perspective to the impact school culture has on the school community. In addition to these literature review elements, there is the shaping of school culture. By reviewing how culture can be shaped, school leaders can customize the direction they want their school culture to go; a direction that will hopefully harvest immense support for all stakeholders, with great emphasis on student academic achievement.

The first literature review under this element comes from Kent Peterson (2002) in his piece, *Enhancing School Culture: Reculturing Schools*. In this journal excerpt, Peterson describes culture as the persona of a school made up of the beliefs, norms, symbols, rituals, and stories (Peterson, 2002). Moreover, the culture embodies the unwritten expectations of the school community that are created over time. The latter, here, becomes part of the day to day work in an almost traditional type manner.

Along with the above school culture definition, the article outlines pillars that can aid in establishing a positive school culture for all. These pillars include professional development for teachers, learning communities, and reading and assessing the culture (Peterson, 2002). By reading the culture, school leaders can learn history of the school and/or gain a current pulse on how the school culture is supporting the vision and mission of the school (Peterson, 2002). This, along with assessing the culture, can be done via asking the school community questions, conducting a survey, or even setting up focus groups. Once the assessment takes place, school leaders can then begin to shape the culture. As Peterson (2002) notes, when schools that have professional development and

student learning that are supported by a strong and positive culture, these schools become a community where all students learn from teachers, all of whom make a difference (Peterson, 2002). When there is a strong culture, the learning opportunity for students (as well as teachers) becomes the most optimal, resulting in success for all.

As school leaders reshape or even build a new school culture, change occurs. With this change, it is important for the school leaders to follow steps to ensure an easy course of action with the implementation of the culture shape or build. Change Now! Five Steps to Better Leadership is a helpful text to use when embarking on such a change and is from the work of Scisco, McCauley, Brittain, Leslio, and Elsy (2014). The authors outline five steps to use as a guide through the process of change. The steps (2014) help the agent of change identify how development energy should be focused, help to create goals that work, assist in creating a plan to achieve said goals, understand how to conquer obstacles, and ensure the course of action is maintained.

The five steps listed above will allow school leaders to carefully craft and maneuver their school community through the shaping or building of the school culture. School leaders should first identify the largest need for the change. In the case of my school, it would be to increase graduation rates. This is where I am currently focusing my energy. I have increased instructional support for teachers, am offering more tutoring opportunities for students, and have created more opportunities for parents/guardians to come on campus to learn more about the academic needs and requirements of their child. A goal of a 5% increase in academic achievement on the FSA ELA and graduation rate has been set. Currently, the only obstacle I am facing is the delayed learning

opportunities due to Hurricane Irma. Although this is the case, I am staying on course and persevering with the goal of graduating more students.

Now that steps for change have been noted, another piece of literature or text in this case that supports the shaping of school culture is *Building Strong School Culture: A Guide to Leading Change* by Kruse and Louis (2009). Within this book, the authors look at schools that have success in creating a school culture change that has lasted over time. Furthermore, the authors provide strategies in a practical way for school leaders to achieve such a status as represented by the schools in the book. These strategies provide information that will help a school diagnose and shape its school culture, review the roles of the leadership and the structures in the organization in respect to making decisions, and ensure stability by the support of improvement that is continuous across the campus year after year (Kruse and Louis, 2009). By using this book as a resource, principals can create a school culture that is sustainable by ensuring there is organizational learning and a professional community that promotes trust to positively impact teaching and learning (Kruse and Louis, 2009). This type of school culture will also comprise wonderful collaboration among faculty and staff, administrators, students, parents/guardians, and the school community.

As school leaders shape and rebuild current school culture pitfalls, resources may be needed to assist with the change. Another book to do so is by Deal & Peterson (2009) and is titled, *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls, Paradoxes, & Promises*. The authors address organizational culture and change and provide suggestions on how school leaders can juggle goals and the demands for student academic achievement. One suggestion is to ensure that the patterns of culture shape how people feel, act, and think, which could

have a commanding impact on performance (Deal & Peterson, 2009). If these take place, the element of school culture buy-in will come to fruition, allowing for a great collaborative and collective learning environment to be established.

In addition to the book by Deal and Peterson, Bambrick-Santoyo's *Leverage Leadership* (2012) provides step by step procedures for building exceptional schools. To have an exceptional school, school leaders must have secured a school culture that is positive and is built on support, collaboration, great communication, and a focus on student academic achievement. In respect to the collaboration and communication among the faculty and staff, great staff culture comes from habits that build a strong staff community (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). Without such a community, the culture at a school will not be substantial nor affirmative, thus potentially harming the academic achievement of all students.

Another way of shaping the culture of a school is to rewire it. With the work of Gruenert & Whitaker in the book, *School Culture Rewired: How to Define, Assess, and Transform It*, school leaders can ascertain their school culture and make decisions on ways to maintain it or shape it in a more positive manner. The book highlights ways to shift the school culture in an effortless way by providing tools on culture-busting implementations, ways to identify the type of school culture that currently exists, tips for ensuring the best teachers are employed, and ways to execute a rewiring team. Through such a rewire or shaping process, it's important to keep in mind and perspective that although will it be difficult to discern the exact moment the cultural shift occurs, the fact the school culture has shifted is not hard to ascertain (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). To this point, school leaders need to stay the course of action even if the rewire, building,

and/or shaping of the school culture feels like it is not taking place. This is certainly the case for me at my school. I often tell the faculty that we must go slow to go fast. Every day is a new opportunity to fill in the gaps of the culture shift to eventually have a solid foundation for successful student achievement.

As the literature review section showcases ways to model, view, and shape school culture, it's also important to provide a means for ensuring effective leadership. By using the book, *School Leadership that Works*, by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), school leaders can use the research within the text to get a pulse on their effectiveness, which in due course can pay positive or negative dividends on the shaping of school culture. This research stems from studies of more than 650 principals and has provided data to the authors for the creation of the leadership practices that work. As the authors note (Marzano et al., 2005), school leaders can use this book to learn how to identify leadership responsibility behaviors, understand change order, know how to focus on student achievement, and how to develop a five-step school leadership plan that is effective. If these leadership traits are going to be successful, an effective leader needs to have a culture that positively impacts teachers, who make a positive impression on students (Marzano et al., 2005). If a school leader truly wants to safeguard that their school has a suitable and beneficial school culture for his/her school community, he/she will need to maximize capacity by demonstrating operative skills that will aid in the successful functioning of the school.

Conclusion

Throughout the research on the impacts school culture has on student academic achievement, I mostly discovered literature on school culture and how school leaders can ensure a positive one. Moreover, there is not a plethora of literature reviews/critiques on how student academic achievement is impacted. Rather, as noted throughout the literature review section, I showcased ways school leaders could model, perceive, and shape their school culture to best meet the needs of their community. By using any of the material reviewed, school leaders would be equipped with the tools and resources necessary to embark on a school culture change. This change may also incorporate ways to enhance their leadership practice to maximize their ability to be effective instructional leaders and building managers that promotes a school community that is defined by collaboration and collectiveness for the success of all.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design Overview

In respect to the comprehensive overview of the program (school culture and its impact in student achievement) evaluations, research design methods should ensure that the information-gathering procedures selected and implemented yield results that are useful and informative. With this and in respect to gathering information on how school culture impacts student achievement, it is important that the information derived from research be approached from an improvement type lens. Patton (2008) notes, “improvement-oriented approaches tend to be more open ended, gathering varieties of data about strengths and weaknesses with the expectation that both will be found ... to inform an ongoing cycle of reflection and innovation” (Patton, 2008, p. 116). Through the information gathered from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, administrator interviews, and the school’s achievement points and graduation rates from the last three years, I was able to gather perspective on what is working well (strengths) and not well (weaknesses) with the school culture and its impact on student achievement at ABC123 high school. Ultimately, the evaluations provided data to answer the primary and secondary questions surrounding school culture and student achievement.

As an overview of the research methodology used in examining ABC123’s culture and its impact on student achievement, the study utilized mixed methods where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. When used appropriately, data that is qualitative is a respectable counterpart to quantitative data within a design that is of mixed methods (Patton, 2008,). The mixed methods approach across the different informant groups will also lead to triangulation, “a way of checking the consistency of

findings from different courses” (Patton, 2008, p, 442). By having a checks and balance system through the analysis of the collected data, I was able to view the information from different lenses to safeguard perspective as well as to ensure all stakeholder inputs are noted. In addition to this, the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions in the teacher survey provided more detail in respect to the culture for learning on campus. During the examination of this data, it was evident that the open-ended questions were needed to provide a platform for the teachers to share their thoughts, which ultimately helped to support the methodology of data collection.

As a description of how the research methodology answered the research questions, it is important to note that the primary and secondary questions outlined in this evaluation were answered through a variety of data collecting tools. The variety of collecting tools started with the survey taken by teachers, which yielded both quantitative and qualitative data through Likert and open-ended questions, where the insights of the participants informed what is working well and not working well in respect to the school’s culture and its impact on student achievement. Through the teacher focus group, I explored the acuties of teachers from different content departments with different teaching experience in respect to ABC123’s school culture and any potential shift over the past two years. The teachers had the opportunity to expand their thoughts in respect to school culture and student achievement beyond the data collected from the teacher survey. By providing a space for teachers to discuss, enhanced thoughts appeared and helped to conduct a deeper dive into the research at hand. Along with this, the administrator interviews provided information from the leadership lens. The school administrators were provided an opportunity to share their opinions on the work being

done to turn the school around, especially as the work relates to the study of school culture and student academic achievement. The data collected here in addition to the teacher survey and teacher focus group, helped to support the research of whether or not a school's culture impacts student academic success.

Participants

The key participants chosen represent the various stakeholders (teachers, parents/guardians, and administrators) that are involved in ABC123's educational endeavor. All stakeholder groups were chosen as they have a direct impact on the achievement level of students and can provide discernment on school culture. I conducted an online survey (Appendix A) with up to 140 teachers, both males and females, who represent all contents taught on campus. The teacher age range is 22-71 years old and the teaching experience range is 1-38 years. I emailed out the invitation to participate in the web-based online survey. The email included an introduction about the data collection, with the Informed Consent form (Appendix B) in the body of the email, and a link to click to participate in the survey. By clicking the survey link, participants agreed and gave consent for data collection. Participants were given the option to opt out of the survey at any time for any reason.

In addition to the above teacher participants, I conducted a teacher focus group (Appendix C). I invited (in person) up to 15 teachers to include males and females whose teacher age range is 22-71 years old with a teaching experience range of 1-38 years. Invitation to participate was based from teacher representation of the core and elective content areas on campus. Participants were given the Informed Consent form (Appendix

D) and were given the option to stop participation in the Teacher Focus Group at any time for any reason.

Along with the teacher participants, I invited (in person) up to 5 administrators, male and female participants, to be interviewed (Appendix E). The administrator age range is 35-51 years old with administrative experience averaging 6 years. I personally invited all participants and provided them with the Informed Consent form (Appendix F) and the participants were given the option to stop participation with the Interview at any time for any reason.

The final participant group I intended to collect information from is the parent/guardian group. I intended on conducting an online survey (Appendix G) with up to 1,800 current parents/guardians of students to include both males and females, which an age range of 32-60 years old. I emailed out the invitation to participate in the web-based online survey. The email included an introduction about the data collection, the Informed Consent form (Appendix B) in the body of the email, and a link to click to participate in the survey. By clicking the survey link, participants agreed and gave consent for data collection. Participants were given the option to opt out of the survey at any time for any reason. Unfortunately, only 5 responses (0.3%) were received. In retrospect, the lack of responses could be due to the language barrier of many of the parents/guardians as well as their minimal involvement on and off campus.

Data Gathering Techniques

To obtain information on ABC123's school culture's impact on student achievement, I used the following plan to ascertain the data. After the IRRB was approved by NLU and my school district, the process for data collection began with the principal of ABC123 high school. I asked permission (Appendix H) to conduct online

surveys with teachers and parents/guardians, to lead a focus group with teachers, and to interview members of the administrative team. The quantitative data taken from school achievement points and graduation rates, with the mixed methods of the online teacher survey and the qualitative data from the open-ended teacher survey questions, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews, cumulated a plethora of data points to inform the research. Ultimately, by using the different sources of data from various stakeholders, I was able to gain valuable insight to the effects the culture of a school has on the learning success of students, which will be beneficial for future policy change.

Mixed Methods

Teacher Survey. The teacher survey data provided a paradigm across both quantitative and qualitative methods through Likert and open-ended questions. I emailed out the invitation to participate in the web-based online survey (Appendix A). The email included an introduction about the data collection with the Informed Consent form (Appendix B) in the body of the email, and a link to click to participate in the survey. By clicking the survey link, participants agreed and gave consent for data collection. Participants were given the option to opt out of the survey at any time for any reason. The amount of time to complete the survey was 20 minutes. The survey was given one time and teachers could complete it at a convenient time across a given number of days. One additional email was sent out to remind the participants to complete the online survey. The survey questions elicited information about what is working well and what is not in respect to the school's culture and its impact on student achievement.

Parent/Guardian Survey. The parent/guardian survey data was intended to also provide a paradigm across both quantitative and qualitative methods through Likert and

open-ended questions. I emailed out the invitation to participate in the web-based online survey (Appendix G). The email included an introduction about the data collection with the Informed Consent form (Appendix B) in the body of the email, and a link to click to participate in the survey. By clicking the survey link, participants agreed and gave consent for data collection. Participants were given the option to opt out of the survey at any time for any reason. The amount of time to complete the survey was 20 minutes. The survey was given one time and parents/guardians could complete it at a convenient time across a given number of days. One additional email was sent out to remind the participants to complete the online survey. The survey questions intent was to elicit information about what is working well and what is not in respect to the school's culture and its impact on student achievement. Unfortunately, only 5 responses (0.3%) were received. In retrospect and as mentioned above, the lack of responses could be due to the language barrier of many of the parents/guardians as well as their minimal involvement on and off campus.

Qualitative Data Collection

Teacher Focus Group. The data yielded from the Teacher Focus Group (Appendix C) provided qualitative information. I personally invited (in person) all participants to participate in the focus group. The purpose of the study was explained, the questions being asked were given, and the Informed Consent form (Appendix D) was signed and collected. The focus group took roughly 44 minutes and was conducted on an early release day to not interfere with after school meetings. Lunch was provided for the participants. I voice recorded, audio taped, and transcribed the focus group discussion. If clarification was needed, I had up to 5 email exchanges in order to clarify any questions I

may have regarding the discussion. The information from the teacher focus group explored the thoughts of teachers in respect to ABC123's school culture and any potential shift over the past two years.

Administrator Interviews. Similar to the teacher focus group, the data gathered from the administrator interviews (Appendix E) provided qualitative information. I personally invited (in person) all participants to participate in the interview. The purpose of the study was explained, the questions being asked were given, and the Informed Consent form (Appendix F) was signed and collected. The interviews each took roughly 24 minutes and were conducted on an early release day to not interfere with after school meetings. Lunch was provided for the participants. I voice recorded, audio taped, and transcribed the administrative interviews. If clarification was needed, I had up to 5 email exchanges in order to clarify any questions I may have regarding the interview questions. The administrator interviews provided information from the leadership lens.

Quantitative Data Collection

State Assessment Data and Graduation Rate. I collected and reviewed school achievement points and graduation rate data (Appendix I) from the testing years of 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019. The school achievements points were a result of student performance on the FSA and End of Course Exams, participation in advanced placement and dual enrollment courses, and the number of industry certifications earned in career themed courses. Individual student records were not examined. The achievement data and graduation rates were obtained by the school district and represent ABC123 high school.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are pivotal in ensuring the anonymity of the participants who took part in the surveys, focus group, and interview. This project was implemented with ethical safeguards to ensure all participants feel safe and secure throughout the research collection period. Participation in the surveys, focus group, and interviews was voluntary, and participants could end their involvement at any time with no negative effects. Participation in this study did not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While the participants are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, taking part in this study may contribute to better understanding of how culture impacts student learning. The privacy and confidentiality of the participants was secured with pseudonyms given in place on their names.

Only I will have access to the survey responses, focus group and interview tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all interview transcripts, tapes, and notes. While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, the identity of the participants will in no way be revealed.

Participants who took part in the interview and focus group received a copy of the Informed Consent form (Appendix D and Appendix F, respectively). The participant's signature on the Informed Consent form indicates their understanding of the expectations of the study and the protections in place. Likewise, the participants who took the online survey were provided the Informed Consent form (Appendix B) via the body of the invite email, with the survey link embedded in the form. By clicking the survey link, participants agreed and gave consent for data collection, and acknowledge the

expectations of the study and the protections in place. For the school achievement points and graduation rate data I requested from the school district, individual student records were not examined. Rather, the percentage of achievement levels on the information were studied and represent ABC123 high school.

Data Analysis Techniques

I have analyzed quantitative and qualitative data collected from the teacher survey from Likert scale and open-ended questions for themes and trends on perceptions of the stated stakeholders. These perceptions help to identify what is and what is not working in respect to ABC123's school culture and the connection to student academic achievement. By using the Likert scale questions, I was able to gather an understanding of what the teachers agreed and disagreed to in respect to the school's culture and academic achievement. Furthermore, the open-ended questions provided a platform for the teachers to expand their thoughts on elements such as what could be improved in respect to the culture on campus, as well as if the support for teaching and learning is adequate. Along with this, I have analyzed qualitative data from the teacher focus group, and the administrator interviews for themes and trends on perceptions about school culture, administrative support, and student academic achievement. The data collected provided insight from both the teacher and administrator lens, allowing me to make connections and/or disconnects between the two stakeholder groups. Lastly, I have analyzed the school achievement points and graduation rates from ABE123 high school from the past three years. The analysis of this data in conjunction with the information gained from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews helped to draw a parallel between the school's culture and the achievement levels of the tested students.

Conclusion

If a school does not have a positive culture in which all stakeholders feel supported, appreciated, and acknowledged, then the academic potential may not be tapped and certainly not reached. The data collected from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews provided insight from the key stakeholders that play a pivotal role in and on the educational journey of the students at ABC123 high school. Moreover, the data collected helped to inform the administrative team and provided valuable information to help ensure the school is kept on the best course of action to make the paramount impact on student achievement.

From the school district perspective, the research collected from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and the administrative interviews will contribute to the school district by providing information on ways school culture impacts student academic achievement. As the school district states, the goal is to have 90% of students graduate by 2020. The more students who graduate with a high school diploma, the more students who are on track to pursue careers and college which will lead to a stable and productive community for our future (Hillsborough County Public Schools, 2017). Since the school district is striving for 90% graduation by 2020, the research will be able to identify how school culture can either negatively or positively impact this goal. Ultimately, the research supports the school district's vision of preparing student for life. The impact of this study in reaching the district's 2020 graduation goal is plentiful as it provides a correlation on how a strong school culture for learning positively impacts the achievement levels of students, ultimately providing them a greater chance to graduate from high school.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Findings Overview

The evaluation study of a school's cultural impact on student achievement examined the results from online surveys, a teacher focus group, administrator interviews, and data review. The online survey was presented to teachers, eliciting value and open-ended type responses. The teacher focus group included 15 teachers with varied teaching year experiences from different content department around the school. The administrator interviews took place with the administrative team, who have an average of 6 years of administrative experience. The information collected from these research tools, in conjunction with state assessment and graduation rate data review allowed for triangulation of the data collected, allowing for different stakeholder perception of the study.

Teacher Survey - Quantitative Data Findings. The teacher survey (Appendix A) was sent to 140 teachers at ABC123 high school via an email inviting their participating in the collection data. The email included a synopsis of the study, the informed consent information, and an embedded survey link that when clicked, acknowledged the elements of the study and granted permission to participate. After one week of the initial email being sent, a follow-up email was delivered reminding the teachers of the invitation to partake in the data collection. Out of the 140 survey invitations sent, 50 teachers contributed by taking the online survey, giving me a response rate of 35.7% for the teacher survey results.

The teacher survey was designed with both Likert and open-ended questions to provide the contributing teachers the opportunity to give insight on school culture elements and student achievement. The first two questions of the survey gathered demographic information, providing statistics on the number of years the teacher has been teaching and how many years the teacher has been at ABC123 high school, respectively.

