The Effect of School Culture on Student Achievement in Restructured High Schools

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ABSTRACT

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates that if a school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for a fifth consecutive year, the school district must initiate plans to fundamentally restructure the school. Proactive school districts with failing high schools have started restructuring schools into smaller schools in an effort to improve achievement in high schools. Current literature discusses high school restructuring and student achievement as well as the organization of restructured schools, but does not address the culture in restructured high schools and how it affects student achievement. The purpose of this study was to identify specific aspects of school culture that correlate with high and low achieving restructured high schools as perceived by the teachers working in those schools. This study found that there are differences in the cultures of high and low achieving restructured high schools. This study also found that schools that performed better on the English Language Arts portion of the Georgia High School Graduation Test also had higher scores on specific culture themes such as Concern for the school and stakeholders and Intent and direction. Schools that performed worse on the English Language Arts portion of the Georgia High School Graduation Test had low scores in the Empowerment theme.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother, Sireta. When I think of the one person who has been present for all my educational endeavors, who has cheered me on through orientations and graduations, and who has encouraged me to be the best student and educator possible, I think of my mom. When I would grow weary, it was her love that kept me going. Her support has been such a blessing in my life.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

School culture is a little discussed, but significant factor in schools. Culture has been defined as "the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (Barth, 2002, p. 1). Deal adds though culture is often overlooked and ignored, it is one of the most significant features of any educational enterprise (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The concept of schools having distinctive cultures is not new (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Sociologist Willard Waller (1932) wrote: "Schools have a culture that is definitely their own" (p. 103). Waller went on to describe the rituals of personal relationships, moral codes, ceremonies, traditions, and laws that are similar in schools and which define what happens in schools (Lindahl, 2006). More recently, researchers have defined school culture as, the basic assumptions, norms and values shared by school members, which influence their functioning at school (Engles, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe, & Aelterman, 2008). These observations about culture are still relevant in education today. Yet despite its importance, culture is possibly the least discussed element with regard to improving student achievement (Jerald, 2006). Perhaps the reason educators hesitate to examine the role of culture in student achievement is because they do not see culture as a viable determinant of student achievement that can easily be affected. Low student achievement

is often attributed to ineffective leadership, teacher ineffectiveness, low teacher preparedness, student intelligence and motivation, and low parental involvement, each of which is a reflection of school culture. Consequently, factors such as strong leadership, close monitoring of student progress, a common and coherent curriculum, and teacher collaboration are pieces of culture educators can directly affect (Jerald, 2006).

While school culture generally is not examined as a factor impacting student achievement, it is studied even more sparingly in high schools, where low student achievement and low graduation rates place high schools with large numbers or proportions of low-income students in crisis (Jerald, 2006; High School Leadership Summit, 2011). To address this poor record of performance, many high schools are being restructured into small schools, academies, or small learning communities (Lee, Ready, & Johnson, 2001. While the effectiveness of restructured high schools has been widely researched (Lee & Smith, 1994; Lee & Smith, 1995; National High School Center, 2007), there is a very small body of research comparing the cultures of both traditional and restructured high schools. Though often not explicitly stated, restructuring efforts represent attempts to change the culture of low achievement and failure at these poor performing high schools (Lee & Smith, 1995). The research on specific culture factors found in low and high performing restructured high schools is also sparse.

Culture can be obscure and ambiguous, and it is interpreted differently by members of an organization. While coming to a consensus on the culture of an organization can be a challenging task, altering culture is an even more tremendous feat. Researchers have repeatedly cited the notion of culture as "the way we do things around

here" as affecting student achievement. Therefore, culture is an issue that must be addressed in schools (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Problem Statement

As many Title I high schools approach their fifth year of failing to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP), many states and districts are struggling to navigate through school restructuring as required in such cases under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (National High School Center, 2007). States and districts are also struggling with the concept of school restructuring as required in some cases under NCLB (National High School Center, 2007). Under NCLB, if a school fails to make AYP for a fifth consecutive year, the school district must initiate plans to fundamentally restructure the school and place the school in restructuring status. The U.S. Department of Education describes restructuring as follows:

> Generally speaking, under NCLB, when a school is in restructuring status, the Local Education Agency (LEA) must take intensive and far-reaching interventions to revamp completely the operation and governance of the school. Restructuring means a major reorganization of a school's governance structure by a LEA making fundamental reforms. Also, restructuring includes substantial promise to improve student academic achievement and enables the school to make AYP as defined by the state's accountability system, and is consistent with state law. (National High School Center, 2007, p. 1)

Although this definition of restructuring provides clear directions for reorganizing a failing school, it provides no mandates for assessing or modifying the existing school culture. Culture is a factor that influences academic achievement; this is especially true in poorly performing schools (van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel, & Coetsee, 2005). Though culture is an intangible factor that teachers and administrators may feel as though they can only indirectly affect, it plays a dominant role in exemplary performance and thus, must be measured and improved (Jerald, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