For question 1, the question asked the survey respondents how long they have been teaching. The data showed that most of the teachers (16) have been teaching 16 plus years, yielding a response rate of 32%. The next highest response rate was 12-15 years, with 10 teachers (20%) responding. The 8-11 years of teaching category had 9 responses (18%), 4-7 years had 8 (16%), and the 0-3 category, which was the lowest response, had 7 total teachers (14%). I expected the data collection from this question to represent as it does due to the teaching staff at school.

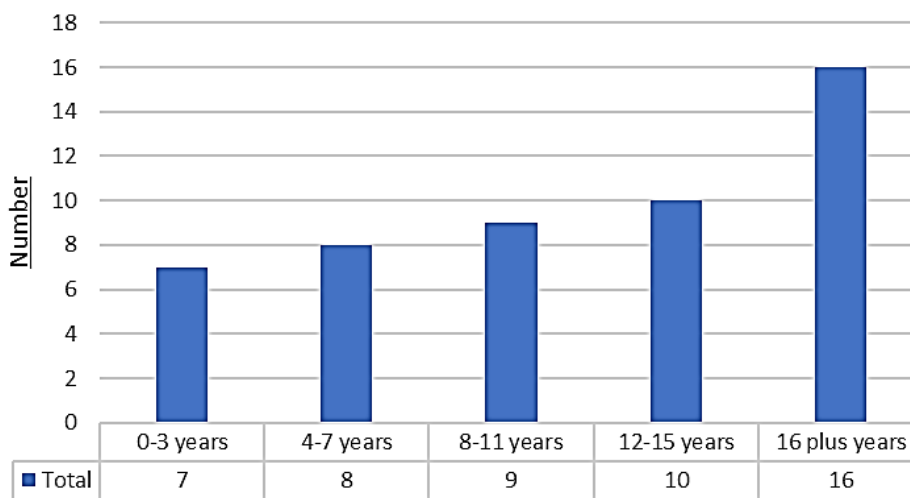


Figure 1. Teacher Survey Question 1: teachers' responses to number of years of teaching (n = 50)

For question 2, the question asked the survey respondents how many years they have been teaching at their current school. The data showed that most of the teachers

(24) who took the survey have been teaching at ABC123 high school for 0-3 years, yielding a response rate of 48%. The next highest response rate was 4-7 years, with 10 teachers (20%) responding. The category of 8-11 years had 5 responses (10%), 12-15 years had 4 responses (8%), and 16 plus years had 7 responses (14%). Due to the initial teacher turnover that occurred when the new administrative team was put in place, I was not surprised to see that the nearly half of the teachers who took the survey were relatively new to the school community.

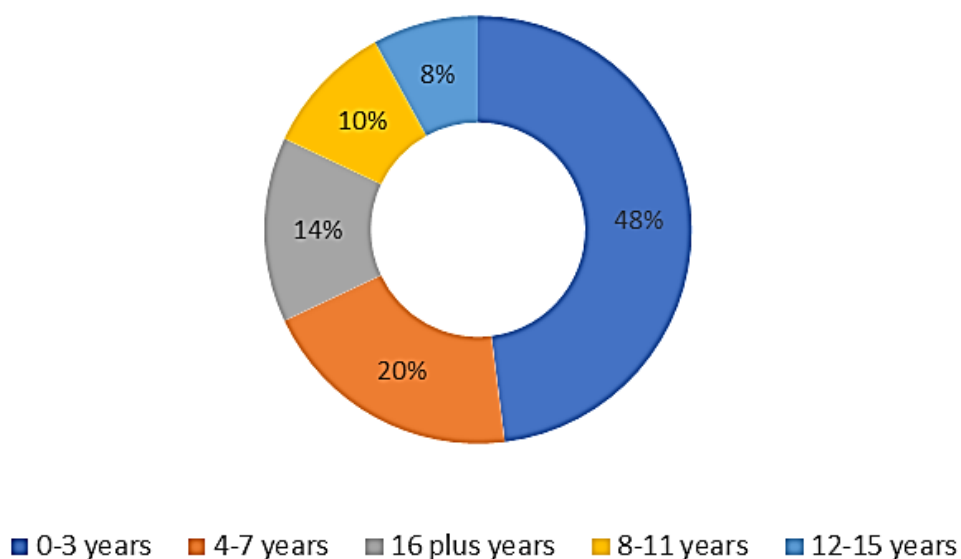


Figure 2. Teacher Survey Question 2: teachers' responses to number of years of teaching at current school (n = 50)

The following survey statements (3-20) are in Likert scale form, evaluating the agreements levels (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree) regarding elements that may impact the culture and academic achievement at ABC123 high school. Statement 3 asked the agreement level to do students treat other students with respect and statement 4 asked the agreement level to do students treat teachers with respect. Both statements generated the exact same responses. The highest response of

agree yielded 35 respondents (68%) with 4 responses (14%) for strongly agree, noting that 82% of the teachers feel that students do treat each other and teachers respectfully. The category of not sure had 5 responses (8%) and disagree had 6 responses (10%). None of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. These results are in line with the school-wide expectation of respect for all and are an indication that the way in which people are treated on campus is good-mannered.

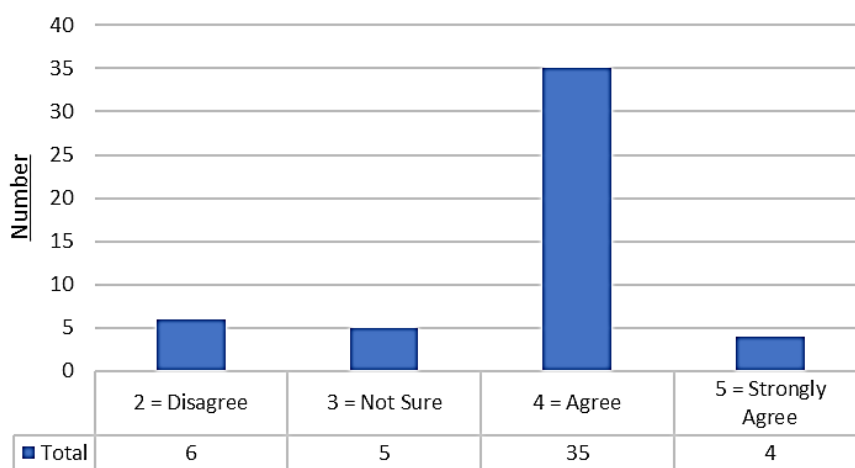


Figure 3. Teacher Survey Question 3: teachers' responses to agreement level that students treat others with respect (n = 50)

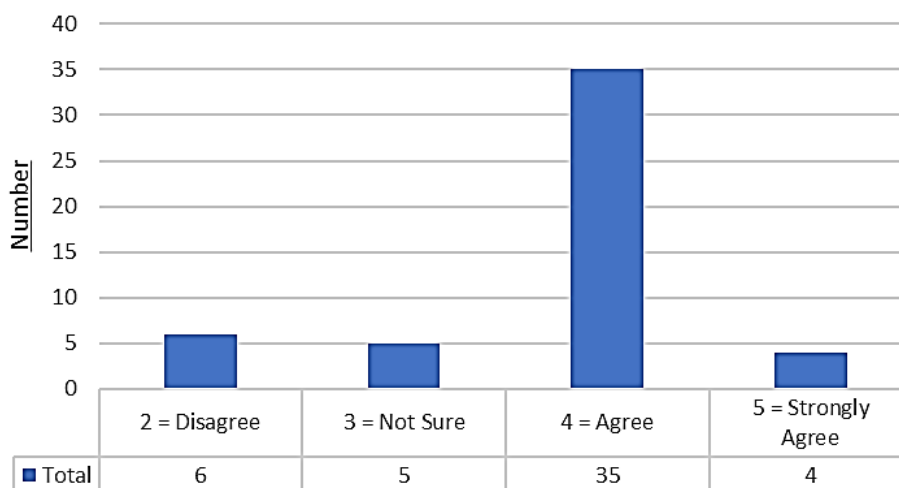


Figure 4. Teacher Survey Question 4: teachers' responses to agreement level that students treat teachers with respect (n = 50)

Statement 5 asked the agreement level to teachers treating students with respect. None of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. One teacher (2%) responded with an answer of not sure. Overwhelming, the agree category had 40 responses (80%). These responses added with the 9 from strongly agree showcase that 98% of the teachers treat students respectfully. I am pleased with responses as the data are in indication of the respectful interactions taking place on campus between teachers and students.

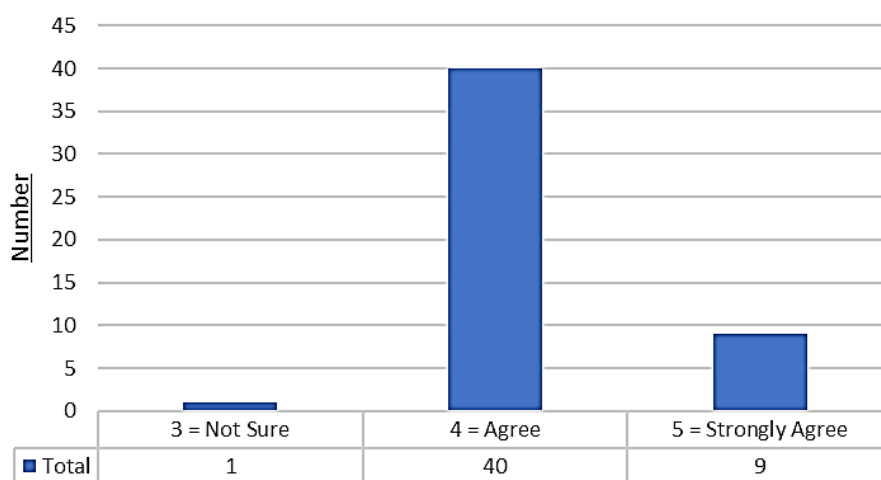


Figure 5. Teacher Survey Question 5: teachers' responses to agreement level that teachers treat students with respect (n = 50)

Statement 6 asked the agreement level about students taking pride in their academics. The highest response was the disagree category with 22 teachers (44%) responding. The agree category had 12 responses (24%) and the not sure category had 11 (22%). The outlier responses from the statement are strongly disagree with 3 responses (6%) and strongly agree with 2 (4%). Due to almost half of the respondents disagreeing with the statement, the data is concerning. If the perception is that students are not taking pride in their academics, organizational change in respect to culture for learning needs to

be addressed. As an educator, I anticipated, that in general, the more pride students have in the academic work they are producing, the greater their outcomes would be.

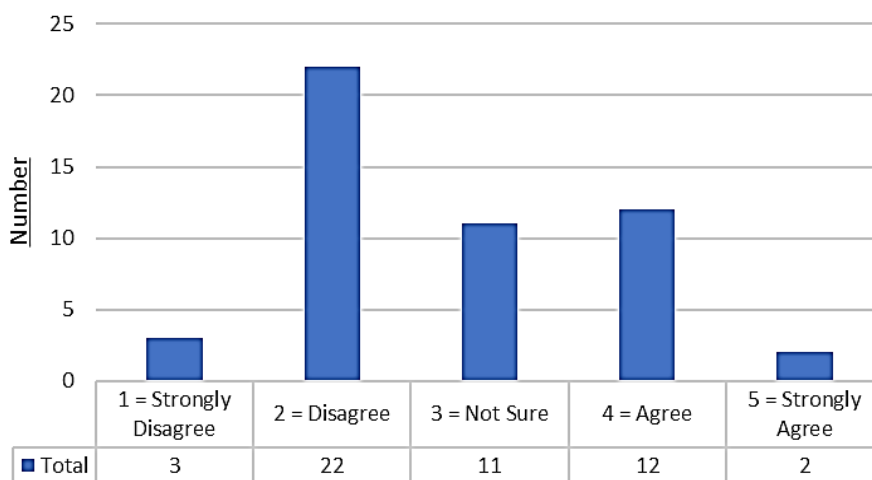


Figure 6. Teacher Survey Question 6: teachers' responses to agreement level that students take pride in their academics (n = 50)

For statement 7, teachers were asked to evaluate their agreement level to the school administration supporting the instructional needs of teachers. The responses resulted in 30 teachers (60%) agreeing and 10 teachers (20%) strongly agreeing to the statement. The combined categories of strongly disagree and disagree, and the category of not sure both had 5 responses (10%) each. The majority (80%) of the teachers agree that their instructional needs are met which is in alignment with the supports in place on campus as teachers are provided the tools and resources to support the teaching and learning needs of their classrooms.

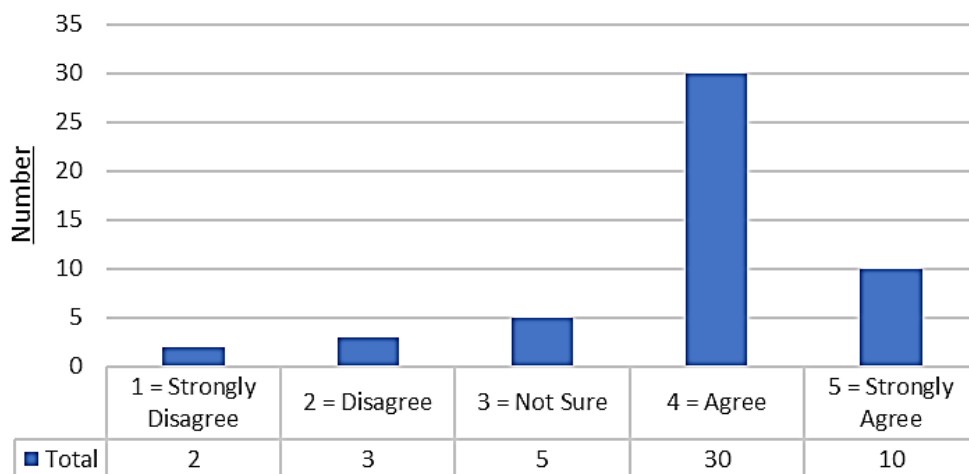


Figure 7. Teacher Survey Question 7: teachers' responses to agreement level that the school administration supports the instructional needs of teachers (n = 50)

Statement 8 elicits the agreement level to the school administration supporting the discipline needs of teachers. The results with the statement show a relative split in viewpoint where 42% teachers (21) agree and 40% of the teachers (20) either disagree (30%) or strongly disagree (10%). The category of strongly agree had 6 teacher responses (12%) and the category of not sure had 3 (6%). The split of agreement that occurred is not surprising as a new discipline matrix was established and put in place, creating new consequences that were less severe in nature. In my experience, when a new system is established, it takes time for all to buy-in and accept the protocol used to change any undesirable behavior that students may exhibit.

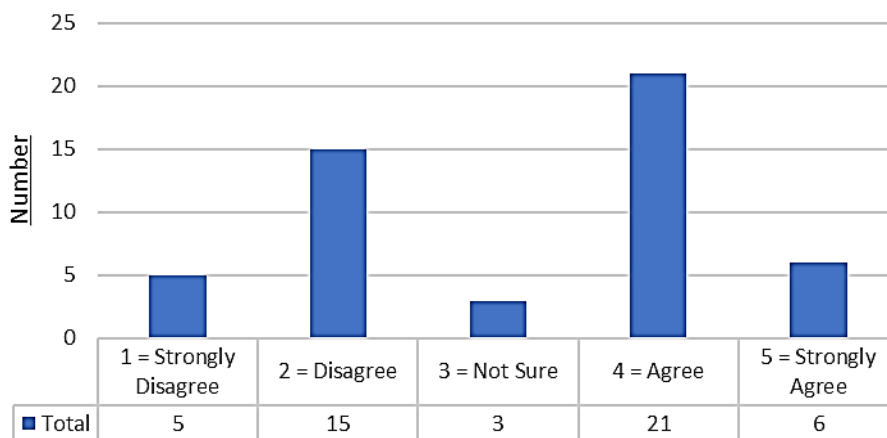


Figure 8. Teacher Survey Question 8: teachers' responses to agreement level that the school administration supports the discipline needs of teachers (n = 50)

Statement 9 asked the agreement level to the administration supporting the academic needs of students. For this statement, the highest response was the agree category with 32 teachers (64%) responding. The second highest category was strongly agree with 11 teachers (22%). The not sure category had 4 responses (8%), the disagree had 1 response (2%), and the strongly disagree had 2 responses (4%). The results from this statement are in line with the expectation that all administrators support any academic needs students have. As the Assistant Principal for Curriculum, this is the primary function of my role, so I am pleased to see the data points overwhelming (86%) reflect this perception from the teachers.

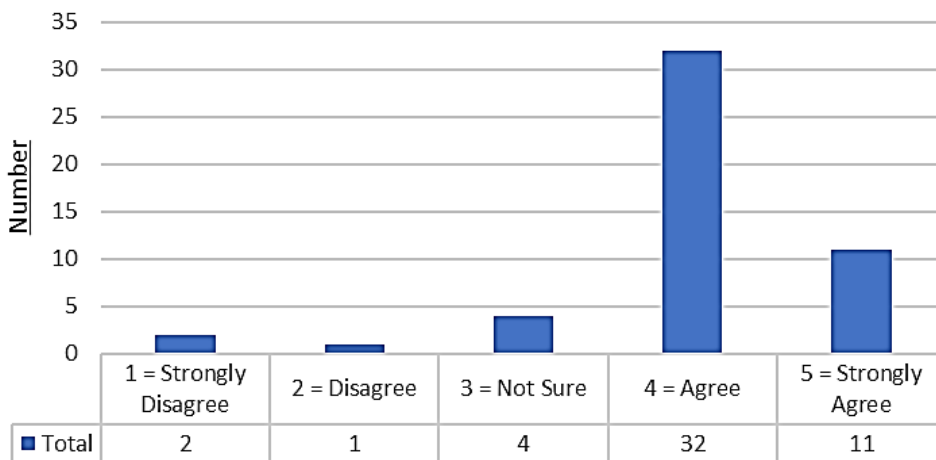


Figure 9. Teacher Survey Question 9: teachers' responses to agreement level that the school administration supports the academic needs of students (n = 50)

Statement 10, parents/guardians are involved in their child's education, yielded not so favorable results. The highest response rate of disagree had 24 responses (48%). Following this, the not sure category had 13 responses (28%) and the strongly disagree category had 5 (10%). The agree category had 7 responses (14%) and the strongly agree had 1 (2%). As noted, the data collected with this statement demonstrates a need for parent/guardian involvement and is concerning since the more involved the parents/guardians are, the greater support their child will have for school success. The data collection should be reviewed further and raises a question of: Why is there a lack of parent/guardian involvement?

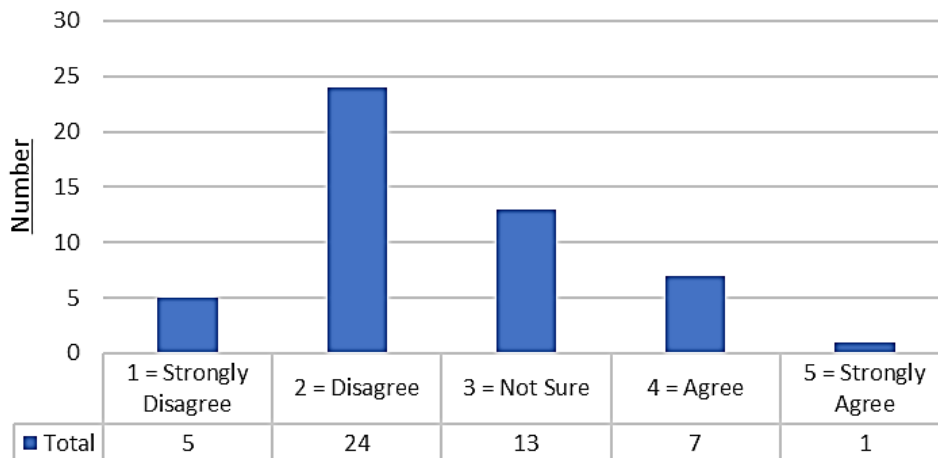


Figure 10. Teacher Survey Question 10: teachers' responses to agreement level that parents/guardians are involved in their child's education (n = 50)

Statement 11 asked the agreement level to teachers supporting the instructional needs of one another. The highest response rate (58%) was in the agree category with 29 teachers responding. The strongly agree category had 7 responses (14%), the not sure category had 10 responses (20%), and the disagree category had 4 teacher responses (8%). None of the teachers strongly disagreed. This data supports the newly designed learning walks and teacher presented professional development put in place. With 72% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement, it appears as if the teacher designed supports put in place are received well.

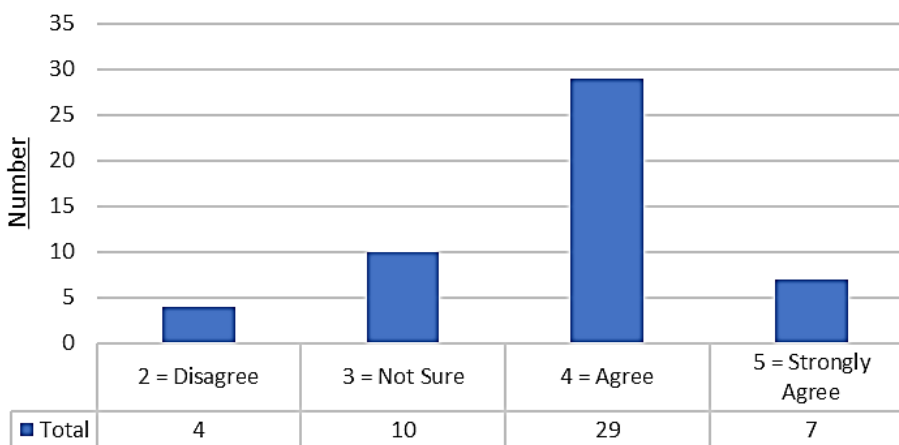


Figure 11. Teacher Survey Question 11: teachers' responses to agreement level that teachers support the instructional needs of one another (n = 50)

For statement 12, the administration discusses the academics with faculty and staff, 86% of the teachers agreed (60%) or strongly agreed (26%) as noted in the categories. For the category of not sure, 4 teachers responded (8%). The disagree category had a return of 3 responses (6%) with the strongly disagree category having none. The data is in line with the academic conversations that continually take place. Since a new way of work had to be initiated to pull ABC123 high school out of turnaround status, discussion of academics through a teaching and learning lens has become the norm on campus.

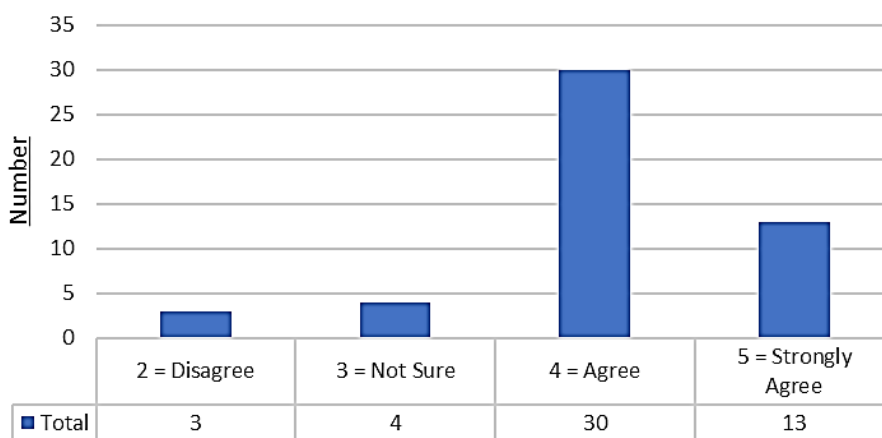


Figure 12. Teacher Survey Question 12: teachers' responses to agreement level that the administration discusses academics with the faculty and staff (n = 50)

Statement 13 asked the agreement level to the administration discussing academics with students. The highest response category was agree with 28 responses (56%). Following this, the not sure category at 10 responses (20%), the strongly agree category has 9 responses (18%), the disagree category had 3 responses (6%), and the strongly disagree category had none. With 74% of the teachers acknowledging that the administration discusses academic with students, this data in conjunction with statement 9 is in alignment with the instructional priority of student academic discussion from the administrative team.

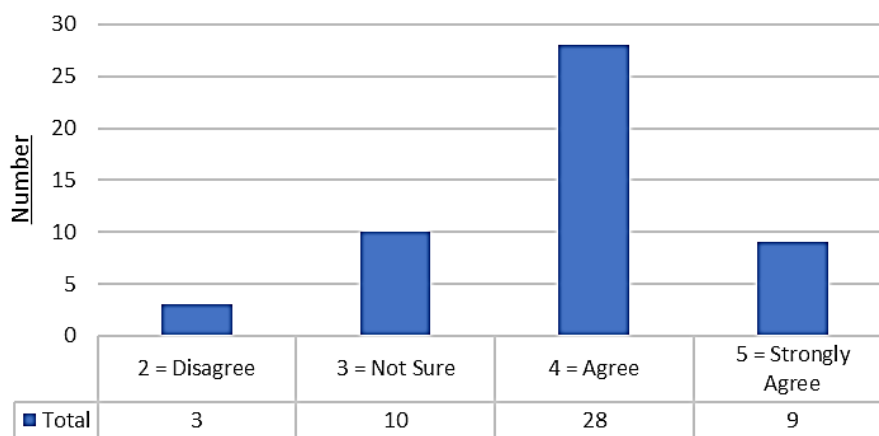


Figure 13. Teacher Survey Question 13: teachers' responses to agreement level that the administration discusses academics with students (n = 50)

Statement 14 asked the agreement level to the administration discussing academics with the parents/guardians. The highest response category was agree with 22 responses (44%). Following this, the not sure category at 13 responses (26%), disagree category had 8 responses (16%), the strongly agree category has 7 responses (14%), and the strongly disagree category had none. The interpretation from this data collection is that 29 teachers (58%) are aware of the parent/guardian academic conversations taking place, many of which are to support the teaching and learning taking place in classrooms. Since 42% of the teachers are not sure or do not agree that the discussion is taking place, this is an area that needs further review to ensure that teachers have awareness of the academic talks that are occurring.

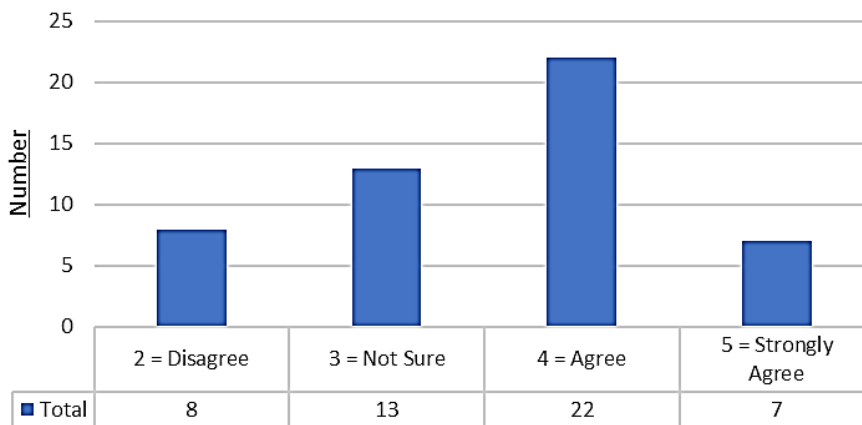


Figure 14. Teacher Survey Question 14: teachers' responses to agreement level that the administration discusses academics with the parents/guardians (n = 50)

Statement 15 obtains agreement level to professional development being provided at school. The highest response of agree had 23 teacher responses (46%). The second highest category was strongly agree with 21 responses (42%). The disagree category had 4 responses (8%), the not sure category had 2 responses (4%), and the strongly disagree category has none. With 88% of the teachers recognizing that professional development is provided on campus. This data is encouraging and in line with the instructional supports put in place through PLC's, learning walks, teacher led trainings, and coaching cycles.

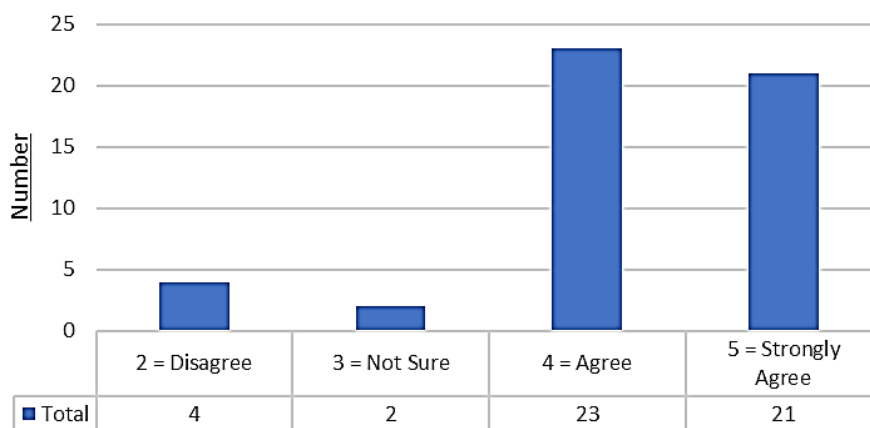


Figure 15. Teacher Survey Question 15: teachers' responses to agreement level that professional development is provided at their school (n = 50)

For statement 16, the administration discusses school culture with the faculty and staff, 23 teachers (46%) agree. From the other agreement level categories, 17 teachers (34%) strongly agree, 3 teachers (6%) are not sure, 5 teachers (10%) disagree, and 2 teachers (4%) strongly disagree. With 80% of the teachers recognizing that the discussion of school culture take place, I am fortified by these results. The implication here is the school culture and all that it encompasses is a frequent topic of conversation on campus.

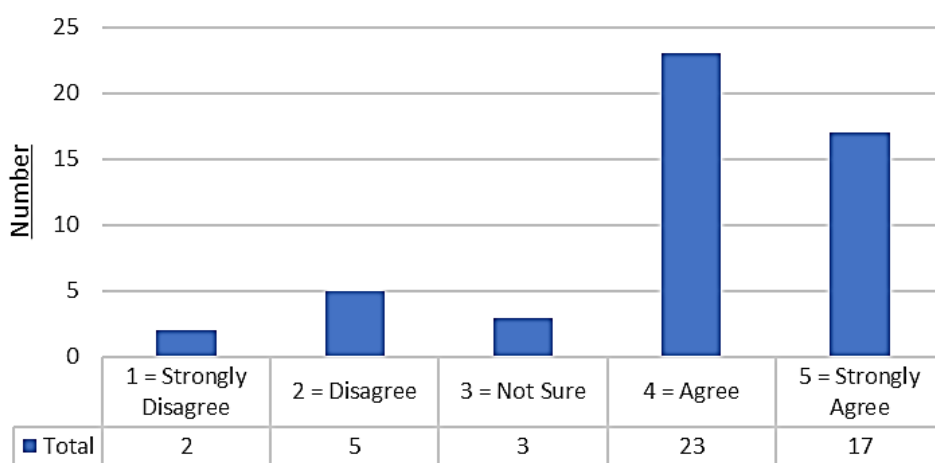


Figure 16. Teacher Survey Question 16: teachers' responses to agreement level that the administration discusses school culture with the faculty and staff (n = 50)

Statement 17 asked the agreement level to the community being involved with the school. The highest response category was disagree with 23 teacher responses (46%). The not sure category had 10 responses (20%). The agree category had 9 responses (18%). The strongly disagree category had 5 responses (10%) and the strongly agree had 3 (6%). The response rates here are like those in statement 10 where 48% of the teachers responded that they disagreed with the notion that parents/guardians are involved in their child's education. Though concerning, these two statements draw a paralleled conclusion that outside involvement with the school is needed. Further review of this statement and

that of statement 10 need to occur, especially defining exactly what community involvement looks like.

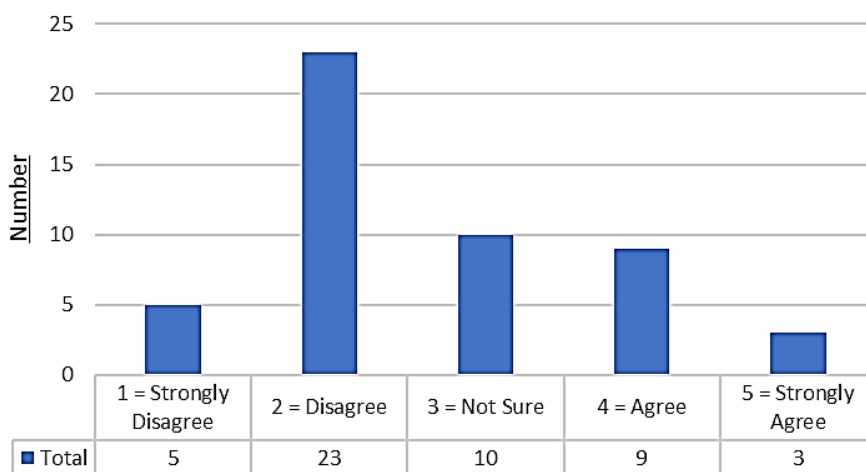


Figure 17. Teacher Survey Question 17: teachers' responses to agreement level that the community is involved with the school (n = 50)

The last three statements (18-20) of the teacher survey examine insights on positive school culture, if school culture impacts student achievement, and if the school culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement. For statement 18, the school has a positive school culture, 27 teachers (54%) agree. The second highest response was in the disagree category with 9 responses (18%). The not sure category had 7 responses (14%). The strongly agree category had 5 responses (10%) and the strongly disagree category had 2 (4%). The interpretation of the data indicates that 64% of the teachers who responded feel that ABC123 high school has a positive school culture. Although this agreement represents most of the respondents, there is need for further review to bridge the gap for the 36% of the teachers who don't. The implication for further review would allow for members to express their *why* behind the statement and to conduct a root cause analysis of the current culture on campus.

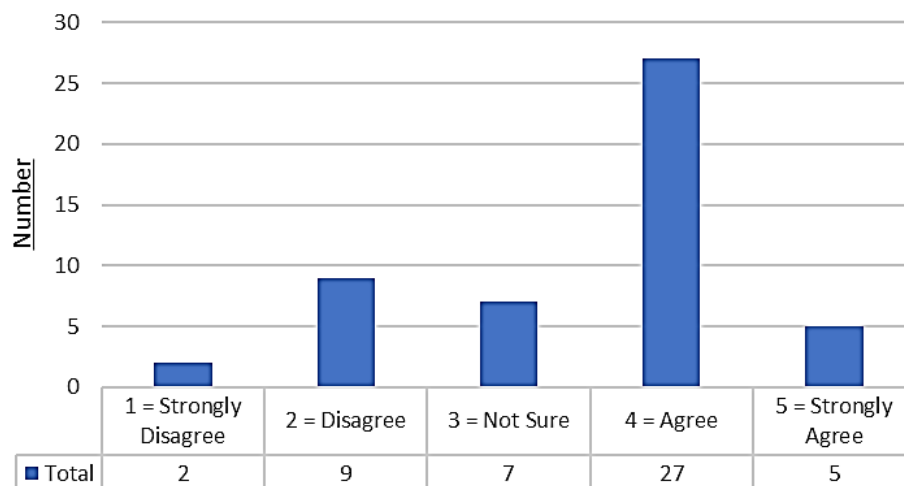


Figure 18. Teacher Survey Question 18: teachers' responses to agreement level that the school has a positive school culture (n = 50)

Statement 19 extracts data about the perception of school culture impacting student achievement. The highest agreement level was in the category of agree with 26 teachers responding (52%). Following this, the next highest category was strongly agree with 19 responses (38%). The not sure category yielded 4 responses (8%) and the disagree yielded 1 (2%). None of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. The implication from this data review indicates that 90% of the teachers feel that school culture impacts student achievement. Through this is the case, which is positive, a further review is needed to breakdown exactly what about school culture makes the impact.

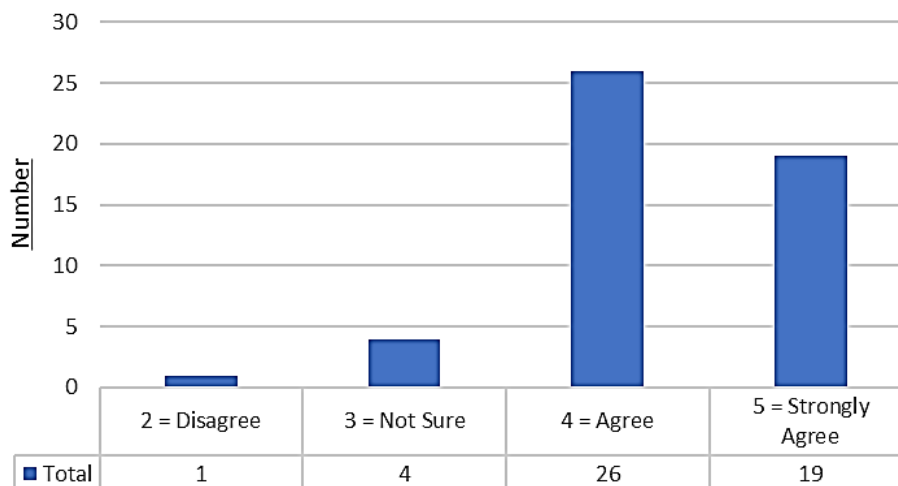


Figure 19. Teacher Survey Question 19: teachers' responses to agreement level that school culture impacts student achievement (n = 50)

The last agreement level statement of the survey is statement 20, the school culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement. The highest agreement level was in the category of agree with 27 teachers responding (54%). Following this, the next highest category was strongly agree with 16 responses (32%). The not sure category yielded 3 responses (6%). The disagree category had 3 responses (6%) and the strongly disagree had 1 response (2%). With 88% of the teachers indicating they feel that the administrative team's culture impacts student achievement, the administrative team needs to promote a positive culture to safeguard the best results for said achievement. The implication from the data collection here dictates that the school's leadership team impacts the academic success of the study body and should be examined on a regular basis to promote success for all.

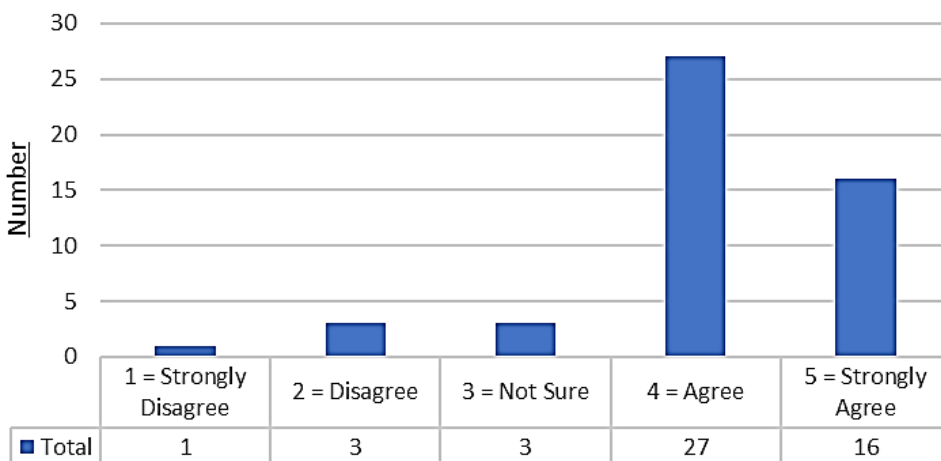


Figure 20. Teacher Survey Question 20: teachers' responses to agreement level that school culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement (n = 50)

Teacher Survey Open-Ended Questions - Quantitative Data Findings. The following teacher survey questions (21-26) represent insight given from open-ended style questions. The data presented for this qualitative approach will be emergent themes and any outliers for each question. Open-ended survey question 21 asked the teachers what is working well regarding the culture at the school. Two major themes appeared through the inspection of the respondents' thoughts. The first major theme presented is the respectful and accepting relationships among the students, faculty, and staff on campus. Many teachers acknowledged how well students get along with the different stakeholders on campus and how accepting they are of the cultural differences represented throughout the school. The second major theme presented is the support teachers have for one another. As the second most reported theme, teachers noted the helpfulness and collaboration many embark on to support not only the teaching needs of one another, but the learning needs of the students.