Culture is a very powerful force in schools and its connection to school improvement is particularly strong (Lindahl, 2006). When positive school cultures exist, teacher performances will improve which, in turn, will lead to improved student performances (Jones, 2009). A positive school culture possesses a widely shared sense of purpose and values; norms of continuous learning and improvement; a commitment to and sense of responsibility for the learning of all students; collaborative, collegial relationships; and opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing personal practice. On the other hand, negative school cultures possess toxic norms and values that hinder growth and learning, lack a clear sense of purpose, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration and often have actively hostile relations among staff (Peterson, 2002). A school principal who creates a culture which promotes and encourages learning is absolutely essential to improve student achievement in schools (Sergiovanni, 2001). School principals who care and focus on the specific aspects of the dimensions of school climate effecting the culture of the school promote student achievement (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Although a number of factors have been

identified that affect student achievement, organizational culture seems to be a key factor (Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel, & Coetsee, 2005). Van der Westhuizen et al. found a healthy and positive organizational culture exists in high achieving high schools. Furthermore, the results showed that not only a strong but also an effective organizational culture exists in well and average performing secondary schools. This evidence linking student achievement to healthy school culture provided the framework for this study.

Purpose/Rationale

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between specific aspects of school culture in high and low achieving restructured high schools and student achievement as measured by the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT). In this study, the participating schools were restructured into either small school or small Learning Communities (SLC) constructs. For this study, small schools are defined as schools with no more than 400 students that have a central academic focus, such as computer animation and design, the arts, or information technology. Small schools each have their own principal in charge of each autonomous school on campus, and in some cases, their own assistant principal and/or instructional coaches.

In this study, SLCs are defined as having no more than 400 students, and have a central-themed academic focus; however, with SLCs, one principal runs the school and academy leaders govern the SLCs. The school system in this study began high school restructuring in 2005 in response to a drop-out rate in excess of acceptable standards.

The district set four key goals for the high school restructuring initiative: (a) to reach a graduation rate of 90% within four years; (b) to ensure that graduates are ready for college and post-secondary opportunities; (c) to make the school system the first

choice among students and parents in the city; and (d) to provide students with a world-class education. Over 11,000 schools were identified as needing improvement under NCLB in 2004-2005. Of those, over 9,000 were Title I (high poverty) schools. Of all identified Title I schools, over 12% (over 1,000) were in restructuring status in 2004-2005 (National High School Center, 2007).

Since many researchers have already described the effects of school culture on student achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009; Gruenert, 2005; Dumay, 2009; National School Climate Center, 2007), and since many schools are *forcibly* restructured, the next area of research should focus on how culture effects student achievement in recently restructured high schools.

Research Questions

Through this study, the researcher will address two Research Questions (RQ), and consider three null hypotheses (Ho, Ho1, and Ho2)

RQ1: Are there statistically significant differences in the cultures of restructured high and low achieving high schools?

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high and low achieving restructured high schools.

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high achieving restructured small high schools.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the low-achieving restructured SLC high schools.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance?

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho1: There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho2: There is a statistically significant negative correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

For this study, the researcher chose two high schools based on the schools' performance data for the past three years and their current status as restructured high schools. The researcher submitted a request to the district's Research, Planning, and Accountability (RPA) department to conduct research in the school district, and received approval for conducting the research in these high schools (See Appendix A). The researcher also secured permission to proceed with the study from the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (See Appendix B). When all permissions were secured, the researcher contacted the principals of the selected schools and scheduled a meeting with them to obtain permission to conduct research in their schools and develop a survey administration schedule. When the principals agreed to participate, the researcher asked them to choose a survey administration method involving an online School Culture Survey [SCS] (Green & Raiford, 1997, Appendix C), use of the TurningPoint® clickers, or a paper and pencil survey with answer documents for the teachers to select their answers.

The SCS was used to measure the quality of the culture in each school. The SCS provides a means of determining how a school faculty and the administration perceives

and judges the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and progress toward a quality work life for students, teachers, and staff. The SCS has 50 items and yields results that identify, describe, and measure the strengths and deficits in school culture as perceived by the faculty and administrators who work there. Each of the 50 SCS items will yield an average quality point score ranging from a minimum of zero to a maximum of 100. These average quality point scores were used to compare similarities and differences, and identify the quality of the cultures in the high and low achieving restructured high schools. An average quality points score of 70 or higher denotes a "quality culture," and a score of 60 or below denotes a "deficient culture."

Once the data were collected, a student's *t*-test of independent means was conducted to determine if the differences in the cultures of high and low achieving restructured high schools were significant. The data were also used to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in the quality of the school culture among the small schools and among the SLCs. A comparison of means (i.e., average quality points scores) was conducted between the small schools and the small learning communities, and among the schools within the small schools and small learning communities.

To determine if there is a relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance as measured by student achievement on the GHSGT, a Pearson Product moment correlation analysis was used to compare the average quality points scores for each school in the low achieving small learning communities and high achieving small restructured high school, to its performance on the English Language Arts (ELA) section of the GHSGT. Pearson's *r* is a useful descriptor of the degree of

linear association between two variables, by illustrating both the magnitude and direction of the variables of interest.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the dissertation in accordance with the definitions listed:

Adequate Yearly Progress: Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a measurement required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that each state defines year-to-year student achievement on statewide assessments.

Collaborative Decision-Making: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing a process for leading and managing that involves appropriate stakeholders in the determination of actions to be taken to improve the quality of schools.

Concern for School/Stakeholders: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the concern about factors within the school that directly impact the students, the faculty, the staff, and parents.