In addition to the abovementioned themes, a few outlier responses are important to note. First, 2 teachers indicated that the student incentive program on campus is

working well in respect to school culture. These teachers noted that the use of the falcon buck system has been a positive addition to celebrate students who are doing the right thing. A second outlier was noted from 3 teachers who stated that the culture of professional development is working well and that they are benefiting from the learning. The final outlier, the support of the administrative team, was noted by 4 teachers. The data inspection of this open-ended question indicates that respect, collaboration, incentives, and administrator support are elements of what is working well with school culture.

Open-ended survey question 22 asked the teachers what was not working well regarding the culture at school. Two major themes appeared through the inspection of the respondents' thoughts. First, several of the teachers reported that many of the students do not take pride in their academics and are apathetic. Though this was a constant response throughout this question, some teachers also noted that the apathy could be due to outside influences. Nonetheless, this insight and that of statement question 6, students take pride in their academics, is an indication that further review is needed to increase the culture for learning where students take a more positive approach regarding their academic success.

The second theme that was noted is a lack of trust between the teachers and the administrative team. The data point here is an implication of administrator turnover where new expectations and accountability have been brought to the forefront of the way of work on campus. Though this is the case, there were some teachers that accredited the administrators with building trust and accountability in the previous question. Nonetheless, the data trend of lack of trust indicates a need for further review.

An outlier important to annotate came from 2 teachers who indicated the lack of communication with parents/guardians is an element that is not working well. Although this is not a major theme in this question, this perception along with statement questions 11 and 17 need to be further investigated to safeguard the support for students both on and off campus. The findings in this question suggest that teachers are desiring improved student academic accountability, enhanced trust with administrators, and a greater line of communication with parents/guardians, all of which will optimistically safeguard the desired positive school culture on campus.

Open-ended survey question 23 asked teachers what could be improved with the culture at school. Four themes emerged from the teacher responses and are connected to the responses in survey question 22, what is not working well regarding the culture at school. First, the lack of trust between teachers and administrators was noted. Secondly, the improvement of student accountability in respect to discipline and academics was apparent. The third matter stated was an increased need for community and parent/guardian support. Lastly, teachers responded with a want for more cross-department collaboration. I interpret these data points to mean that teacher visions for what can be improved regarding school culture need to be further reviewed and discussed, especially to create buy-in from and for all stakeholders.

Open-ended question 24 asked teachers if they feel there is a strong culture for learning at school. The inspection of this question generated three insights. The first insight of yes had 24 responses (48%), noting that almost half of the teachers felt the culture for learning is strong. The insight of no had 15 responses (30%) and 11 teachers (22%) felt the culture for learning needed to be improved. I interpret these data points as

although half of the respondents felt the culture for learning is strong, there needs to be further assessment on ways to grow and improve said culture to preserve student learning.

Open-ended survey question 25 asked teachers how (if at all) does the culture of the administrative team impact student achievement. The major theme that transpired through the teacher responses was that support from the administrators can have an impact. The support, as noted by many teachers, is needed for both students and teachers if the impact on student achievement is going to be a positive one. Furthermore, to this theme, some teachers responded that the consistency of the administrators to hold both students and teachers accountable is an important aspect of how the culture influences achievement. I interpret these data points from the collective teacher responses that teachers feel strong support, consistency, and accountability from the administrators on campus will have helpful dividends on the achievement level of the students.

The last open-ended survey question, 26, elicited responses regarding how adequate the support is to increase the school culture and academic achievement. From the responses, 30 teachers (60%) noted that the support is adequate, using terms like: excellent; amazing; good; and sufficient. The remaining 20 teachers (40%) either felt that support needs to be improved or is lacking. From the inspection of the responses, this is an area of need and will require further review. Although the majority feel that the support is acceptable, there is a need to improve and grow the support for the remaining teachers, which will also impact the trust necessary to create more buy-in to continue to move the school in a forward direction.

Parent/Guardian Survey. The questions on the survey were intended to elicit information about what is working well and what is not in respect to the school's culture and its impact on student achievement. Unfortunately, only 5 responses (0.3%) were received. In retrospect, the lack of responses could be due to the language barrier of many of the parents/guardians as well as their minimal involvement on and off campus.

Teacher Focus Group - Qualitative Data Findings. In addition to the open-ended questions on the teacher survey, to obtain further qualitative data from the examination on school culture's impact on student achievement, I conducted a teacher focus group (Appendix C) with 15 teachers, representing the different content department on campus, which last 44 minutes. The information from the teacher focus group explored the thoughts of teachers in respect to ABC123's school culture, student achievement, and any potential shift over the past two years.

For question 1, the question asked the teachers what their definition of school culture is. From the discussion, the most common response was school culture is shared beliefs supported by positive attitudes and feelings. Another common response was school culture is the way of work at a school, to include sound systems to support teaching and learning. The data collected from the discussion suggests that teachers feel school culture should be systematic in nature and promote a community for the common good, which demonstrates a shared vision for an environment that supports optimal instruction for teachers and great learning for students.

For question 2, the question asked the teachers to describe what school culture looks like in a classroom. The major theme that emerged from the discussion was high expectations for student learning through work that is valuable and meaningful. Another

theme noted was respectful interactions between all members of the classroom. In addition to these, a third theme that appeared was that classroom culture is the backgrounds and experiences the students bring with them to the learning setting. The data collected suggests that the teachers agree and believe that culture in a classroom embraces student conditions through respectful connections that support significant work where the expectation for student learning is elevated.

For question 3, teachers were asked what student achievement means to them. Two major ideas came from the discussion. First, the teachers felt that student achievement represents academic growth over a period time. The second idea was that student achievement is the competence and confidence related to academic performance. An outlier, one teacher connected student achievement to the VAM (Value Added Model) scores received from district and state assessment as part of the teacher evaluation. The data suggests that most of the teachers feel that student achievement represents the learning development and performance level of the students. Teachers seem to have an understanding that students will expand their level of learning over time, creating more academic capacity.

Question 4 asked teachers if they think school culture impacts student achievement. The unified answer from the discussion was yes. The teachers magnified their agreement through the idea that culture helps students lead themselves from I can't too I can. Moreover, another idea that transpired in respect to school culture impacting student achievement was that learning is contagious and should be supported by the type of culture in place. The data suggests that teachers feel that student achievement is

impacted by the culture at a school, which demonstrates a shared vision for a strong culture for learning to positively impact student learning.

Question 5 asked the teachers what the biggest challenge in ensuring a positive school culture was. From the responses in the discussion, three viewpoints came about. The first is the consistency and follow through in respect to setting high expectations for learning and holding students accountable. The teachers discussed the need for accountability measures to be enhanced, especially in the area of student discipline. The second viewpoint shared is the lack of buy-in to promote a positive school culture. This idea was presented in respect to the disconnect among some of the faculty and staff with the administration. Furthermore, it was stated that the lack of buy-in could be a result of the need to build greater trust among all, which certainly can impact the positivity of the culture at a school. The last viewpoint stated was the absence of parental and community involvement, which was also noted in survey questions 10 and 18. The data suggests there is a further need for review which can be achieved via a root cause analysis of the noted elements that the teachers state are infringing upon the positive school culture, which ultimately may have impacts on student learning.

For question 6, the teachers were asked what is working well regarding the culture at school. The major theme that arose was the respectful relationships among students and students, and students and teachers. In addition to this, throughout the discussion of this question, the teachers also made mention that the content departments work well. That is, the teachers in the individual departments work cohesively with one another. The data suggests that the teachers value the kind and supportive relationships established

on campus, which demonstrates their feel that the collegial atmosphere is something that is work well at school.

Question 7 asked the teachers what they felt are the challenges around ensuring a good culture for learning were. The most common idea that was presented was the lack of consistency among classrooms in respect to students being held to and accountable for high expectations of learning. The data suggests that if all classroom teachers were on the same page in respect to the uniformity to hold students accountable for their learning, then there would be less barriers to guaranteeing a good culture that supports said learning.

For question 8, the teachers were asked if they felt there was a greater culture for learning over the past two years. From the discussion, teachers agreed that there is. The idea presented is that although there is continued work to be done to augment the culture for learning, there has been improvement with the expectation for lesson planning and for instructional technique, which benefits student learning. Though this is the case, 1 teacher responded that the shift to pedagogy practice should not neglect experience in field. Thus, teaching practices should not be overshadowed by content knowledge. The data from this question suggests that teachers acknowledge the shift in the culture over the past two years as noted by increased knowhow with lesson planning and teaching techniques, though there is need for further review to continue the improvement for student learning.

Administrator Interviews - Qualitative Data Findings. As an additional part of the qualitative data collection, I scheduled administrator interviews (Appendix E) with the school administrators at ABC123 high school. My goal was to conduct interviews

with up to 5 administrators, both males and females, whose administrative experience averaged 6 years. I was able to interview 3 school administrators (60% response rate) as one administrator was promoted to another position and the other was out of town during the interview timeframe. Each interview lasted an estimated 24 minutes and provided perspective on school culture and academic achievement through an administrator lens from the Principal, the Assistant Principal for Administration, and one of the Assistant Principals for Student Affairs.

Question 1 of the administrator interview asked the respondents to define school culture. The responses elicited two themes. The first is the attitudes, expectations and the values people bring to school. The second is the school's brand along with the procedures and systems put in place to support the educational operation. The data suggests that although the themes are slightly different, school culture has both feeling and systematic elements that creates its functionality.

For question 2, the administrators were asked to describe what culture looks like in the classroom. From the responses, many collective thoughts about the description occurred. First, all administrators agreed that culture in a classroom is characterized by the active learning taking place within the classroom through the interaction between students and students, as well as students and teacher. Along with this, one administrator described the culture as the way students take pride in their work. An additional idea about the defined culture are the procedures and rules being adhered to. From the shared responses, the data suggests that despite the fact there are multiple layers to what classroom culture looks like, the central focus is on the student learning.

For question 3, the interviewees were asked to explain the culture of the administrative team. Collectively, all three administrators noted that the culture is one that is supportive, team minded, and unified. Along with this, one administrator stated that administrative culture is one that has a growth mindset and is academically oriented and student-centered. One administrator stated that in addition to the supportive aspect of the culture, it is one that has consistency with the expectations that everyone needs to support the teaching and learning occurring on campus. From the responses, the data indicates a centralized notion that the culture of the administrative team is cohesive with supportive elements that focus on learning.

Question 4 asked if the administrators think the teachers feel supported by the administrative team. From the responses, one administrator thinks so due to the supports put in place to assist with instructional needs. The other two administrators think that most of the teachers do but acknowledge that there are some that do not. The communal responses from these two leaders note that the teachers who have utilized the learnings from the professional development sessions, the assistance from the instructional coaches, and the feedback cycles from the administrative team feel supported. The responses also included the idea that for those who have not taken advantage of the support and/or for those who do not trust the administrative team most likely do not feel supported. From the response, the data suggests that when assistance is taken advantage of, the teachers' feeling that they are supported by the administrators is secured and recognized.

Like question 4, question 5 asked if the administrators think students feel supported by the administrative team. All three administrators stated that they think most

of the students do. This notion stems from the open-door policy that administrators have in respect to providing space for students to ask questions, express concerns, and share successes. The responses also note that while some students may not be happy about a decision made, the students for the most part do appreciate that they have a place and the respect to be self-advocates. The data from this question indicates that students are supported on campus and can engage the administrators as needed in a setting that allows collective conversation and collaboration to occur.

Question 6 is like questions 4 and 5 as it asked the administrators if they think the parents/guardians feel supported by the administrative team. All three responses indicated yes for those who have engaged and interacted with the team. Furthering this answer, one administrator stated that the team is winning families over one conversation at a time. Another administrator notes that through the SAC and PTSA, parents/guardians have the occasion to interact with the administrative team for a common good. All three school leaders make mention that though supports are in place for the parents/guardians, this is an area that needs growth, specifically to provide support for many of the families on campus. From the responses, I interpret the data to mean that for parents/guardians who have partnered with the administrative team, support is felt, but there is a need for further review to expand the support to more families.

Question 7 asked what student achievement means to the administrators. From the responses, two ideas transpired. First, two administrators described student achievement as meaning the ability to pass state assessments as well as earn passing grades for courses taken. The second, as responded by the third administrator, notes that

student achievement is the academic growth. The data suggests that although the answers somewhat differ, student achievement is measurable.

To continue discussion on academic achievement, question 8 asked the school administrators what they could do to enhance the school culture to support student academic achievement. From the answers, all three respondents stated a need to work with teachers to help them protect the culture in their classroom, which will permeate to the culture in the school, having a positive impact on academics. Working with the teachers in the areas of classroom procedures, student engagement in learning, and scaffolding techniques to reach all students were suggestions given to support the teachers to help create a culture for learning that yields encouraging results. The data suggests that in order to enhance the school culture to support student academic achievement, backings must be in place to assist teachers with all aspects of the teaching and learning occurring in their classroom.

Question 9 asked if school culture impacts student achievement. From the responses, all three administrators answered yes. Furthermore, the administrators collectively explained that when students feel good about where they are and have a voice in their learning, they tend to do better, resulting in higher achievement. From this response, the data clearly advocates that student achievement is impacted by the school culture and can be improved when students have a greater feeling about their learning environment.

Question 10 asked as an instructional leader, how could the administrators create a culture of academic excellence. From the responses, three suggestions arose. The first, by two administrators, suggests being present in classrooms daily and providing

timely feedback to teachers with specific suggestions to support areas of growth and examples of what is working well in respect to the teaching and learning occurring. Along with this, both administrators discussed acknowledging the academic excellence and growth of students. The third suggestion by the third administrator discusses the importance of having conversations with students about academic performance and how they are held accountable for their achievement and any actions that negatively impact their success. From the data, I conclude that to create a culture of academic excellence, instructional leaders need to engage in conversation with both students and teachers about the learning and teaching being observed and provide meaningful feedback to build greater capacity for success.

Question 11 asked how do you promote good relationships. From the responses, three suggestions were provided. One administrator suggested having an open line of communication where all parties involved are given an opportunity listen, receive, and respond to what is being communicated in a respectful manner. This leader explained that by doing so, the individuals involved in the communication will have a transparent understanding of what the communication is about. The second administrator responded with a suggestion to ensure proper and timely follow up is in place to solidify the supportive partnerships needed for good relationships. The third administrator explained that good relationships are executed from positive interactions between people. This individual further accounted that whether it's asking how someone's day is going, how a family member is, how a particular lesson went, or even by writing a card to recognize a job well done and/or a thank you for help that was given, being consistent with these niceties helps to promote good relationships. The data from the responses ultimately

suggests that encouraging interactions with sound communication will help to solidify and foster relationships that are positive, respectful, and kind.

For question 12, the respondents were asked how they would involve parents in their child's education. One administrator responded that the involvement is about the opportunities created for the engagement to transpire. That is, hold events on campus such as conference night, academic celebrations, and townhall meetings where the parents/guardians have the chance to interact with their child's teacher, thus increasing the involvement. The other two administrators responded with making sure there is constant communication about their child's education with an insertion of supports as needed. The data from these responses implies that the involvement level of a child's parent/guardian could be increased with firm communication about the happenings of their child, along with structured events where interactions among the stakeholder groups can occur.

Question 13, what is working well regarding the culture at school, produced an overarching response from all three administrators that the student and teacher support, as well as celebration of accomplishments for faculty, staff, and students is glowing. To further this response, the administrators noted that members of the faculty and staff are working to support the mission and vision of the school. Additionally, there has been a constructive improvement with the positive behavioral systems in place, enhanced professional development, showcasing of teachers' instructional techniques, and the helping in giving the teachers a voice in the direction of the school. The data outlines that through support structures that also recognize and revel success, a school's culture can be working well for the betterment of all.

For question 14, the administrators were asked to pinpoint what can be improved with the culture at school. From the responses, two administrators explained that teacher and administrator consistency could be examined for improvement. The third administrator discussed the continuing need to break down barriers between the administration and the teachers to build more trust. Outside of these suggestions, an increase in academics in the form of more industry certifications could be addressed. From the responses, the data suggests a need to review the inconsistency and lack of trust occurring on campus.

Question 15 asked the school leaders what effective instructional leadership looks like. Collectively, all three administrators pontificated that effective instructional leadership is having the ability to discuss academics with teachers (and students) and provide structured and targeted feedback that teachers can attain and put in to use to support the learning in their classroom. The data clearly suggests that administrators need to have the skillset to provide suggestions that will amplify the teaching and learning occurring in a classroom, to ultimately push the academic envelope of the students.

For question 16, the administrators were asked what the greatest challenge with school culture is and how it can be addressed. One administrator noted the time needed to support all aspects of a school's culture. Due to the lack of time, distributed leadership was discussed to build a greater capacity to fulfill the elements needed for a strong culture to be sustained. Another administrator discussed the consistency needed to ensure continued support, follow up, and follow through in respect to students and teacher needs. The suggestion to address this concern is to make sure organization is all-

encompassing. A third takeaway from the remaining administrator is that the everchanging need in Education makes the consistency with a school's culture challenging. With mandates changing, a new initiative being presented, or even different groups of students passing through the school, the culture is a lively phenomenon that should be viewed throughout the year to triage as needed. From the responses, the data ultimately implies that the challenge with culture is that it has many layers that need support when the climate is constantly changing.

The last administrator interview question, question 17, asked the administrators if they felt there is a greater culture for learning over the past two years and why or why not. The collective response was yes. The "why" behind the answer is due to a strong support of teacher professional development to help improve student learning. In addition, the administrators discussed the increasing academic points related to school grade; there has been a 51-point improvement in the school grade calculation and a 15% increase in graduation rate over the past two years. From these responses, the data clearly suggests that the culture for learning has become greater over time partly due to the professional learning put in place to aid in student learning.

Student Achievement Data. As detailed in the last administrator interview question, ABC123 high school achieved a school grade gain of 51 points with a graduation rate increase of 15% over the past two years. The results from this data are in line with teacher focus group question 8 and administrator interview question 17 that the culture for learning has shifted over the last two years. From this data, it is clear that the culture for learning has increased, yielding greater results for students.

Year	Graduation Rate (Prior Year)	College and Career Acceleration (Prior)	Total Points Earned	% of Total Possible Points
2019	90	44	526	53
2018	85	43	534	53
2017	75	45	475	48

Figure 21. Florida Department of Education, fldoe.org PK-12 Portal, High School Academic Points and Graduation Rates, retrieved from <https://edstats.fldoe.org/>

Organizational Changes

After careful review and analysis of the data collected from the perceptions of the teachers and school administrators as noted from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews, organizational changes are needed to safeguard the most conducive school culture to support student academic achievement. The changes here, as they relate to the evaluation of culture and the impact on student achievement, are to increase the trust between faculty and the administration, enhance the professional development provided to teachers to support sound instructional practices that will benefit all students, and boost the parent/guardian collaboration and involvement on and off campus to provide an additional layer of support for student learning.

From the findings, I have learned that trust between teachers and the administrative team is an important part of a school's culture. The data from the teacher survey and teacher focus group indicate that although there has been a positive increase to the culture at school, there is still work to be done in respect to the trust between the instructional members of the school's community. The lack of trust as noted by the teachers could be an indication that more transparent communication is needed in respect to the expectations for teaching and learning, particularly related to classroom observation feedback. Moreover, there is a need for teacher voice in the decisions that are made on campus. When this occurs, more buy-in for the vision and mission of the

school will come to cultivation. Ultimately, when all instructional members are on the same page, academically, the greater the trust and confidence for one another will occur. When this goal takes place, a greater culture for learning will emerge, impacting a greater number of students.