Continual School Improvement Focus: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing an emphasis on enhancing the school's current condition by moving it to higher levels of performance. Evidence of a Continual School Improvement Focus features the following elements:

- Regular and ongoing
- Oriented toward incremental changes
- Intentional and strategic
- Both proactive and reactive
- Focused on the whole organization

- Inclusive of all organizational members
- Oriented toward mission and core values
- Integral to organizational identity, design, and basic functions.

Deficient Culture: The level of school culture quality denoted by an average quality points score of 60 or below on the SCS.

Empowerment: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the promotion or attainment of autonomy and freedom of choice for teachers.

Georgia High School Graduation Test: The Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) has four content areas: English language arts, math, science, and social studies, and is administered to all students in the eleventh grade. This test determines whether or not a student will graduate from a high school in the state of Georgia.

Human Resources Needs: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing forecasting and determining the future manpower needs of the school and/or school district.

Intent/Direction: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the purposeful heading of the school towards higher quality by the actions or inactions of those in leadership.

*Leadership**:*** A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the individual and collective actions of persons in the school that serve to both drive actions which positively impact the quality of school performance, and to encourage others to take action towards that purpose.

Management of Excellence: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the monitoring elements and creating conditions within the school that contribute to high

levels of performance and taking the actions necessary to support and sustain these elements.

No Child Left Behind: No Child Left Behind, or NCLB, is the most recent authorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Professionalism: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the behavior that is aligned with the standards of conduct specified either in legislative mandates, occupational standards for educators, or the norms of behavior either explicitly or implicitly defined by the school district.

Quality Culture: The level of school culture quality denoted by an average quality points score of 70 or above on the SCS.

Restructured High School: A restructured high school is a high school that has been transformed into small schools or SLCs.

Small School: A restructured high school in which one principal is in charge of each autonomous school on the campus.

Small Learning Community (SLC): A restructured high school in which one principal runs the school, which is comprised of smaller academies, each with a specific instructional focus such as fine arts, or technology.

Small Learning Community Engineering for Early College (SLC/EEC)*:* A small learning community participating in this study tailored to students who are interested in receiving two years of college credit upon leaving high school.

Small Learning Community for Fine Arts and Media Communication (SLC/FAMC)*:* A small learning community participating in this study tailored to

students who are interested in professional dance, music, art and video broadcasting production.

Small Learning Community for Information Technology (SLC/IT): A small learning community participating in this study tailored to students who are interested in computing and networking in technology, which will lead to industry certification before graduation from high school.

Small School of the Arts (SS/OA): A small school participating in this study that integrates all of the arts plus performances and exhibitions, internships, summer academics and mentoring opportunities.

Small School of Health Sciences and Research (SS/HSR)*:* A small school participating in this study that is tailored to students interested in careers in the medical field and research.

Teaming: A culture theme measured by the SCS representing the sharing of responsibilities for required instructional and/or administrative tasks.

Trending Up: A school with an upward trend in student performance on the GHSGT due to a decrease in the percentage of students that failed the GHSGT, and an increase in the percentage of students that received an advanced proficiency or honors score on the GHSGT since school restructuring.

Trending Down: A school with a downward trend in student performance on the GHSGT due to an increase in the percentage of students that failed the GHSGT, and a decrease in the percentage of students that received an advanced proficiency or honors score on the GHSGT since school restructuring.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the roots of what defines school culture and its impact on school effectiveness. School culture can create an increased sense of unity and purpose and inspire greater commitment from those working in the school. When a positive school culture has become embedded, schools can more easily attain goals related to student achievement, and can operate in a more efficient and effective manner (Deal, 1985).

Effective school research has established a number of cultural elements that have an impact on student achievement. Fyans and Maehr (1990) identified academic challenges, a greater sense of community, recognition for achievement, and perception of school goals as relevant elements. Cheong (1993) connected organizational ideology, shared participation, charismatic leadership, and intimacy to stronger teacher motivation and satisfaction. Senge (1990), Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), and Deal and Peterson (1990), all pointed to the importance of a compelling vision promoted by a strong leader with a sense of moral purpose. From this work, studies of school culture reveal a connection that links school mission and vision, the commitment of stakeholders to a creating and maintaining a quality school, and leadership that builds community and a sense of urgency. This study's potential for adding to the body of research that shows the linkage between school culture and achievement makes it significant both to the literature on school culture and to the school reform practitioners seeking additional affirmation for the importance of monitoring school culture.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations with regard to place and time in this study. One limitation was the lack of access to the total population of restructured high schools in the selected school district. To make comparisons of school performance using GHSGT data, the researcher was only able to use schools that were restructured by the 2008-2009 school year. Only four of nine of the District's formerly traditional high schools met this criteria. These four schools have been restructured into thirteen small schools or SLCs. Data were collected from only four of these thirteen restructured high schools. For this reason, results may not be generalized across all the District's restructured high schools or to other restructured high schools in other districts.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction which identifies the purpose and significance of the study, along with the operational terms that are used in the study and a general description of the study methodology. The second chapter is the Literature Review which examines relevant research on school culture and its relationship to school performance. The third chapter is the Study Methodology which details the study subjects, research questions, survey instrumentation and data analysis. Chapter 4 contains a detailed discussion and analysis of the study findings, and the fifth chapter contains the study summary, implications for further research and practice in the field.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An important goal for school leaders is for schools to develop and maintain strong cultures (Jones, 2009). Schools with strong cultures are more likely to have effective leadership with exceptional student performance. Ultimately, the behavior of the leader initiates both positive and negative change in schools (Jones, 2009). Though researchers have varying perspectives on instructional leadership, and its direct or indirect alignment to culture, one thing is certain: "When there are cultures that are more positive, teacher performances will be better which will ultimately lead to improved student performances" (Jones, 2009, p. 7). School leaders who shape their cultures to become more collaborative should reap the benefits of greater teacher performance and satisfaction and greater student performance (Gruenert, 2005). Testimony from successful school principals suggests focusing on development of the school's culture as a learning environment is fundamental to improved teacher morale and student achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). This knowledge demonstrates that principals must understand the term *culture* and its impact on school performance.

Definitions and Origin of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as "the intangible foundation that encompasses common values, assumptions, norms, and convictions, which serve as guidelines for the behavior of individuals in an organization" (ven der Westhuizen,

Mosoge, Swanepoel, & Coetsee, 2005, p. 93). Organizational culture consists of mainly intangible, invisible elements and tangible, visible manifestations. The intangible elements of organizational culture include beliefs, thoughts, philosophies, missions, vision, aims, objectives, assumptions, values, and norms. The intangible basis forms the foundation from which the organizational culture develops and influences the manner in which the tangible elements are manifested in a school (ven der Westhuizen et al., 2005). The tangible elements of organizational culture are comprised of the verbal, visual, and behavioral manifestations which include artifacts such as rituals, traditions, symbols, stories, and ceremonies (ven der Westhuizen et al., 2005).

Though the concept of organizational culture was made popular in the early 1980s, it originated in the early human relations view of organizations that began in the 1940s (Baker, 2002). Attention to organizational culture faded as organization science and social science in general became increasingly quantitative. The focus of organizational culture shifted to its more measurable aspects, especially employee attitudes and perceptions and/or observable organizational conditions thought to correspond to employee perceptions. This research, referred to as organizational climate studies, was prominent during the 1960s and 1970s. The renewed interest in organizational culture that emerged in the late 1970s is best reflected in four books: Ouchi's *Theory Z: How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge* (1981), Pascale and Athos' *The Art of Japanese Management: Applications for American Executives* (1982), Deal and Kennedy's *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (1982), and Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies* (Baker, 2002). These books suggested that

a more complex anthropological approach was necessary to understand important but largely invisible aspects of organizational life. This interest in organizational culture represented a return to the early organizational literature but it went beyond this literature in contributing important new insights and ways of thinking about the role, importance, and characteristics of organizational culture.

Origins of School Culture

Waller (1932) wrote about the concept of schools having distinctive cultures. Waller stated schools have unique cultures complete with rituals, rules, and moral codes. His ideas about teams, traditions, and ceremonies are still relevant today. Bower (1966) described culture simply as "the way we do things around here" (p. 7). In 1985, Schein asserted that the shaping of culture as one of the most important things that any leader must do.

Definition of Culture

Geertz (1973) described culture as the web of significance in which we are all suspended. Deal and Kennedy (1982) defined culture as the shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together. Deal and Peterson's (1990) definition of culture includes deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of the school's history. Hoy (1990) suggests that culture encompasses the values and norms of the school or organization. Three years later, Heckman (1993) added that school culture lies in the commonly held beliefs of teachers, students, and principals.

Barth (2002) defined culture as "the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (p. 6).

Though researchers have offered several different definitions of culture, none is universally accepted as the one best definition (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Though definitions of culture are similar, authors have different opinions about how to go about measuring culture. Hoy and Tarter (1997) suggest that since cultures are not easily described or measured, charting a specific culture in detail requires a trained anthropologist or clinical consultant. On the other hand, Ramsey (2008) argues that most school leaders are not scientists, and highly technical definitions that only a scientist or anthropologist can appreciate and distinguish are unnecessary. Ramsey describes culture as an unwritten code of conduct. Taking all these definitions into consideration, *culture* can be defined as the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by members of the school community. This system of meaning often shapes what people think and how they act (Stolp & Smith, 1994). Schools have unique cultures (Jones, 2009), and different members of the organization experience it in different ways. These varying perspectives are contextually influenced (Lindahl, 2006). These unwritten cultural expectations develop over time as teachers, parents, administrators, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges, and cope with failures (Peterson, 2002).

Functions and Impact of Culture

In *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls, Paradoxes, and Promises*, Deal and Peterson (2009) describe the six functions and impact of school culture. First, culture effects all aspects of a school. It influences informal conversations in the teacher's lounge, more formal interactions during faculty meetings, instruction practices, attitudes toward professional developments, and the ultimate commitment for ensuring that all students