Building amplified trust between the instructional groups on campus will open the transparency of the expectations and accountability needed for teaching and learning. As a result of the research conducted, a continued goal that the administration will champion is the professional development provided to support the instructional priorities of literacy across all contents through firm lesson planning to meet the needs of all students while promoting active learning through engagement and assessment. Although the teachers noted, by their responses in the survey, that professional development is provided on campus, the organizational change will streamline teacher learning opportunities to push student learning to the next level. The insight that I gained from this finding is that providing opportunities for the teachers to professionally learn from one another, from the instructional coaches, and from the administrative team is an ongoing need. The greater the learning that can take place for the teachers, the greater the learning that will occur for the students. As the needs of the students change from year to year, it is important to equip the teachers with the knowledge and resources on how to meet the changing needs. The best way to do so is by providing continued opportunities for teachers to learn.

Moreover, to the above desired changes, the improved parent/guardian involvement will bridge the gap between the happenings inside and outside of the school building. These changes, as placed in the larger educational context, will provide layers

of support for all stakeholders. Once this occurs, potential barriers for strong partnerships and professional learning will dissipate, creating a culture for learning that is sound, respectful, and academically focused. From the findings, it is clear that the goal of improved parent/guardian involvement in critical if ABC123 high school is going to continue to climb to academic excellence. I have learned, from the data collected, that the teachers strongly feel the same. Without the support of the parents/guardians, the outside learning opportunities for the students may not be as plentiful, thus not exhausting their educational potential, resulting in less academic achievement.

I selected the aforementioned organizational changes to support the learning of all students. Through my professional experience as an Assistant Principal for Curriculum, it has become apparent the need to amplify the supports in place for teachers, students, and parents/guardians, and to promote learning practices that will ultimately graduate more students from high school. As noted in the Introduction, ABC123 high school was in turnaround status with the school district. Because of this, a great need to change the learning practices of students was evident. Additionally, the data collected from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews supports the necessity for organizational change. Without the element of trusting and collaborative partnerships, the opportunity to maximize for learning to the highest degree (100% of students graduate from high school) may not come to fruition. Reeves (2009) states, “organizational culture will change with leadership actions ... and change in culture requires relentless personal attention by the leader” (Reeves, 2009, pp. 38-39). Though ABC123 is no longer in turnaround status as a result of the enhancements put in place, there is still quality work to be done, which needs to be led by members of the leadership

team, to continue building a strong culture for learning to optimize the academic achievement of all.

Utilizing the 4C's "AS-IS" (Appendix J) diagnostic chart from Wagner et al. (2006), foundational insight is provided on the systematic elements of ABC123 high school. When looking through the systematic lens, school leaders can think "systematically about the challenges and goals of change in schools" where the 4C's of context, culture, conditions, and competencies are examined (Wager et al., 2006, p. 98). The points of each of the 4C's provides a baseline of information to understand where ABC123 high school is in relation to the four elements and the where anticipated change will allow ABC123 high school to go.

Context. The context pillar provides information on the reality of the school from a global, state, or community perspective (Wagner et al., 2006). Upon arrival to ABC123 high school, the school's status of turnaround indicates low student performance on state assessments and low graduation rate (75% of students graduating from school). This state perspective compares these results to those across the area and details a need for change. In addition to this, the school has a Title I tier of renaissance school due to the high percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch. This is an indication that the community in which the many of the students come from is one that is economically disadvantaged.

Many of these students also receive Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and/or English Language Learner (ELL) services, marking the school as one with a high ESE and ELL population. Furthermore, to this, a new administrative team has been in place, igniting a high administrator turnover to occur with three new school leaders (new

Principal, new Assistant Principal for Curriculum, and new Assistant Principal for Administration) being positioned. These changes along with the economic and educational barriers many of the students encounter prior to even setting foot campus creates a need, igniting concern for potential disconnects. Nevertheless, with the organizational changes recommended, ABC123 high school will be able to support the learning of all.

Culture. For the next pillar of culture, it is defined as “the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality relationships within and beyond the school” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102). In looking at ABC123 high school’s culture through this defined lens, the following are elements of this pillar that support the need for organizational change.

First, there is a lack of trust between the faculty and the administration as noted by teacher responses during data collection. Partly due to the new administrative team positioned at the school, the internal disconnect between the school leaders and those who are led creates a non-favorable cultural situation, especially when support is needed for teaching and learning. The lack of trust here may also permeate to the community, especially with the parents/guardians, as there is little involvement with student learning from this stakeholder group.

In addition to the above culture elements, enhanced areas of professional development are needed in the area of lesson planning for students with a focus on student engagement and assessment that support literacy in all content areas. Furthermore, the professional development will open prospects for teacher collaboration.

By providing such erudition for teachers, an active culture for learning can be established which will help preserve, improve, and raise the expectations the unguarded culture for learning.

Conditions. The conditions pillar relates to the outside architecture linked to student learning (Wagner et al., 2006). Although not a major theme presented in the teacher and focus group discussion, teachers did note there is insufficient time provided for lesson planning. This lack of time in the teaching day limits teachers' ability to adequately prepare and assess the lesson plan's effectiveness on student learning.

Another condition noted in the need to have more focused time for adult learning to occur to learn new methods and approaches to exhaust the learning opportunities of students. Even though professional development is presented, there is a need to have consistent times in which the learning is taking place, as well as a focus to support the instructional priorities set forth.

Competencies. Competencies, the fourth pillar of the 4c's, is "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 99). As noted from the data collection of the administrator interviews, teachers need and deserve support in knowledge for methods in creating lesson plans that narrow the standards, as well as engage and assess students in the learning process.

The other competency addressed is knowledge on how to incorporate authentic literacy into all content areas. When authentic literacy takes hold, students will be able to acquire the needed academic language of the subjects being studied to better demonstrate knowledge of content standards throughout the learning process. By addressing both

competencies, teachers will have the toolkit and developed knowhows that will positively impact the learning for all.

Organizational Changes Next Steps

Through my study of school culture and its impact on student achievement, I have unanswered questions that assist in directing the plan of action for the needed organizational change. The first question is: What is the most practical way to improve the expectations and accountability set for student learning, not only from the teachers, but for the students and their parents/guardians as well? The second question is: What are the most practical ways to improve the involvement of the parents/guardians in the learning process of their child? Both questions direct attention to major hurdles at ABC123 high school as noted in the data collection from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and administrative interviews.

The organizational change plan to help secure the most beneficial learning environment for all would involve next steps and specific actions to make the organizational change come to realization. The first step towards the change would be to create a shared vision for the school. Since “organizational vision needs to inspire action”, the vision should embrace the perspectives of all stakeholders in the school community in order to activate deeds to move the school forward (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, p. 31). The action step to create a shared vision would be to hold a townhall meeting to discuss the school’s vision through a protocol system to make sure every perspective is heard for the common good. The protocol would allow the collaborative conversation to stay focused, all the while gaining insight about the beliefs and feelings of the stakeholders as they relate to the desired utopia for the school.

Once the shared vision is established, a needs assessment of the school would take place, especially related to context, culture, conditions, and competencies. Through this examination, a root cause analysis protocol could be used to help guide the “why” behind the areas (trust, student learning expectations, student learning outcomes, professional development, and parent/guardian involvement) that need review to help reach the school’s vision. Following this, a sound communication plan would be secured to correspond how improving each of the areas will benefit the school community. Once the communication of the plan occurs, the actual work of building trust, raising student learning expectations, increasing student learning outcomes, igniting new and forced professional development, and expanding parent/guardian involvement would take hold, allowing the school community to see the unified vision come to life.

By embarking on the above next steps and actions to achieve the desired organizational change, the study’s secondary questions around how culture impacts learning, how the culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement, and how adequate the support is to improve the culture and student achievement, can be realized. The relationship between the data collected to identify the change and the designed steps to achieve it is paramount. If the organizational change is implemented with fidelity and integrity, then the trust factor between teachers and administrators will improve, the participation of the parents/guardians on campus will be enhanced, and the professional development opportunities will be continued, all of which makes the culture for learning richer, promoting more academic success for all students.

As noted in the data collection, there is great need to intensify the community involvement at ABC123 high school. By doing so, not only will the layers of support for

student learning increase, but so will the support for parent/guardian understanding of how to assist in their child's educational journey. More community involvement would afford small businesses, churches, and community members to be a part of the happenings on campus. As noted by Marzano et al. (2005), "collective efficacy is a group of members' shared perception or belief that they can dramatically enhance the effectiveness of an organization" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 99). For the collaboration with the community to be secured, a cohesive understanding that partnership can positively benefit all members of the educational community must be understood, believed, and realized as supported by the shared values of all involved. For the parent/guardian involvement to adequately occur, there needs to be a strong partnership in which the school is giving back. Since many of the parents/guardians of the student body do not speak English with 100% confidence, classes on English acquisition can be offered as an opportunity to get more of the community on campus through the learning of English to better support the academic needs of their children. Moreover, opportunities to teach the parents/guardians on ways (tutoring services, steps to apply for financial aid and college, job search resources, etc.) they can support their child is essential. If these supports are in place, then ABC123 high school will receive an extended support system that embraces academic and work force needs of the students, helping them to transition to the chapter after high school graduation.

Once the above occurs, the data related to need for organizational change can be discussed and addressed. A perception survey can be given to gain additional insight from the community members on their evaluation of the outlined changes. Moreover, with this, faculty and staff can share the achievement data of the students to help educate

the community on the current academic status of the school. Through this overview, members of the community can share how their expertise can support the areas of change, as well as inform on the areas they need assistance with. By collaboratively analyzing the information pertinent to the change plan, questions, comments, and/or concerns can be talked through, adding additional layers of action steps to assist in the culmination of the organizational change plan.

Interpretation

The results from the study on school culture and its impact on student achievement present both positive findings and areas needed to be addressed for growth. By using the quantitative and qualitative data collection approach, I was able to extract valuable information from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, administrator interviews, and student achievement data (school points and graduation rate).

Unfortunately, however, and as noted in this chapter, the response rate from parent/guardian stakeholder group was minimal, causing the results to be unsound. Nonetheless, in reviewing the results from the data collected, I have been able to interpret what they mean, understanding the significance of the findings and gain insight as to why they turned out the way they did.

The overarching description of what the results mean is a direct correlation to the information gathered from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, administrator interview, and school achievement data, indicating that a strong school culture will positively impact the achievement of students. As a major theme from the data collected and in respect to the culture for strong interactions, the culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and feelings of the stakeholder groups as seen through different lenses but

solidified for the common good. I interpret the results from the teacher survey to mean that the culture on campus regarding respect for and understanding of individuals is paramount, establishing opportunities for collegial interactions and relationships among students and students, and between students and teachers.

The significance of these results is immense as it showcases the friendliness and caring attitudes of the students in which the school serves. The responses related to the questions that yielded this finding are not surprising and turned out the way they did due to the considerate actions of the students as they open up doors for each other and the adults on campus and say please and thank you when providing assistance, Genuinely speaking, the students have a carefree attitude towards their interactions on campus, which are reciprocated by the faculty and staff.

Though this is the case for student and teacher connection, the results also signify and describe a need to build trust between the teacher and administrator groups. I interpret the finding here to be due to the administrative turnover, the new expectations set for teaching and learning, as well as accountability measures through inspection of the expectations that occur. Though there is bountiful support provided for teaching and learning, the accountability by way of lesson planning, Professional Learning Communities, data chats, classroom walkthroughs, observations, and evaluations is prevalent, which causes some teachers to think the administrative team is looking for ways to negatively impact their professionalism. While this is not the case, it is the perception of said teachers. Even though the support is provided when needed and feedback is provided with evidence that showcases both the strengths and areas of growth

for what is being observed, some teachers do not want to fulfill the expected way of work.

The significance of these results is that without affirmative trust between the instructional groups on campus, gaps in the layers of support for students learning could occur, providing less assistance when and where needed. This is a critical issue on campus and needs an in-depth discussion with the administrative and teacher leader teams. By doing so, a foundational understanding on the “why” behind the lack of trust can be determined, providing insight for next steps to support organizational change. Since a significant number of teachers feel there is a lack of trust, it is crucial that we address the issue and demonstrate that we, as an administrative team, are listening to their teacher voice.

Another described result eluted to above is the enhanced professional development provided to support instructional practices that will promote successful learning for all students. Since ABC123 high school was a turnaround school at the start of the new administrative team’s tenure, an instructional focus via professional development was paramount. The significance of this result is that without the push to provide new methods for teaching and learning, the academic achievement levels of the students may not have surfaced to level in which they did, providing insight and an explanation for why the results generated the way they did.

After review of the data collected, a third described result from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and the administrator interviews is the critical need to increase the community’s involvement, particularly the parents/guardians of the students, to build a resilient collaborative partnership to nurture the educational vision and mission

of the school. A reasoning for why the results produced this perspective and as an unfortunate explanation as to why there is a lack of involvement could be the language barrier of the parents/guardians. Noted for the potential reason of the minimal survey response rate from this group, many of the parents/guardians have limited English speaking skills, which may cause them to have an insecurity with engaging the school's faculty and staff. This is significant since without the support of the family members of the students, it will be difficult to exhaust support for learning both in and outside of the school. Notwithstanding, the language barrier should not infringe upon the opportunity for a child to have the educationally involved support from their parent/guardian. This being the case, ABC123 high school needs to provide opportunities for parents/guardians to acquire the English language. Along with this, it is important that translators are available when parents/guardians do come on campus to help communicate any need or/and concern they may have. The more opportunity for conversation to occur, the greater the partnership between the stakeholder groups can occur, creating a positive change that supports student learning.

Judgments

Through the study of school culture and its impact on student achievement, the results provide perspective on answering the primary and secondary questions. The exploratory primary and secondary questions were used as the lens to produce the questions asked in the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and administrator interviews (no parent/guardian survey results due to minimal response rate). The primary exploratory questions for the study are: (1) How do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians describe school culture?, (2) What do the teachers, administrators, and

parents/guardians report is working well with the culture of the school?, (3) What do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report is not working well with the culture of the school?, and (4) What do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report as the greatest challenge(s) with the school's culture and how can we address these challenges? The secondary exploratory questions include: (1) According to the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians, how does the culture of the school impact learning?, (2) According to the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians, how does the culture of the administrative team impact student achievement?, and (3) According to the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians, how adequate (or not) is the support to improve school culture and academic achievement. Examining the responses to the questions asked helps to determine if the results answered the primary and secondary questions and if the results were positive, negative, or unclear, and are noted as follows.

For the primary question 1, the question asks how do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians describe school culture. Most of the results received from the data collection techniques answered this question as the feelings or beliefs of the stakeholders in the school's educational community. With the consistency of the definition, the school's culture has a solidified description which is a great starting point for the momentum needed to foster excellent teaching and learning. Since this finding encompasses the majority of the perspective, the results to this question are positive.

Primary question 2 asks what do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report is working well with the culture of the school. From the responses received, the findings answer the question by indicating that the professional

development implementation and the opportunity for teacher collaboration are working well. The finding here is positive since professional learning between teaching colleagues can help booster the instructional capacity, producing positive dividends on student learning.

Primary question 3 searches an answer from the stakeholder group in respect to what they report is not working well with the culture of the school. From the responses collected across the survey, focus group, and interviews, three key findings were identified to answer this question. First, the teachers reported student academic apathy as an area that is causing the school's culture to not work well. Though they recognize the students are polite and respectful, there is a desire for students to take more ownership of their academic life. Secondary, reported by both the teachers and administrators, is the lack of trust among these groups. The unified answer to the question suggests an area of review. A root cause analysis to the lack of trust should be examined to provide a transparent understand behind they this occurs. The third finding that answers the what is not working well question come from the response of a need for more parent/guardian involvement. Since this is an element of what is not working well, a root cause analysis should also be conducted to create a true and opposed perceived rational for why. Collectively, these findings do not have a positive connotation, but they do positively give answer to the primary question, which provide an opportunity for growth in school culture to safeguard student learning in the end

The fourth primary question asks what do the teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians report as the greatest challenge(s) with the school's culture and how the challenges be addressed. From the responses collected, the results provide a rather vague

answer of lack of consistency, although there are suggestions on what can be improved with the school's culture, the survey, focus group, and interview questions did not yield enough responses to outline the challenges associated with school culture nor provide ways to address them. Thus, the results to this primary question are somewhat unclear.

The following set of questions are secondary in nature and ask the perceptions of the stakeholders in respect to elements of culture and academic achievement. Secondary question 1 asks how does the culture of the school impact learning. As an inference from the responses of the stakeholders, the answer to the question concludes that the culture at a school impacts learning by the beliefs and systems in place to support the learning. That is, the more structures to assist in the teaching and learning environment that are embedded in the culture of the school, the greater the impact for student learning to occur is palpable. Therefore, the results to this question are positive in that a strong culture of sustenance will positively influence student learning.

Secondary question 2 elicits the perceptions of the teachers and administrators to how the culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement. Ultimately, the responses from teachers and administrators answer this question as the more unified, consistent, and instructionally sound the culture of the administrative team is, the greater the impact on student achievement will be. These strong leadership elements will aid in the building of instructional capacity and encourage student support. Because of this, the results to this question are positive.

Secondary question 3 examines the perceptions related to the adequacy of the support to improve school culture and academic achievement. The answer from the open-ended survey teacher question 26 and elements examined throughout the

administrator interviews draws an answer to this question that the adequacy level of the support is favorable and sufficient. Though this is the majority perception, there were responses that indicate this is an area for future review to and reexamination, in the end still providing a positive result to the question.

Recommendations

As a description of what should be done (desired changes) from the results of the findings of the study, I have identified areas of strength as well as areas of growth related to school culture and its impact on student achievement. In respect to the areas of growth, these elements help lead and define desired changes for the school organization and are described as follows. These changes include building trust across the ABC123's campus; increasing student accountability for academic learning; continued professional development; and reinvigorate the parent/guardian involvement on campus. The implications of the findings help to acknowledge that by instilling the changes in the school's community, the school's culture can be one that is fully integrated and supports teaching and learning, producing a culture for learning that is superb.

Although there are suggestions for organizational change, the element of parent/guardian connection is critical. The involvement of a child's parent/guardian is inserted as a piece of school-wide improvement effort focused purposely on improving student academic achievement (Clark and Clark, 2002; Sheldon, 2003; Kruse and Louis, 2009). By created opportunities for the involvement to occur, greater layers of support for student learning will come to fruition, which is the reason I selected this as a focal point for change.

The first major organizational change I would like to make around the organizational issue of marginal parent/guardian involvement is to provide professional learning to the stakeholder group to inform them on the educational elements of the system in which their child learns. Given that many of the families in our school community derive from other countries and are learning to speak English, there is an unfortunate built-in disconnect with the way of educational work. Elements of the envisioned professional learning include: an overview of the curriculum in which their child is learning, the rights and responsibilities of a parent, structures and functions of the school site, parent and teacher partnerships, and strengthening communication skills. Since “the social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging” (Block, 2009, p. 9), the elements outlined will provide space for the parents/guardians to feel more connected to the school and their child’s learning, with the hope that they feel a part of the school community.

The second organizational change I would like to make around the organizational issue is to provide monthly townhall meetings (outside of the scheduled conference nights, showcase events, sporting events, etc.) to give a platform for the parents/guardians to come to campus to ask questions, share concerns, and/or be a think-partner in their child’s education. The townhall meetings can even be held in the community as needed. Translator services would be available as to not create barriers for the communication. Since “strong cultures positively influence parents” (Muhammad, 2009, p. 138), it’s important that the values, beliefs, and respect felt by the teachers and administrators (as reported in their data collection) permeate when the parents/guardians are at school.

These meetings would also spark good conversation about the needs in the community in which the school could and should support.

The reason for choosing parent/guardian involvement as a pillar for organization change is to open a joint effort of collaboration and partnership for the school community's common good. In my professional experience, the more interaction with the child's parent/guardian, the greater success potential the child will endure. Often, at the high school level, there is a manifested decrease of involvement as the students move from grade to grade throughout their high school years. Since this is the case at ABC123 high school, the suggested changes to the cultural element of parent/guardian immersion should allow for consistency in connection across all four years of schooling. Many times, it's at the end of the high school year where the support is needed the most to help the child transition from one chapter of life to the next as they prepare for their journey post high school graduation.