learn. Second, culture fosters school effectiveness and productivity. "Teachers succeed in a culture focused on productivity, performance, and improvement" (p. 12). By providing focus and collegiality, such a culture helps teachers overcome the uncertainty of their work. Third, culture improves collegiality, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving practices. Schools that value collegiality and collaboration have teachers that freely exchange ideas and classroom practices, work closer to achieve the goal of student achievement, and solve problems in teams or groups. Fourth, culture promotes innovation and school improvement. Toxic cultures that encompass disequilibrium, mediocrity, and indifference are unlikely to yield high achievement. On the other hand, schools that encourage change and risk taking produce people who seek new practices and approaches. In positive cultures, fresh ideas and practices are embraced. Fifth, culture builds commitment and kindles motivation. People are motivated and feel committed to organizations that have meaning, vision, and purpose. Motivation is strengthened through rituals, traditions, and stories. Sixth, culture amplifies the energy and vitality of school staff, students, and the community. Social climate and culture influence the emotional and psychological orientation of a school. In schools with optimistic, caring, and supportive climates, staff, students, and community members are likely to take on those same characteristics (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Similarly, Deal and Peterson (2009) noted in toxic school cultures, even the most eager and positive individuals can become discouraged. Culture focuses attention on what is important and valued. Though rules and job descriptions often govern behavior, unwritten rules and informal expectations also facilitate progress and action. These

"unstated, often hidden, assumptions and expectations are embedded in cultural patterns and become more intensified over time" (p. 14).

Elements and Benefits of Effective School Culture

Fairman and Clark (1982) identified 10 dimensions of organizational health that are present in schools with healthy, effective cultures: goal focus, communication, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation, and problem-solving adequacy. Additionally, Saphier and King (1985) identified 12 elements that are representative of healthy cultural norms in schools: collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring celebration and humor, involvement in decision making, protection of what's important, traditions, and open and honest communication as healthy cultural norms.

There is no one best culture, nor is there a magic formula for a healthy culture; however, knowledge of successful schools identifies common features in professional learning communities. In these cultures, staff, students, and administrators value learning, work to enhance curriculum and instruction, and focus on students and student achievement (Peterson, 2002). In schools with professional learning communities, the culture possesses a widely shared sense of purpose and values, norms of continuous learning and improvement, a commitment to and sense of responsibility for the learning of all students, collaborative, collegial relationships, and opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing personal practice (Peterson, 2002). Additionally, these schools often have a common professional language, communal stories of success, extensive opportunities for quality professional development, and ceremonies that

celebrate improvement, collaboration, and learning (Peterson & Deal, 2002). These elements build commitment, strengthen motivation, and facilitate learning for staff and students.

Eaker and Keating (2008) noted that while all professional learning communities do not mirror each other, they all reflect three critical cultural shifts. The first shift is a shift in fundamental purpose from teaching to learning. When schools passionately adopt the mission of ensuring high achievement for all students, they are driven to pursue different questions and work in different ways. The second shift is a shift in the work of teachers. To help all students learn, teachers must work collaboratively. Teachers should not work in isolation; they should work in high-performing, collaborative teams. Everyone wins when the school shifts from a culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration. The third shift is a shift in focus. The only way to discover if collaborative efforts have been effective is to focus on results. Therefore, educators shift their focus from "inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results" (p. 15).

Peterson and Deal (1998) describe schools with strong, positive cultures. In schools with strong cultures, staff has a shared sense of purpose, and they fully commit themselves to teaching. In these schools, the underlying norms are of collegiality, improvement, and hard work, and rituals and traditions celebrate student accomplishments, teacher innovation, and parental commitment. Furthermore, in schools with positive cultures, informal networks of storytellers, heroes, and heroines provide a social web of information, support, and history. Finally, in schools with strong cultures, success, joy, and humor thrive.

In addition to providing a description of the opportunities of positive cultures, Deal and Peterson (1999) also offer several beneficial functions of strong positive cultures. Positive culture fosters effort and productivity and improves collegial activities which, in turn, promote better communication and problem solving. It also supports successful change and improvement efforts, builds commitment, and helps students and teachers identify with the school. Lastly, it amplifies energy and motivation of staff members and students, and focuses attention and daily behavior on what is important and valued.

Elements and Consequences of Ineffective School Culture

Toxic school cultures possess the same elements as positive cultures. They have values, rituals, stories, and traditions (Deal & Peterson, 2009). However, in schools with a toxic culture, these elements have a negative connotation. Instead of being positive, they become crippling. Deal and Peterson (2009) identified nine characteristics common in toxic cultures. First, schools with toxic cultures become focused on negative values and self-interests. Work is painful for adults and students; and teachers routinely lead boring classes. Furthermore, in these schools only a small group of students are of interest and others who wish to learn are ignored. Focus is placed primarily on achieving outcomes such as athletic championships that are of little importance, on basic skills, or on hierarchical levels of control. Sadly, these misdirected values quickly transfer to new hires, resulting in a continuous wave of negativity.

Second, schools with toxic cultures become fragmented buildings and meanings are derived from cliques, anti-student feelings and displays, or life outside work. Unfortunately, no positive web is woven for people in toxic schools. Instead, people work

in isolation, or in some cases grade level or departmental alliances replace overall collaboration and unity. Colleagues may be divided along racial or ethnic lines, and people openly dislike each other. Veterans spread negativity about work and students to new hires and fellow veterans. In some instances, staff members are only committed to life away from work (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Third, Deal and Peterson (2009) add schools with toxic cultures become hostile and destructive. Faculty meetings are uncomfortable, and people who attempt to improve the situation are berated. Hostility is met with hostility and escalates quickly.

Fourth, in schools with toxic cultures the informal network is filled with hostile people. The most influential people in the school spread negativity and gossip and people become fixed on "the way things used to be," ridiculing any new, fresh, effective ideas.

Fifth, in schools with toxic cultures, exemplars of the school are anti-heroes or villains, valued for their opposition or lack of commitment and drive. Schools need heroes and heroines to define what is possible, but in toxic schools villains who attach a negative connotation to new possibilities are valued and celebrated. In these schools energy, focus, and commitment are misguided.

Sixth, Deal and Peterson (2009) note that in toxic schools students are viewed as burdens. In these settings, teachers and administrators dislike their students and have negative thoughts about them. Students are only as good as their test scores, and many teachers hope students do not attend school. "With a lack of real commitment to the needs of the students, few attempts are made to change practice, reach students who are disengaged, or connect with the true meaning of education" (p. 165).

Seventh, affected schools are frequently spiritually fractured. People in these schools lack a sense of excitement or passion. Many people seem hopeless and discouraged. Teachers and administrators arrive at work just before they are required to be there, and they leave as soon as they are allowed. In between, there is little energy or focus, and the teachers do not connect with the students. Eighth, in toxic schools there are few positive rituals or ceremonies that bring people together. Staff marriages, degree completions, or new babies are not celebrated, nor are there ceremonies to celebrate student success, such as perfect attendance, honor roll, or club participation. Lack of rituals and ceremonies leave a school emotionless (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Lastly, Deal and Peterson (2009) add that stories of toxic schools highlight incompetence, low expectations, and apathy. Stories of incompetent, uncaring teachers, students with poor academic skills, and disinterested parents are emphasized. Even worse, these stories travel among the teachers, students, parents, and members of the community. Positive stories are frowned upon, and are replaced by negative stories. Unfortunately, toxic cultures are difficult to change because people are drawn to negativity. Complaining, whining, and disagreeing can bond people just as easily as can innovativeness and collegiality. “Pessimism is just as contagious as optimism and when a school is mired in a noxious past and dysfunctional present it is hard to envision a more promising future” (p. 166).

In a comparison of positive and toxic cultures, Peterson (2002) notes that schools with negative cultures hinder growth and learning. These schools lack a clear sense of purpose, have norms that reinforce inertia, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration, and have hostile relations among staff. These schools are

unhealthy for staff and students. Furthermore, negative cultures can seriously damage staff development. In these schools positive experiences are attacked because they don't fit the cultural norms. In other instances, teachers are ridiculed for sharing their positive experiences at professional development trainings. In some schools, professional development is not valued because teachers do not believe they have anything new to learn. Positive teachers in these schools either leave the school, become outcasts, or eventually join the negativity crowd.

Transforming and Strengthening Culture

Leaders who are interested in changing their school's culture should first try to understand the existing culture (Stolp, 1994). Leaders can undermine a school's existing culture in two ways: by commission or by omission (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Commission is when leaders adopt new values or overlook key symbols or rituals, and omission is when leaders neglect current values, allow important rituals and ceremonies fade, allow negativity to grow, or focus solely on standards, rules, and test scores. Once a leader has taken steps to understand the existing culture of a school, he or she can try one of several measures to begin alleviating the negativity that exists in schools with toxic cultures.

Deal and Peterson (2009) outlined a series of steps to combating negative culture. One step is to confront the negativity head on by giving people a chance to voice their concerns in a public forum. Healthy venting should be followed with actions to correct the problem. Another step is to shield and support positive cultural elements and staff. New staff members should be welcomed and protected from the poison that negative staff brings. A third step for alleviating negativity in schools with toxic cultures is focusing

energy on the recruitment, selection, and retention of effective, positive staff. Negative people should be replaced, and new, positive staff should be celebrated. Another step is to celebrate the positive and the possible. Leaders should rebuild the culture around new values and beliefs and tell stories of small successes, collaboration, and collegiality. They should also appreciate the small moments in which students shine and establish ceremonies and celebrations to unite the entire school.

A fifth step that can be used to transform negative cultures is to consciously and directly focus on eliminating the negative and rebuilding around positive customs and beliefs (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Staff members can decide what negative trends and traditions should be abolished, and during retreats and other staff outings, staff can focus on the positive possibilities. Another step is to develop new stories of success, renewal, and accomplishment. Any successes, large or small, should be celebrated. As this pattern continues, staff will begin to gain confidence in themselves and in their values of the school. Lastly, when all else fails, a final step is assisting staff in finding other places to work. If staff or administrators would be more comfortable and positive elsewhere, steps should be taken to make such a move happen (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

In *The Culture Builder*, Barth (2002) states that by the time a beginning teacher waits the mandatory three years to speak out in a faculty meeting, she too is likely to be so immersed in the toxic culture of a school that she will no longer be able to gauge with clarity the school's cultural patterns of leadership, competition, fearfulness, self-interest, or lack of support. To combat this phenomenon, Barth adds that to change a school's culture requires gathering the courage and skill to not remain victimized by the toxic elements of the school's culture but rather to address them. Finally, Barth notes that

culture building requires the will to restructure elements of the school's culture into forces that support rather than hinder the school's purposes. Similarily, Byrk (2010) adds cultivating teacher buy-in and commitment is a central concern in promoting the deep cultural changes required for large initiatives to be successful.