CHAPTER FIVE

TO-BE Framework

Through the evaluation of a school's culture's bearing on student academic achievement, the need for improved elements of a culture for learning is essential to positively impact the academic success of all students. Due to ABC123 high school's district status of turnaround caused by low achievement on state assessments as well as low rates for the number of students graduating from the school, organizational change in the areas of organizational culture and transformational leadership, expectations for teaching and learning, as well as the necessity for collaboration and partnership with parents/guardians must come to fulfillment for the school to successfully educate and move the academic achievement of all students. When this occurs, the shift of the cultural and academic course of the school is one that moves in a more favorable direction.

The previous chapter outlined the need for organizational change using the "AS-IS" model developed by Wagner et al. (2006). By using such a model, leaders can identify the important "first steps toward creating organizational cultures with a laser like focus on the new challenge of success for all students" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 17). This chapter will incorporate the important organizational changes to assist educational leaders to move from the "AS-IS" model to the "TO-BE" model to ensure success for all (Wagner et al., 2006). In doing so, the educational setting can be visualized where the leaders can inspect what they expect, holding themselves, and the stakeholders accountable for the learning opportunities of not only the students, but the teachers and parents/guardians as well.

Review of Literature Related to Change

Organizational change should be viewed through different lenses, especially as it relates to the change plan. The plan, itself, should go through the process where it is prepared, envisioned, and enacted (Wagner et. al, 2006). By keeping these three steps intact, organizational change will have a greater chance of survival where it can supportively make an impression on all who the plan serves. In addition, the plan should be inclusive of all members of the educational community, providing equal opportunity for change to occur. This in mind, the literature review highlights the following educational essentials for organizational change as it relates to the study of school culture and academic achievement: Organizational Culture and Transformational Leadership, Expectations for Teaching and Learning, and Collaboration and Partnership.

Organizational Culture and Transformation Leadership

Organizational change, especially in the area of school culture, is a mission that shouldn't be taken lightly, and one that needs to be understood by all. As Yilmaz and Kiliçoglu (2014) state, there needs to be a discussion about the change process so the potential problems that such a change create can be understood. Moreover, because organizational change, particularly in schools, can be difficult and complex to accomplish, it is important that the dynamics and implications of the change be discussed, questioned, and realized by all involved in the organizational change process (Yilmaz and Kiliçoglu, 2014). These steps are a part of the preparation process for change and are critical to the change's success. Without the perspective of all involved, the idea of a utopia change, chiefly for school culture, may not come to culmination.

As the above states, it's important to include all members of the school's community that the organizational change will affect. A way that school leaders can ensure this is through transformational leadership where "transformational leaders focus on developing a collaborative culture in the organization ... by encouraging values and beliefs through interactions that support change in the culture of the organization" (Chirichello, 1999). For the change to occur, it is critically important that the school leaders create buy-in from teachers, parents/guardians, and the students. This is one layer of the implementation step of the change process. By doing so, the change itself will become more functional and long-lasting in the school. A way to secure this functionality is to make sure there is a strategic plan that supports the values and beliefs (culture) of all involved, with checkpoints along the way to assess if the change is yielding the desired results for all.

Another part of transformational leadership is building capacity within the stakeholder groups that are involved in the change process. As Muscalu (2014) notes, the culture of the organization, particularly with organizational culture, is one that is related to human capital. The greater the culture of the school, culture for learning for instance, the greater the opportunity to build human capacity. Here, the human capital would be having teachers with sound and strong pedagogical skills that help build sound and strong student learners. If transformational leadership is true to its form, then capacity for both the teachers and students would increase. Thus, teachers and students would transform their ability to enhanced levels, creating an unyielding culture for learning that would produce high levels of teaching and high levels of learning.

In addition to the abovementioned elements of transformational leadership, it is important for school leaders to ensure teachers, in particular, acknowledge their level of capacity as it relates to self-efficacy with the collaboration of decision making. As Kaniuka (2012) notes, if school leaders do not know how to provoke such self-awareness with their teachers, then the ability to move the change initiative forward could be restricted. It is important that school leaders and teachers are discussing and reflecting on performance ability and understand where each team member's strengths and areas of growth impact the change being implemented. If such conversational collaboration does not take place, then "if school personnel are asked to engage in decision-making to improve schools relying on the level of capacity that was used to create the current approaches to improve student achievement, the likely outcome would be to perpetuate the status quo" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). As a part of the preparation process for organizational change, performance level and strength finder activities can be completed to help establish the team's ability and capacity in order to properly assign roles for the intended change, especially for the area of academic improvement.

If the elements of organizational change are to come to fulfilment, it is important for the school leader or principal to understand his/role in guiding the change. Huling-Austin et al. (1985) created a framework for school leaders to use to ensure they are accurately facilitating the change process through six categories: vision and goal setting; structuring the school as a workplace; managing change; collaborating and delegating; decision making; and guiding and supporting. This framework provides checkpoints for the school leader to assess. If one category is not adequately in place, then potential gaps

could be created. That is, if there is no vision or goal setting, then structuring the school and managing the change will not be done with full integrity. Furthermore, if guidance and support are not given to those carrying out the change, then collaboration and decision making will not be done effectively. All in all, the framework will afford the school's leadership the ability to establish spot checks for not only themselves, but for the team that is created to carry out the change initiative.

A central element of any team is to understand its meaning. In the case of organizational culture, the team is working through a way of work defined as "a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group ... to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel" (Schein, 1985). For any type of change to be effective, whether if it's cultural or not, it is important that the team understand its worth, as well as the external and internal factors affected by the change.

For a team to meritoriously lead change, it's important that the school leader not only have resilient transformational leadership skills but have robust instructional leadership skills as well. As Aslanargun (2015) asserts, the efforts of school leaders to enrich the quality of education is the core of instructional leadership. Strong instructional leadership provides the school leader with the tools and resources to move instruction for optimal learning to the next level. This in mind, Aslanargun, (2015) further affirms that elements such as the accomplishment of learning both inside and outside of the school building, and the establishment and sharing of moral and national values between teachers and students are also connected to instructional leadership. By demonstrating both transformational and instructional capacity, the school leader will be better equipped

to lead his/her team through the organizational change with not only veracity, but with fidelity as well.

Expectations for Teaching and Learning

Not only does the organizational culture and transformational leadership influence organizational change, but so does the expectations for teaching and learning. If the academic trajectory of a school is going to be limitless, then the school's leadership needs to establish high expectations for the teaching and learning taking place in all classrooms. Furthermore, there should be an inspection of what is expected to assess if optimal teaching and learning is occurring, as well as if any supports are needed.

Effective teaching practices help to support the learning of all students. Tkatchov and Pollnow (2008) maintain that teachers who are exemplary implement an assortment of instructional approaches daily, all the while holding students to high expectations through a nurtured approach. If the academic success of students is a focus for organizational change, then it's important to promote the practice of differentiated teaching to meet the needs of all learners by expecting the students to exhaust their learning potential. In order to achieve this, teachers need to know and understand the students in which they teach, know and understand the standards in which are to be taught and learned, have an arsenal of resources and tools to engage learners, and assess and scaffold the instruction to meet the learning needs of all. By doing so, the culture for learning will be exemplary all in itself.

For teachers to maintain the culture for learning mentioned above, it is important for teacher reflection to take place, chiefly for when academic change is needed. The Reflective Action Protocol (RAP) (Awkard, 2017) is a tool that can be used to help

reflect upon their assumptions about their students' ability to learn and the level of differentiated instruction being executed. The RAP (Awkard, 2017) achieves the reflection through a cyclical process of self-assessment, observations of instruction, discussions of the observations, discussions about ways to improve lesson plans, a view of instructional techniques, and an assessment on the learning of the students. Such a reflection protocol can take place during a Professional Learning Committee meeting, through an instructional coaching cycle, and even during an evaluation with the school principal. Nonetheless, when a teacher can reflect on their practice and make change to benefit all students, then the culture for learning increases and is optimum for all.

The abovementioned reflection protocol can also be utilized as a professional development opportunity for teachers when organizational instructional change is taking place, as well as a professional practice that occurs throughout the school year. Allen (2006) states that professional development that is continued over a period of time has noteworthy influence on student learning and should be nurtured to support student learning. Without professional development, teachers will not be afforded the opportunity to enhance their skills for the betterment of their students. This is principally important when enacting change for academic success. If the expectation is to raise the academic achievement levels of all students, then there needs to be an expectation to provide professional opportunities to teachers over time that meets their need for their content being taught, and for the students in which they teach.

A major professional development activity we initiated at ABC123 high school was that of lesson planning. Shen, Poppink, Cui, and Fan (2007) note that this type of professional development may be referred to pedagogical content manner where there is

learning about the content being taught, the subject matter itself, understanding the learning styles of the students, and ways to incorporate different alternatives that enable students to learn via the best mode and method they can. All the elements should be incorporated in a lesson plan to make sure quality teaching is taking place by engaging and assessing students throughout the learning process. Without a solid plan, teachers will not exhaust the educational opportunity for their students. This idea and the lesson planning professional development were key components to moving our school out of turnaround status.

In addition to the above literature reviews for teaching and learning, Butler and Gerkin's (2006) Teaching/Learning Cycle is another tool that can be used to set high expectations for both teachers and students through a cycle. The Teaching/Learning Cycle (Butler and Gerkin, 2006) is a system that continuously formatively assesses students learning, evaluates the data from the assessment to recognize the implications for student learning, assesses the type of instruction being used to meet the needs of individual students, and evaluates the teaching that results in ideal learning for all. By using such a framework, all members of the instructional team can work collaboratively to ensure supports are in place, for both teacher and student, to safeguard the culture for learning at its most perfect level.

Collaborative Partnerships

Organizational change is not only for the stakeholders inside the school building, but also for the stakeholders outside of the school building. The goal for the organizational change as it relates to my evaluation is the need to increase collaborative partnerships with the parents/guardians of our students. As Lontos declares, "when

families become involved in their children's education, the children's academic achievement rises, and their motivation, behavior, and attendance improve" (Liontos, 1992, p. 6). In the case of my school, this is a heavy lift that needs focused attention. As we learn more about the community in which we serve, we are gaining a greater understanding about their knowledge level of schooling, as well as what is important to them. Knowing these perspectives helps us to identify barriers to the current lack of collaborative partnerships taking place. This knowledge helps to define the needed change and foresee the goal of an increased partnership between the community the school's students, faculty, and staff. The major take-away here and as Liontos states is that partnership with families is not possible if collaboration is not intact, both inside and outside of the school. Once more collaboration takes place around the educational opportunity for students, a greater partnership with the parents/guardians will blossom, providing more support for all involved.

Envisioning the Success TO-BE

Through the evaluation of school culture and its impact on student achievement, there are areas of change (goals) and growth needed to support improved achievement levels for all students. The goal for a utopia culture for learning would be one that supports and encourages the highest level of academic success. To understand where and how to ignite change to elicit the greatest results, information from the data collection as well as the literature review should help to inform where the changes ought to occur. I utilized the 4C's "TO-BE" tool (Appendix K) from Wagner et al. (2006) to identify the ideal contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies I wish ABC123 high school to possess. The envisioned 4C's would showcase the contexts resulting in the school

earning a state grade of B, a culture which embraces teacher collaboration and high expectations for student learning, conditions that would provide time for teacher collaboration through designed professional development, and competencies that would be showcased by teacher expertise in teaching to all students. By using such a tool, I will be able to create a vision and mission for organizational change that will have positive dividends on the school's community, encompassing a culture for learning that supports high levels of student academic achievement.

Context. If the organizational plan were realized, the ideal context elements related to the study of a school culture's impact on student achievement would have six components to consider. The first three: renaissance school status, high percentage of free/reduced lunch, and high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) and students who receive Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services. The contextual elements are a part of the make-up of the student population. That is, due to the high percentage (89%) of students who receive free/reduced lunch, the school has a status of renaissance, which is a tier above Title I. This status provides a stipend to all instructional members of the faculty, as well as additional funds to support student learning, specifically within the ELL and ESE population. Such services include additional resources for language acquisition for ELL students and tutoring opportunities to support the learning needs of the ESE students.

With the potential realization of the organization change, the next context element of having a low staff turnover would support a shift to an idyllic cultural change where faculty and staff stay year to year, helping to solidify the positive direction of the school. With the consistency of the faculty and staff, especially the teachers, the plan will achieve

increased results with student achievement on state assessments, where ABC123 high school has the 5th largest gain in school grade points in the school district. These results would be an indication of the new expectations set for teaching and learning, as well as the layers of assistance put in place to support academic success. With the achievement levels coming to fulfillment, the vision of the school earning a school grade of “B” would be supreme, noting the school’s move from turnaround status to a school that is achieving higher levels of academic success.

Culture. As noted throughout the study, culture is a central focus of the desired organizational change. With this, the ideal culture related to the study would encompass teacher collaboration within and across content departments, teacher engagement in coaching cycles with instructional coaches, a shared vision of viewing students through different lenses, and teachers having high expectations for students. These desired culture elements would help to support an ultimate culture for learning where teachers increase their capacity to reach all students, all the while ensuring they are pushing their educational potential to the highest level possible.

Teacher collaboration is essential to build a net of support in and across content departments. By doing so, teachers can help narrow the content standards to streamline what students need to learn, work on lesson plans that support student engagement and assessment, as well as take part in learning walks where teachers can learn from another in an effort to build a robust teaching kit that will positively impact student learning.

In addition to the teacher collaboration, an ideal vision for cultural change would involve teacher coaching cycles with the instructional coaches. Through these coaching cycles, teachers would have the opportunity to get feedback on lesson plans and

instructional methods, as well as to interact in a co-teach model to practice innovative teaching and learning methods. This informal type of professional development is non evaluative and would lend itself useful, especially for teachers that are new to the profession and/or those teaching a new content prep. The more coaching cycles that take place, the greater the opportunity for teacher reflection. As the literature review showcased, teacher reflection is a significant part of building self-efficiency, which will yield vast results for students.

The next culture element is related to teacher connection with students. Here, connection is key when it comes to engaging students in the learning process. An ideal part of the anticipated organizational change would warrant that all teachers connect to and view students through different lenses. The different lenses would help teachers recognize that students learn differently from one another and that each student should be looked at as an individual learner. When this occurs, differentiated instruction transpires through skilled scaffolding, guaranteeing that all students have access to learn. Through such access, teachers can incorporate the fourth culture element of having high expectations for students. Often, students will rise to the high expectations, surpassing their initial potential to achieve. When comparing the “AS-IS” to the “TO-BE” (Wagner et al., 2006) of ABC123 high school, this type of culture for learning is most conducive for all.

To incorporate the above cultural competences in the wanted organizational change, it is important for school leaders to begin “to promote and model a strong normative culture of respect, trust, and accountability for learning” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 111). If the school leader embodies such a way of work, the opportunity for

collaboration can begin. When this takes hold, trust and respect for one another as professionals becomes apparent. Moreover, when the trust emerges, it deepens and blossoms, affording the teachers the occasion to work with one another and with the administrative team in innovative ways (Wagner et al., 2006). The incorporated instructional practices noted in the previous section are embodied from trust-based relationships that are “essential if schools and districts are to fundamentally disrupt the extreme isolation of educators and help build a profession of teaching based on standards of practice” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 157). All in all, the more confidence teachers have in themselves and for one another and the greater the trust is among all, the greater the occasion for instructional partnerships to take place, ultimately encouragingly impacting the learning potential of all students.

Conditions. The ideal conditions to support a strong culture for learning would include scheduled Professional Learning Community (PLC) time for teacher collaboration and professional development to support lesson planning and instructional priorities. These two conditions are established and extended from culture as documented previously. It’s important to provide teachers with scheduled and focused PLC time to connect and work in partnership towards strengthening their instructional tool kit. The collaboration would allow teachers to discuss and examine student work, showcase effective pedagogy techniques that support the diverse learning styles of students, and review student data from formative assessments. Furthermore, the PLC time together could also intensify cross curricular connections where teachers could reinforce content standards and best learning practices that overlap the many subjects being taught.

In addition to the above time together during the PLC's, the administrative and instructional coach support team would present mini professional development sessions focusing on lesson plan creation through the narrowing of standards to help make what the students need to learn more efficient. By doing so, teachers will be able to build greater capacity to better support the needs of all students and ensure the instructional priorities of literacy across all contents. Furthermore, active student engagement and assessment throughout lessons would support the best learning environment for all.

Competencies. The golden thread of the 4C's connects the contexts to the culture, which influences the conditions that impact the sought-after organizational change to the ideal teacher competencies. These competencies are developed expertise on how to incorporate authentic literacy in every content, how to lesson plan, and how to reach all students. As noted in the above conditions, securing sacred PLC time with an added layer of professional development, teachers will build capacity that should sustain the ideal competencies.

Incorporating authentic literacy in every content using WICOR (Writing Inquiry Collaboration Organization and Reading) will allow teachers to utilize a pedagogical skillset that will progressively impact the literacy of students; literacy that is connected to subjects across the contents taught at school. Moreover, WICOR infused lessons will enhance the active engagement of students, especially with the collaboration element of the resource. The more active learning taking place, the more potential to push the academic envelopes of the students, allowing the teacher to reach all. When the latter occurs, an idealized culture is established, yielding insurmountable academic results.

Conclusion

Executing a plan for organizational change required an examination of the state of ABC123 high school in conjunction with the data collected from the research and the learning that took place from the literature review. The culmination of this oversight helped to create the transition of the “AS-IS” (Appendix J) to the preferred “TO-BE” (Appendix K) with recommendations for ideal contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies. Using the 4C’s (Wagner et al., 2006) framework will help to implement the proposed changes through a systematic approach to help create stakeholder understanding and buy-in. Thus, creating a school culture and culture for learning that supportively impacts student academic achievement.

CHAPTER SIX

Strategies and Actions

By using the findings from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, administrator interviews, and student data, in conjunction with the literature review, I have been able to extract meaning for organizational change that will benefit and inform a school culture's impact on student achievement. These takeaways in addition to the analysis of the "AS-IS" and "TO-BE" (Wagner et al., 2006) models help to create main areas that need to be addressed for the organizational change plan. These main areas, or focal points, are building trust across ABC123's educational community, continued professional development, and transformation of the parent/guardian involvement on campus. The implications for the changes will positively impact the culture at the school all the while protecting the learning and teaching environments for all. As a connection to learning, the prescribed changes will build greater capacity for all involved, encompassing the school with a grander toolkit to foster academic excellence.

Strategies and actions (Appendix L) are needed to realize the organizational change focus areas of trust, professional development, and parent/guardian involvement, which are extremely important elements that impact the culture for learning. The strategies and actions (Appendix L) needed to cultivate the wanted change are outlined as below.

Focus Area: Building Trust

The first focus for change, building trust between teachers and administrators, is an indicated need as noted in the data collected. The goal is to establish a trusting working partnership between teachers and the administrative team. In doing so, any

misconceived notions about professional expectations, decision making, and/or support suggested or requested will dissipate. The first strategy to achieve a strong trusting working relationship is to evaluate the current teacher and administrator perceptions regarding trust. By developing a trust perception survey (action step) to gain an understanding on how to achieve trust and what trust means to the teacher and administrator stakeholder groups, school leaders will be able to understand the meaning of trust for the two groups and identify ways to ensure it.

The second building trust strategy is to conduct a root cause analysis of the barriers for trust. By creating a focus group (action) to examine the current relationship level of the teachers and administrators to determine where and why barriers exist, stakeholders will be able to express, in a controlled setting, any areas of concern, as well as provide suggestions for improvement. This collaborative opportunity will allow all members to be at the same level, not drawing attention to the teacher/administrator title, which unfortunately sometimes is a barrier all in itself.

The final strategy to building trust between teacher and administrators is to identify the importance of open and transparent communication. Since communication that is open is an essential element of trust (Kruse and Louis, 2009), the action to support the strategy is to engage in a book study about fierce conversations to provide the tools and resources on effective ways to communicate to build trust. Such a study would provide both the teachers and administrators practice opportunities on how to effectively communicate to make sure the intent of what is being communicated is clearly understood and acknowledged. Moreover, the study would provide information on how to navigate the conversation when potential conflict arises.