School Culture and Student Achievement

Culture is a very powerful force in schools and its connection to school improvement is particularly strong (Lindahl, 2006). Developing and maintaining positive relationships with staff is a critical component of developing and nurturing a positive school culture. When positive school cultures exist, teacher performances will improve which, in turn, will lead to improved student performances (Jones, 2009). A school principal who creates a culture that promotes and encourages learning is absolutely essential to improve student achievement in schools (Sergiovanni, 2001). School principals who care and focus on the specific aspects of the dimensions of school climate that affect the culture of the school promote student achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). Furthermore, if school leaders want to change and improve the outcomes of schooling for both students and teachers, some features of the school culture must be changed. Deal (1985) identified eight attributes of effective schools with strong cultures: (a) shared values; (b) the principal as a hero or heroine who embodies core values; (c) distinctive rituals that embody widely shared beliefs; (d) employees as situational heroes or heroines; (e) rituals of acculturation and cultural renewal; (f) significant rituals to celebrate and transform core values; (g) balance between innovation and tradition and between autonomy and control; and (h) widespread participation in cultural rituals. Principals and school leaders should embrace these attributes and take steps to identify

those that they should strengthen within their schools. Saranson (1996) adds if leaders want to change and improve the outcomes of schooling for both students and teachers, they must change some features of the school culture.

MacNeil and his colleagues (2009) summarize these ideas by asserting "school principals seeking to improve student performance should focus on improving the school's culture by getting the relationships right between themselves, their teachers, students and parents" (p. 78).

Schools need both clear structures and strong, professional cultures to facilitate teacher learning (Peterson, 2002). Carefully designed curriculum and assessments are key to increasing student achievement, along with teacher professional development. A school's culture either supports or sabotages quality professional learning. "Developing and sustaining a positive, professional culture that nurtures staff learning is the task of everyone in the school" (p. 15). With a strong, positive culture that supports teacher development and student learning, schools can become places where every teacher is effective and every child is successful.

The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture

By now, it seems clear that a discussion about culture as it relates to student achievement is incomplete without simultaneously discussing the principal's role in shaping school culture. Stolp (1994) asserted that the most effective change in school culture happens when principals, teachers, and students model the beliefs important to the institution. The actions of the principal are noticed and interpreted as what is important. To a lesser degree, stakeholders also define what is important by studying teacher behavior. MacNeil et al. (2009) stated that the culture and climate of the school effects

student achievement and the school principal directly influences the culture and climate of a school. In their discussion on the role of school leaders, Peterson and Deal (1998) claim school leaders from every level are vital in shaping school culture. School leaders do several important things when sculpting culture. First, they read the culture by reviewing its history and by determining its current condition. Second, school leaders discover and articulate core values, looking for those who are most concerned about student success. Finally, leaders work to develop a positive context, reinforcing cultural elements that are positive and modifying those that are dysfunctional. In a depiction of skills and traits of effective leaders, Jones (2009) discussed two generations of traits for leaders according to Stogdill from 1948 to 1970. The author also discussed Yulk's (2002) perspective of leadership traits. In the three categorizations of skills and traits, there is one common characteristic linked to the leader's ability to exhibit interpersonal relationships with staff members. This is so imperative in the development of positive climates especially in schools where staff members feel they are valued. "Obviously, teacher productivity is best in positive school cultures and climates, which ultimately leads to improved student achievement" (Jones, 2009, p. 3).

Several researchers have demonstrated a relationship between school culture and student achievement. Hoy, Tarter, and Bliss (1990) found healthy schools that promote high academic standards, appropriate leadership, and collegiality provide a climate more conducive to student success and achievement. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1997) found school culture and climate were among the top influences in affecting improved student achievement. They also found state and local policies, school organization, and student demographics exercise the least influence on student learning.

In an assessment of 81 Indiana schools, Guenert (2005) found more collaborative schools tend to have higher student achievement. More specifically, the study showed how student performance in both math and language arts was positively correlated to a collaborative school culture. MacNeil et al. (2009) investigated whether schools rated exemplary, recognized, and acceptable differed in their school climates as measured by the 10 dimensions of the Organizational Health Inventory. They found that each of the schools which demonstrated higher student achievement, as shown by their exemplary rating, also demonstrated healthier climates than schools with acceptable ratings. Exemplary schools consistently demonstrated higher scores on each of the 10 dimensions of organizational health than acceptable schools. The schools with higher student achievement consistently exhibited healthier school climates.

Efforts to Impact Student Achievement

Though sociologists recognized the importance of school culture as early as the 1930s, it was not until the 1970s that educational researchers began to draw direct links between the quality of a school's climate and its educational outcomes (Jerald, 2006). Ron Edmonds, often regarded as the father of the effective schools movement, included safe, orderly climate conducive to teaching and learning on his influential list of school-level factors associated with higher student achievement (Jerald, 2006). Though climate is considered a facet of culture, school culture is possibly the least discussed element in practical conversations to improve student achievement (Jerald, 2006). Perhaps this is because factors such as effective leadership, close monitoring of student achievement, a common and clear curriculum, and teacher collaboration seem like factors that educators can directly influence. This seems to explain why culture is often not initially identified

as a factor for improving student achievement. Another explanation for the lack of effort put forth to improve culture may be the amount of time needed for genuine improvements in school culture to occur. "Cultural change is not something to be attempted in the short term" (Lindahl, 2006, p. 8).