Focus Area: Professional Development

As noted by the teachers and administrators, professional development has been central part of the work at ABC123 high school not only to move the school out of turnaround status, but to safeguard teaching practices that enhance learning. Because of its success, the organizational change plan should continue with professional practice, especially in the areas of lesson planning, student engagement, student assessment, and content literacy. The first strategy to execute this focus is to identify instructional needs of teachers by the action step of reviewing teacher observation data in the areas of lesson planning, student engagement, student assessment, and content literacy. Through such a review, the instructional leaders on campus can identify specific areas of need as noted by any progressing and/or requires action ratings marked in the observation rubric. This data will help to inform areas for growth and provide a standard to evaluate the development of the instructional strategies being learned.

The next action step to support the strategy of identifying instructional needs is to develop a survey asking teachers to suggest professional learning topics to support instruction. By seeking the input of the teachers, the instructional leaders can make sure the teachers “have at their disposal a wide array of instructional strategies” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 89). The survey will also provide an opportunity for teacher voice, which could benefit the building of trust between them and the administrative team.

In addition to the instructional needs of teachers, the goal is to also identify the instructional needs of students. The action step, like that with the teachers, is to develop a survey asking teachers to suggest professional learning topics to support student learning as identified by student learning needs. These learning needs could be derived

from student learning observations, 504 plans, and/or Individual Educational Plans. Since the teachers spend the most amount of time with the students, it is important that their evaluation of what their students need is recorded. The more suggestions that are provided, the greater array of instructional learning supports can be obtained to assist with the learning of all.

Focus Area: Parent/Guardian Involvement

Identified as a major change area, the goal to increase the involvement level of the parents/guardians is crucial to the support needed for the educational welfare of the students. The first strategy to achieve this goal is conduct a root cause analysis of the barriers for involvement. The action step here is to create a focus group to examine the involvement level to determine where and why barriers exist. Like the trust focus group, the collaborative opportunity will allow all members to be at the same level. The analysis will provide important information on next steps to break down barriers in an effort for an open and inviting collaborative environment.

The second strategy to support the involvement increasement is to conduct professional learning opportunities for parents/guardians. As noted in Chapter 4, the action step would be to engage in learning sessions to educate the parents/guardians on schooling essentials such as systems for learning, ways to be involved, and the supports in place for the parent/guardian role. Ultimately, the more informed the parents/guardians are, the more likelihood they will be engaged in their child's educational endeavor.

The last strategy to elevate the partnership between school officials and the parents/guardians is to conduct townhall meetings for parents/guardians on and off

campus with the action of engaging in meeting opportunities for parents to ask questions, share concerns, and become think-partners where both the school's staff and the parents/guardians of the students can collaboratively discuss and think about ways to partner to support student achievement. Since effective school culture finds innovative ways to involve parents, even the less enthusiastic ones, the school should initiate parent/guardian involvement by any means possible (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015). Invitations could be sent to particular groups of parents/guardians, depending on the focus of the meeting, but also to showcase the personal and professional desire to have them involved. With this, the townhall meetings would be an excellent way to interact, even if the meeting is on a monthly basis.

Conclusion

Organization change is a complex, yet valuable part of transformational leadership. As a school leader, I have been given the grand opportunity to transform a school in the hopes of creating a culture that is most conducive for student learning. From the instructional leadership lens, the three organizational change focus areas of building trust, professional development, and parent/guardian involvement are all staples in ensuring such a sought-after school culture exists. The three areas for change are built upon professional experience, the data collection from the research studied, the literature review, as well as the examination of ABC123's context, culture, conditions, and competencies as related to the 4C's in the "AS-IS" and "TO-BE" (Wagner et al., 2006) models. Combining the learnings that occurred with the strategies and actions for the organization plan, I am more equipped to suggest implications and policy

recommendations that will help to structure the support needs to realize the envisioned school culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Implications and Policy Recommendations

The culture of a school ensures students receive their education in a learning environment that is enriched with support to push their academic envelope. Such a culture can positively bridge learning gaps for students, all the while making sure individual interests are met with sound differentiation and scaffolding through well-designed lesson plans that meet the needs of all students. With this, a policy issue related to the culture and student achievement of a school is one that makes sure professional development is delivered to teachers to provide them with the tools and resources to safeguard the greatest culture for learning.

With the aforesaid in mind, I am recommending a policy of specialized professional development that supports the needs of the stakeholders at ABC123 high school. By having a policy that promotes professional development, the school would be mandated to provide professional learning that not only meets the needs of students but meets the needs of the teachers, as well as supports any new district directed initiatives. The policy would instruct the administrative team to evaluate teacher observation data to determine both individual and school-wide instructional needs. Along with this, the policy would make sure there is an opportunity for teacher input on the types of professional development they think would benefit the culture for learning. Moreover, the policy would also provide learning opportunities for school staff to partner with the community to build greater support for student academic achievement.

With the abovementioned policy, by having all teachers engage in professional development that focuses on lesson planning to actively engage and assess all students,

the professionals will become a community that supports the learning of all students, all the while having the opportunity to learn new and innovative ways to reach their students. Assessing the level of professional learning that took place two years ago compared to current practice, the element of professional learning has blossomed. Though this is the case, there is a continued need (as noted in the strategies and action plan) to push professional practice to safeguard student learning. Since the areas of student engagement and assessment were not as strong as positive relationships with students, the continued professional learning would provide ways with the use of the text, *Teach Like A Champion*, to better equip teachers with the pedagogy needed to teach and reach all students.

Policy Statement

As noted by Marzano et al., 2006, “one of the most frequently mentioned resources important to the effective functioning of a school is the professional development opportunities for teachers” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 59). Since the culture of a school directly impacts how the school functions, my recommendation is that all teachers receive professional development on how to build a strong culture for learning in their classroom to maximize the learning for all students to ultimately optimize student academic achievement. This is a critical area for student academic success, as well as a major part of the teacher evaluation system. If the teachers are more equipped to effectively teach all students, then the learning potential increases, resulting in improved academic triumph for all. Once the culture for learning in individual classrooms is intact, school staff can bridge the community relationship to increase the support for learning outside of the classroom, and most certainly outside of the school.

Analysis of Needs

Educational Analysis. As an educational analysis of the recommended professional development policy, it's important that teachers participate in educational learning that will push their practice. Blank and de las Alas (2010) note that there should be a strong emphasis on teachers learning pedagogical content to inform them on improved ways to teach and reach their students, with the opportunity to receive follow-up from the professional development implementation where the teachers receive support from their colleagues within the school.

Economic Analysis. Professional development requires funding to provide the personnel and resources to educate teachers in the most favorable way. Such a policy implementation will require the school to encumber funds to support the learning for the desired school culture. With this, Fowler (2013) states that "two of the most important aspects of the policy environment are the structure of the economic system and the current economic climate" (Fowler, 2013, p. 47). In respect to my school district, there has been a decrease in the funding source for professional development across the county due to the decrease in funding from the state. Because of this, my school would need to use the expertise of current faculty and staff to design and instruct professional development as well as to develop the resources to accompany the learning. Though there is professional development offered by the district, it has become the expectation that schools are providing the professional learning inhouse that best meets the needs of the instructional staff. Since we are a Title I Renaissance school, there are additional funds to support such a teaching endeavor. My school is able to purchase books for a book study (Teach Like A Champion), purchase instructional and learning materials to

meet student needs, pay for substitutes during the school year so teachers can engage in learning walks, as well as sending teachers to conferences to learn from experts outside of the school district. Although the district's economic climate cannot support the professional development policy, the school's economic system through Title 1 certainly can.

Another component of the economic impact of the policy of professional development would be the potential increase of the VAM (Value Added Measure) score of the teachers. If part of the professional learning is designed to help meet the needs and push the academic potential of all students, then the student achievement growth should become apparent, having a positive impact on the VAM score and overall evaluation rating of the teachers. When this occurs, the higher evaluation rating promotes the greater opportunity for financial award.

Social Analysis. The social analysis for the professional development policy is one that creates a collegial and collaborative teaching community that strives to push and align their instructional practice that supports the optimal culture for learning. Penuel et al. (2012) notes that when people have information or expertise that others seek, the learners in this case often align their beliefs and practice with those that are experts in the pedagogical craft. When the latter occurs, a strong social learning community comes to fruition, which is ideal for increased student achievement.

Political Analysis. When a community or organization establishes social impartiality, "decisions are made democratically when the interests of all citizens of the polity are fairly considered (Strike, 2007, p. 95). That is, political equity occurs where all members of the organization are in agreement and united with what's best for the school

community. As noted in the strategies and actions plan, providing opportunities for teacher voice helps to create buy-in, ultimately aiding in the building of trust to knock down bureaucratic walls. Along with this, the strategies and actions plan also provides a space for community input by way of townhall meetings. As the political climate changes, the needs of the community may shift. If this occurs, it is critical that the policy of professional learning for the parents/guardians takes hold, especially for ways to support their child's learning (as noted in the strategies and actions plan). This collaboration also creates an opportunity for the school's staff and community to be on the same page, breaking down political leadership barriers that may be negatively presumed.

Legal Analysis. Fowler states that “legal authority is conferred on those who hold positions of responsibility within an organization (Fowler, 2013, p. 27). As instructional leaders and school-based administrators, we are tasked to ensure students have the greatest opportunity to learn. Because of this, we have a legal responsibility to make sure students have open access to education in a culture for learning where teachers are equipped to support the learning of all. By offering professional development to teachers, students will be beneficiaries of the professional learning taking place. Since it is our obligation to educate all students, the professional development provided will help to safeguard the tools and resources needed to meet the individual needs of the teachers and the students alike. If we do not safeguard such an opportunity, we will be doing the school's learning community a disservice.

Moral and Ethical Analysis. The legal analysis above lends itself well to the moral and ethical analysis of the professional development policy where leaders should

inspire members of their staff to strive for their best as opposed to citing requirements that are administrative in nature (Reeves, 2009, p. 93). Through our ability to motivate, we can move the teacher to individual victory that will ultimately empower them to continue to their learning to best meet the needs of their students, which should be a moral and ethical staple of their daily practice. Moreover, there is an ethical obligation as noted by the Code of Ethics to safeguard the learning of and for all students. If, as educators, we do not ensure our practice emulates such a code, we will not be morally sound as it relates the expectations for teaching professionalism.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

The organization change plan that was derived from the data collected from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, and the administrator interviews, outlined areas of need in respect to relationships among stakeholder groups. The first is the building of trust between teachers and administrators. This being a need, “the responsibility of culture involves the creation of a cooperative environment among staff within the context of a shared sense of purpose” (Marzano et al., p. 103). If the school’s culture does not harvest trusting relationships among the school’s educational and support teams, the lack of trust will then have a negative implication on student learning. Another relationship need is that with the community. For this example, the community would be members of the local church, small business owners, and/or even district and state representatives that support constituents in the school community. Through transformational leadership, the school leader can focus “on the community as a source of support for the school ... through a thoughtful approach to community involvement that can help face the hard work of school improvement” (Kruse and Louis, 2009, p. 155). Ultimately, the more

involved the community is, more support will be available to assist in the day to day aspects of the functioning of the school. By having a policy of professional development, professional learning can be offered to the school's community, particularly on ways to support the learning of the parents'/guardians' child. Whether the learning is about the tutoring opportunities on campus, ways to engage in learning online, and even information on college applications, scholarships, and financial aid, the more equipped the parents/guardians are to help support the learning of their child, the greater the backing the student will have, especially when at home.

Another area of need is the building of partnerships between school members and the parents/guardians. This being the case, "the responsibility of relationships might be considered to be the bedrock of the principal's efforts to establish a purposeful community" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 103). Such a responsibility, especially through the lens of transformational leadership, should be a major implication for enhanced community relationships. Once the relationship between administrators, faculty and staff, and the students is solid, the relationship with the school's community and that with the parents and guardians should unfold. Since the professional development policy incorporates building trust, relationship building should extend to the parents and guardians that support student learning from afar.

Conclusion

A primary role of any school leader should be to guarantee a culture for learning that is advantageous for all members of the school community. By mandating a professional development policy that teaches instructional practices among areas of lesson planning, building relationships with students and the school community, and

community learning, the policy will support the important school culture that fosters a stout learning environment that positively impacts all students. As a school leader, it's important to never forget that the element of learning should not only be for the students, but it should also be for the adults both on and off campus as well. Moreover, the learning should be everchanging to meet the needs of those who support the learning needs of the students. By having such a policy, the element of a strong culture for learning to support student academic achievement can come to realization.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The course of this study examined school culture and its impact on student achievement. Through the examination, the evaluation of school culture indicated implications for teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and students, especially as the implication relates to academic achievement. From the study, the perceptions of the stakeholders (minus the students), provided insight to the elements of school culture. By cultivating the information collected, areas of focus were established as goals for the organizational change plan. The change, which is needed to safeguard a sound culture for learning, identifies the issues that were thematic throughout the study. These issues were transformed to goals where the school culture is to be one that has strong trusting relationships between teachers and administrators, meaningful professional development to support teaching and learning, and a collaborative partnership with parents/guardians. Through the learning that took place from this study, I believe that by igniting the organizational change plan, the focus on school culture would be further developed to promote student academic success, preserving a strong culture for learning that embraces high levels of student achievement.

Discussion

The purpose of the evaluation was to identify if school culture impacts student achievement. Furthermore, the purpose was to examine the definition of school culture, what is working well and not well with school culture, what the greatest challenges with school culture are, and finally, does school culture impact student achievement. Once the purpose was established, the process of the study evaluation provided an approach to gain

a depth of knowledge that would help inform next steps to reach the needed change. The process began with review of literature and designing data collection techniques and methods to help inform decision making about the impact school culture has on achievement. Embarking on the data collection from the teacher survey, teacher focus group, administrator interviews, and student achievement, the information provided the platform to establish the transition from the “AS-IS” to the “TO-BE” (Wagner et al., 2006) analysis of the school.

The exploration of the context, culture, conditions, and competencies of ABC123 high school, along with the strategies and action steps developed to support the goals for the essential change created a tangible plan to move the school in a forward direction. Furthermore, the suggested policy for change helped to streamline the process for this evaluation as it provided the tools and resources to make valuable inferences and decisions about the change plan to support the organizational needs. The goals for the organizational change plan were addressed in chapter six by way of the strategies and action steps suggested to accommodate the aims to uphold the greatest culture for learning. The organizational change plan addresses the issue of student achievement and teacher support through the goals and is additionally supported by the policy recommendation of professional development to secure sound teaching practices to aid in student learning. In the end, the structured approach to gathering data, formulating a plan for change, and establishing policy to support said change, provides the systemic methodology to achieve a strong school culture that supports academic triumph.

Leadership Lessons

The leadership lessons learned from this study evaluation have been resoundingly beneficial to my role as a school-based administrator. Throughout this process, I have learned that value of research design and the importance of acquiring information from multiple stakeholders to gain insight from their perceptions on the happenings on the school campus. Providing the opportunity for teacher voice also affirmed the importance of collaboration for the betterment of teaching and learning.

A second lesson learned, as well as a major take-way, is the professional learning that occurred for me from the literature reviews. Learning about the research regarding elements of school culture and student achievement as well as the frameworks designed to view cultural and academic elements of the study, gave me great schooling with a plethora of literature sources that can and should be utilized to guide the instructional leadership of my day to day work. Moreover, the works reviewed for organizational change provided the means to gain additional understanding on how to execute change.

The final leadership lesson learned from the exploration of this study is that as a school administrator and instructional leader, the task of leading a school from turnaround status to academically improved should not be taken lightly. With a clear vision for the direction of the school, as well as the understanding of what needs to occur for the transition to take place, being a transformational leader is something that I hold dear to my heart and in great regard. I know that through this leadership style, the element of pleasing 100% of the school community will be difficult to achieve. Rather, I will continue to focus on what is best for students, all the while safeguarding support for

faculty, staff, and the school community. The support provided will increase the ability of the school's staff and parents/guardians to push the academic potential of all students.

Conclusion

In the end, the study of a school's cultural impact on student achievement has made me an improved scholar, a more informed educator, a more academically focused instructional leader, a greater transformational administrator, and over all a better human being. Because of this, I solidify my mission that as educators, our purpose is to educate to the core of every student, providing them the access, the tools, and the means to learn to the highest level. As I often say to the teachers at my school, since we cannot change how the students come to us, we most certainly can help change who they become. We, as educators, must make sure the culture for learning supports who the students want to become by an environment that supports academic achievement from the core of who the students are.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teacher Survey Questions

Appendix B: Informed Consent: Adult Survey Individual Participant

Appendix C: Teacher Focus Group Questions

Appendix D: Informed Consent: Adult Focus Group

Appendix E: Administrator Interview Questions

Appendix F: Informed Consent: Adult Interview – Individual Participant

Appendix G: Parent/Guardian Survey Questions

Appendix H: Informed Consent: School Site Administrator

Appendix I: School Data

Appendix J: Baseline AS IS 4 C's

Appendix K: Baseline TO BE 4 C's

Appendix L: Strategies and Action Chart

Appendix A

Teacher Survey Questions

Instructions: This survey is designed to provide beneficial information on the impact school culture has on student academic achievement. Please answer all multiple-choice questions by selecting the answer that best represents your opinion/position based off your experience, knowledge, and perspective. Please answer the open-ended questions by writing as much as you feel necessary to capture your opinion. There is not any one correct or incorrect answer per question. Please note that all answers will be kept confidential.

School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs, values, attitudes, and expected behaviors evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007).

1. How long have you been teaching?
 0-3 years 4-7 years 8-11 years 12-15 years 16 plus years

2. How long have you been teaching at your school?
 0-3 years 4-7 years 8-11 years 12-15 years 16 plus years

3. Students treat other students with respect.
 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

4. Students treat teachers with respect.
 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

5. Teachers treat students with respect.
 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

6. Students take pride in their academics.
 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

7. The school administration supports the instructional needs of teachers.
 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

8. The school administration supports the discipline needs of teachers.
 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

9. The school administration supports the academic needs of students.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
10. Parents/Guardians are involved in their child's education.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
11. Teachers support the instructional needs of one another.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
12. The administration discusses academics with faculty and staff.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
13. The administration discusses academics with students.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
14. The administration discusses academics with the parents.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
15. Professional development is provided at your school.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
16. The administration discusses school culture with the faculty and staff.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
17. The community is involved with the school.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
18. The school has a positive school culture.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
19. The school culture impacts student achievement.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
20. The school culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Open-ended Questions:

21. What is working well regarding the culture at your school?

22. What is not working well regarding the culture at your school?

23. What can be improved with the culture at your school?

24. Do you feel there is a strong culture for learning at your school? Why or why not?

25. How (if at all) do you think the culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement?

26. How adequate is the support to increase school culture and academic achievement?

Appendix B

Informed Consent: Adult Survey Individual Participant

My name is Jeremy D. Johns-Klein, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "Evaluation of School Culture and its Impact on Student Achievement". The purpose of the study is to understand how the quality of the culture at a school impacts the level of student academic achievement. Ultimately, I hope to increase awareness of the need to have positive levels of culture within a school to help students reach their highest levels of academic achievement.

My project will address the process of how school culture impacts student academic achievement and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding school culture at your school. I would like to survey you regarding your thoughts on school culture and student academic achievement your school.

You may participate in this study by clicking on the survey link in the email. By clicking on the survey link, you are indicating that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate in a web-based online survey to be completed and submitted using specific instructions I will include at the beginning of the survey. It should take approximately 20 minutes for you to complete the survey. All information collected in the survey reflects your experience and opinion regarding school culture and student academic achievement.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time with absolutely no negative effects. I will keep the identity of you, the school, the district, and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants in the report. Only I will have access to all of the survey data, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all survey data. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, taking part in this study may contribute to my better understanding of how school culture impacts student academic achievement at your High School and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me at: phone: 813-453-1999, and/or email jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu, and/or my address 13604 S. Village Drive Condo # 204 Tampa, FL 33618. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu; phone (813) 397-2109; 5110 Sunforest Blvd. #102, Tampa, FL 33634; or EDL Program Chair, Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 847-947-5017; or the NLU's Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Please click on this link to signify your acceptance of this informed consent and to take the survey: <https://goo.gl/forms/TlxqP8bX5dGb9ABp1>

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Jeremy D. Johns-Klein

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix C

Teacher Focus Group Questions

Instructions: This focus group is designed to provide beneficial information on the impact school culture has on student academic achievement. Please answer and discuss all questions by providing information that best represents your opinion/position based off your experience, knowledge, and perspective. There is not any one correct or incorrect answer per question. Please note that all answers will be kept confidential.

School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs, values, attitudes, and expected behaviors evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007).

1. What is your definition of school culture?
2. Describe what school culture looks like in a classroom.
3. What does student achievement mean to you?
4. Do you think school culture impacts student achievement? Why?
5. What is the biggest challenge in ensuring a positive school culture?
6. What is working well regarding the culture at your school?
7. What do you feel are the challenges around ensuring high levels of achievement?
8. Do you feel there is a greater culture for learning over the past two years? Why or why not?

Appendix D

Informed Consent: Adult Focus Group Individual Participant

My name is Jeremy D. Johns-Klein, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "Evaluation of School Culture and its impact on Student Achievement". The purpose of the study is to understand how the quality of the culture at a school impacts the level of student academic achievement. Ultimately, I hope to increase awareness of the need to have positive levels of culture within a school to help students reach their highest levels of academic achievement.

My project will address the process of how school culture impacts student academic achievement and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding school culture at your school. I would like to survey you in regard to your thoughts on school culture and student academic achievement your school.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the focus group and agree to participate in one 45-minute focus group with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order clarify any questions I may have regarding your focus group data. I will audio tape and transcribe the focus group All information collected in the focus group reflects your experience and opinion regarding school culture and student academic achievement.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time with absolutely no negative effects. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all of the focus group tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all focus group transcripts, tapes, and notes. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of how school culture impacts student academic achievement at your High School or district and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me at: phone: 813-453-1999, and/or email jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu, and/or my address 13604 S. Village Drive Condo # 204 Tampa, FL 33618. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my

dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu; phone (813) 397-2109; 5110 Sunforest Blvd. #102, Tampa, FL 33634; or EDL Program Chair, Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 847-947-5017; or the NLU's Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Jeremy D. Johns-Klein

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix E

Administrator Interview Questions

Instructions: This interview is designed to provide beneficial information on the impact school culture has on student academic achievement. Please answer and discuss all questions by providing information that best represents your opinion/position based off your experience, knowledge, and perspective. There is not any one correct or incorrect answer per question. Please note that all answers will be kept confidential.

School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs, values, attitudes, and expected behaviors evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007).

1. What is your definition of culture?
2. Describe what culture looks like in a classroom.
3. What is the culture of your administrative team?
4. Do you think your teachers feel supported by your administrative team?
5. Do you think your students feel supported by your administrative team?
6. Do you think your parents/guardians feel supported by your administrative team?
7. What does student achievement mean to you?
8. What can your administrative team do to enhance the school culture to support student academic achievement?
9. Do you think school culture impacts student achievement?
10. As an instructional leader, how could you create a culture of academic excellence?
11. How do you promote good relationships?
12. How would you involve parents more in their child's education?
13. What is working well regarding the culture at your school?
14. What can be improved with the culture at your school?

15. What does effective instructional leadership look like?
16. What is the greatest challenge with school culture? How can we address it?
17. Do you feel there is a greater culture for learning over the past two years? Why or why not?

Appendix F

Informed Consent: Adult Interview Individual Participant

My name is Jeremy D. Johns-Klein, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "Evaluation of School Culture and its impact on Student Achievement". The purpose of the study is to understand how the quality of the culture at a school impacts the level of student academic achievement. Ultimately, I hope to increase awareness of the need to have positive levels of culture within a school to help students reach their highest levels of academic achievement.

My project will address the process of how school culture impacts student academic achievement and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding school culture at your school. I would like to survey you in regard to your thoughts on school culture and student academic achievement your school.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the interview and agree to participate in one 45-minute interview with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order clarify any questions I may have regarding your interview data. I will audio tape and transcribe the interview All information collected in the interview reflects your experience and opinion regarding school culture and student academic achievement.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time with absolutely no negative effects. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all of the interview tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all interview transcripts, tapes, and notes. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of how school culture impacts student academic achievement your High School or district and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me at: phone: 813-453-1999, and/or email jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu, and/or my address 13604 S. Village Drive Condo # 204 Tampa, FL 33618. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my

dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu; phone (813) 397-2109; 5110 Sunforest Blvd. #102, Tampa, FL 33634; or EDL Program Chair, Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 847-947-5017; or the NLU's Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature

Date

Jeremy D. Johns-Klein

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix G

Parent/Guardian Survey Questions

Instructions: This survey is designed to provide beneficial information on the impact school culture has on student academic achievement. Please answer all multiple-choice questions by selecting the answer that best represents your opinion/position based off your experience and perspective. Please answer the open-ended questions by writing as much as you feel necessary to capture your opinion. There is not any one correct or incorrect answer per question. Once the survey is completed, please click on the submit button. Please note that all answers will be kept confidential.

School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs, values, attitudes, and expected behaviors evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007).

1. I have opportunities to review my student's progress (e.g., conference nights, online, progress reports).
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
2. My concerns are addressed in a timely manner.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
3. Academic help is available if my student needs it.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
4. I am encouraged to be involved in my student's learning.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
5. Teachers require students to work hard.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
6. Students are recognized and rewarded for their achievements.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
7. This school is meeting the academic needs of my student.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
8. I am satisfied with the quality of instruction delivered by my student's teachers.
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

9. I am proud that my student attends this school.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

10. School employees are polite.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

11. School students are polite.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

12. School rules are consistently followed.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

13. The principal is an effective leader.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

14. The assistant principal(s) is/are effective leader(s).

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

15. The principal cares what families think.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

16. The assistant principal(s) cares/care what families think.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

17. I feel comfortable contacting the administration.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

18. The school has a positive school culture.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

19. The school culture impacts student achievement.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Open-ended Questions:

20. What is working well regarding the culture at your school?

21. What is not working well regarding the culture at your school?

22. What can be improved with the culture at your school?

23. What is the greatest challenge with school culture? How can we address it?

24. Do you think school culture impacts student achievement?

25. How do you think the culture of the school impacts learning?

26. Do you feel there is a strong culture for learning at your school? Why or why not?

27. How (if at all) do you think the culture of the administrative team impacts student achievement?

28. How adequate is the support to increase school culture and academic achievement?

Appendix H

Informed Consent: School Site Administrator

My name is Jeremy D. Johns-Klein, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent for selected staff at your school to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "Evaluation of School Culture and its impact on Student Achievement". The purpose of the study is to understand how the quality of the culture at a school impacts the level of student academic achievement. Ultimately, I hope to increase awareness of the need to have positive levels of culture within a school to help students reach their highest levels of academic achievement.

My project will address the process of how school culture impacts student academic achievement and how it impacts those involved at Leto High School. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to be made regarding school culture. I will survey and interview up to 1 principal, 5 assistant principals, 140 teachers, and 1,800 parents/guardians in regard to their thoughts on school culture and student academic achievement.

I will email and give participants who volunteer a link for a web-based online survey to be completed using specific instructions and an Informed Consent form (included in the body of the email) indicating that they understand the purpose of the survey and agree to take the survey. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Also, teacher participants may volunteer for one 45-minute focus group with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order to clarify any questions I may have regarding your interview data. I will conduct one 45-minute focus group with those participants who have completed an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the interview and agree to be interviewed. I will voice record and audio tape the focus group and will transcribe the tapes. Administrator participants may volunteer for one 45-minute interview with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order to clarify any questions I may have regarding your interview data. I will conduct one 45-minute interview with those participants who have completed an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the interview and agree to be interviewed. I will voice record and audio tape the focus group and will transcribe the tapes. I will also collect FSA and EOC state assessment student data for the years 2015-2018 for approximately 2000 students, which the district has informed me they will provide to me. All information collected in the surveys and interviews reflects participants' experience and opinion regarding school culture and student academic achievement.

By signing below, you are giving your consent for me to ask for voluntary participation from selected stakeholders to participate in this research study: to complete a teacher and parent/guardian survey and to participate in a teacher focus group and administrator interviews.

All participation is voluntary, and participants may discontinue participation from the survey, focus group, and interviews at any time with absolutely no negative effects. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all surveys, focus group discussion tapes and transcripts, and interview tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all interview transcripts. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While participants are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of school culture impacts student achievement at your school and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. Participants may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu. In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me at: phone: 813-453-1999, and/or email jjohnsklein@my.nl.edu, and/or my address 13604 S. Village Drive Condo # 204 Tampa, FL 33618. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu ; phone (813) 397-2109; 5110 Sunforest Blvd. #102, Tampa, FL 33634; or EDL Program Chair, Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 847-947-5017; or the NLU's Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 312.261.3526, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Larissa McCoy

Principal Name (Please Print)

Principal Signature

Date

Jeremy D. Johns-Klein

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix I

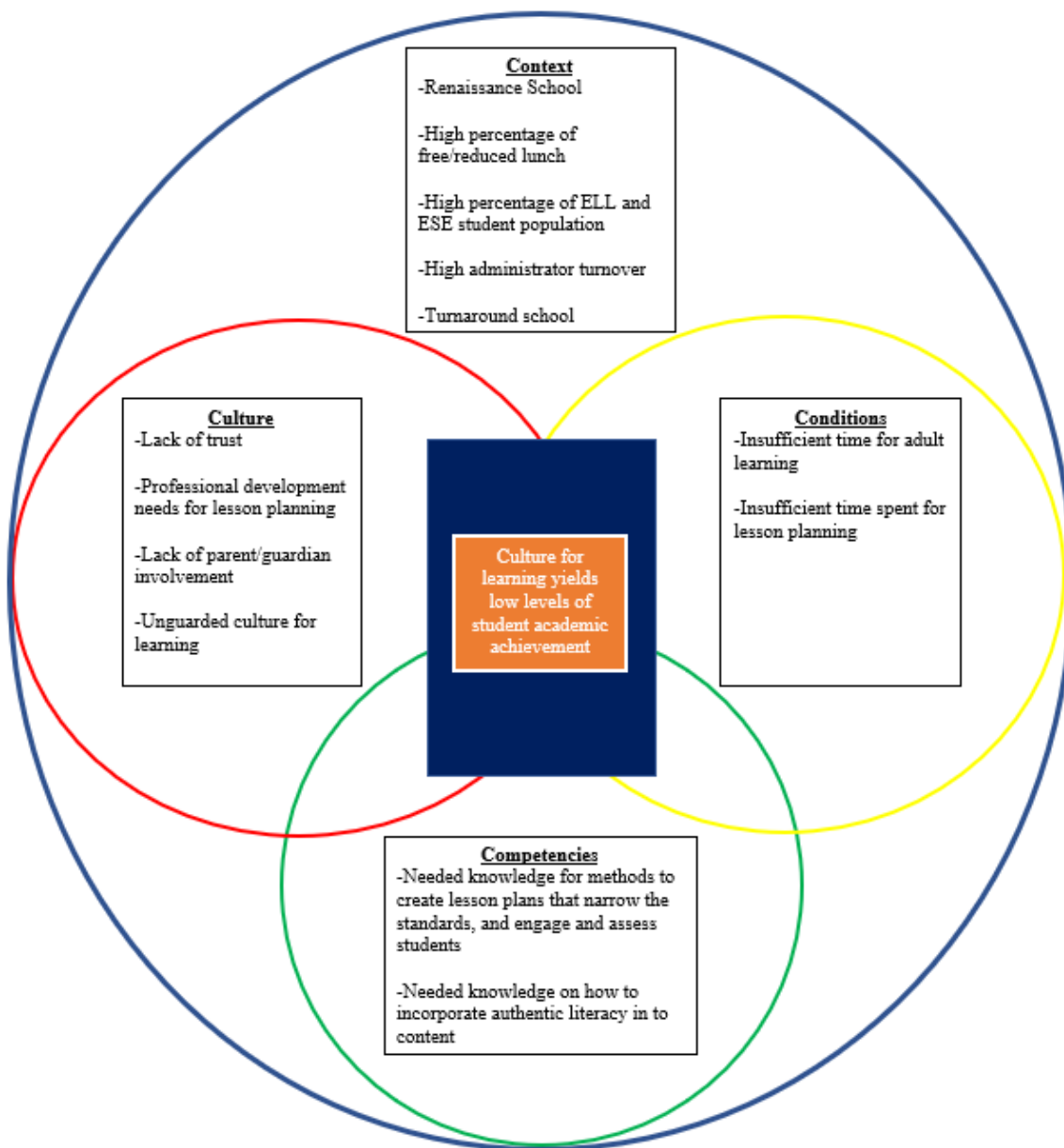
School Data

School Grade					
2019 School Grade	C	2018 School Grade	C	2017 School Grade	C
Current Grading Scale					
% of Total Possible Points: A = 62%+, B = 61%-54%, C = 53%-41%, D = 40%-32%, F = < 31%					
2016 and Beyond Total Points Possible: 1000					
School Grade Calculations					
Year	ELA Achievement Points	Math Achievement Points	Science Achievement Points	Social Studies Achievement Points	
2019	40	47	63	50	
2018	44	46	61	55	
2017	35	39	52	58	
ELA			Mathematics		
Year	Learning Gains Points	Learning Gains of the Low 25%	Learning Gains Points	Learning Gains of the Low 25%	
2019	50	39	51	37	
2018	52	37	58	53	
2017	40	39	45	47	
Year	Graduation Rate (Prior Year)	College and Career Acceleration (Prior)	Total Points Earned	% of Total Possible Points	
2019	90	44	526	53	
2018	85	43	534	53	
2017	75	45	475	48	
End of Course Assessments					
Year	FSA Algebra 1 EOC % Level 3 or Above		FSA Geometry EOC % Level 3 or Above		
2019	36		40		
2018	32		51		
2017	40		36		
Year	NGSSS Biology EOC % Level 3 or Above		NGSSS US History EOC % Level 3 or Above		
2019	50		54		
2018	60		52		
2017	47		55		

Appendix J

Baseline AS IS 4 C's

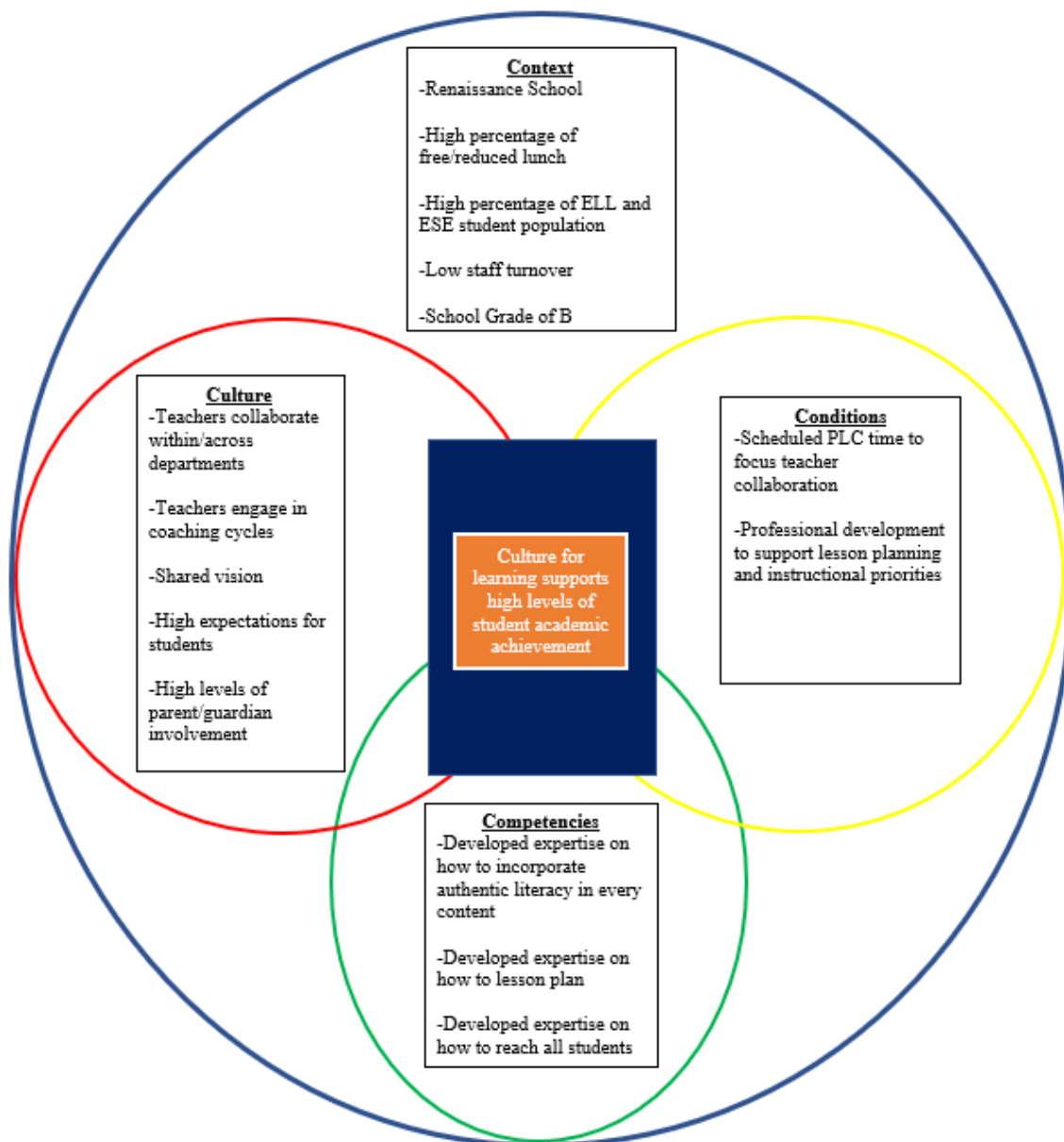
Analysis for How School Culture Impacts Student Achievement



Appendix K

Baseline TO BE 4 C's

Analysis for How School Culture Impacts Student Achievement



Appendix L

Strategies and Action Chart

Focus 1: Building Trust		
<u><i>Goal</i></u>	<u><i>Strategies</i></u>	<u><i>Actions</i></u>
<p>To establish a trusting working partnership between teachers and the administrative team</p>	<p>Evaluate current teacher and administrator perceptions regarding trust</p> <p>Conduct a root cause analysis of the barriers for trust</p> <p>Identify the importance of open and transparent communication</p>	<p>Develop a trust perception survey to gain an understanding on how to achieve trust and what trust means to the teacher and administrators</p> <p>Create a focus group to examine the current relationship level of the teachers and administrators to determine where and why barriers exist</p> <p>Engage in a book study about fierce conversations to provide the tools and resources on effective ways to communicate to build trust</p>
Focus 2: Professional Development		
<u><i>Goal</i></u>	<u><i>Strategies</i></u>	<u><i>Actions</i></u>
<p>To continue to provide professional development opportunities to support teaching and learning</p>	<p>Identify instructional needs of teachers</p> <p>Identify learning needs of students</p>	<p>Review teacher observation data in the areas of lesson planning, student engagement, student assessment, and content literacy</p> <p>Use texts such as Teach Like a Champion to instruct new teaching techniques</p> <p>Develop a survey asking teachers to suggest</p>

		<p>professional learning topics to support instruction</p> <p>Develop a survey asking teachers to suggest professional learning topics to support student learning as identified by student learning needs</p>
Focus 3: Parent/Guardian Involvement		
<u><i>Goal</i></u>	<u><i>Strategies</i></u>	<u><i>Actions</i></u>
To increase the involvement level of the parents/guardians of the students	<p>Conduct a root cause analysis of the barriers for involvement</p> <p>Conduct professional learning opportunities for parents/guardians</p> <p>Conduct townhall meetings for parents/guardians on and off campus</p>	<p>Create a focus group to examine the involvement level to determine where and why barriers exist</p> <p>Engage in learning sessions to educate the parents/guardians on the systems for learning, ways to be involved, and the supports in place for their role</p> <p>Engage in meeting opportunities for parents to ask questions, share concerns, and become think-partners</p>