Effective High Schools

A Carnegie report on the American high school was released in 1983 (Boyer, 1983). A key message from the report was the time for renewing secondary education has arrived. The aim of the study was to stimulate discussion, offer recommendations, and reaffirm the nation's historic commitment to public schools. Four essential goals of effective high schools were offered (Boyer, 1983). First, the high school should help all students develop the capacity to think critically and communicate effectively using language. Second, the high school should help all students learn about themselves, human heritage, and the interdependent world in which they live through a core curriculum based upon common human experiences. Third, the high school should prepare all students for work and further education through electives that develop and serve individual abilities and interests. Fourth, the high school should help all students fulfill their social and civic obligations through school and community service. Although many proposals for school reform are passionately debated, without a vision, they do not accomplish much. These goals constitute a "clear and coherent vision of what the nation's high schools should be seeking to accomplish" (Boyer, 1983, p. 67).

In *The Good High School,* Lightfoot (1983) offers portraitures of six urban, suburban, and elite high schools. She gives a comprehensive view of life at these schools, the emerging cultures, the successes and failures of these schools, and thoughts of what a

good high school looks like. She notes good schools are places where students are seen as people worthy of respect, they provide safe and regulated environments for building student-teacher relationships, and they try to respond to the inevitable tensions that adolescent needs produce and seek to create environments that will connect their students to the wider world and protect them from it.

Origins of Schools within Schools

Although small schools have only become popular in recent years, the idea is not new. Small schools can be traced back to 1919, when six schools in Texas were designed to use smaller homeroom groups to create a sense of loyalty, and a greater feeling of belonging, to provide more counseling for all, to increase control of discipline cases, and to avoid the administrative confusion that accompanies many homeroom situations (Plath, 1965). From the 1920s to the 1950s small schools were created in Illinois, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Georgia, New York, and Pennsylvania. By the 1960s, 50 schools around the nations had adopted some form of decentralization (Plath, 1965). At this time the term, "schools-within-a school" became popular, and was defined as "an organizational design whereby a large secondary school is divided into smaller schools" (Plath, 1965, p. 1). Each small school had its own administrative leadership, guidance staff, and students, as well as building spaces designed to its exclusive use. Additionally, a part of each student's day was spent within his or her small school and, although faculty members were assigned to each small school, a student's curricular class activities were provided by this group and by faculty shared among the several small schools. The dilemma of two trends led to the development of secondary school organization for the 1960s: the dramatic growth of high schools, and the persistent concern for the individual

student as secondary institutions became larger. This dilemma caused school leaders to rethink the purposes of school, goals of secondary education, typical school organization, theory in school organization, and accepted principles of organization.

Small Learning Communities

The term "small learning community" (SLC) refers to an individualized learning unit within a larger school setting where students and teachers are scheduled together and have a common area of the school in which to hold most or all of their classes (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). In SLCs, an interdisciplinary team of teachers shares a group of no more than 500 students for a large part of their instructional time in a physical space dedicated to their collaboration (Oxley, 2001). "The main purpose of SLCs is to raise academic achievement for all student enrolled in large high schools by creating smaller learning communities within them" (Lee & Friedrich, 2007, p. 265).

The United States Department of Education (2001) defined SLCs as a smaller subunit within a larger school, such as an academy, house plan, school-within-a-school, or other structural unit. SLC high schools create the smaller sub-units by combining different SLC structures and strategies defined by the federal government. Since 2000, there have been various models of SLCs implemented in over 1,000 high schools across the country. The federal government identifies four main structures and six principal strategies of SLCs (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The main SLC structures are the academy, house plan, school-within-a-school, and magnet program. The academy is a subgroup consisting of student and teachers who focus on a particular theme. These units are often referred to as theme-based academies. The house plan is an SLC structure that divides student in a large school into groups of several hundred, whether across grade

levels or by grade levels. A school-within-a-school structure features a small autonomous program housed within a larger school building. In schools-within-schools, each school has its own culture, program, personnel, students, budget, and school space. Lastly, a magnet program draws students from an entire school by highlighting an academic specialty focus and assigning competitive admission requirements or open enrollment systems.

In addition to the four main SLC structures, there are six SLC strategies designed to combine with the SLC structures (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). They include academic teaming, an adult advocate system, a teacher advisory system, alternative scheduling, freshman transition activities, and multiyear group. *Academic teaming* is an interdisciplinary group of teachers who share the same students rather than the same subject. The focus of an *adult advocacy system* is to provide at least one caring adult who can serve as a source of social attachment, personal guidance, and rapport for each student by meeting on a regular basis with each student individually or in small groups. A *teacher advisory system* aims to organize teachers to personalize the high school experience and support academic achievement by working with small groups of students. Particularly, the major activities of this strategy include developing personalized lesson plans, introducing students to career clusters, and helping students select courses. With *alternative scheduling*, teachers are encouraged to develop lessons that are more compatible with learning objectives by changing the length of the class period, the school day, and the school year to enhance student achievement. The purpose of *freshman transition activities* is to support all first-year students who have difficulties in adapting to their new academic settings. Freshman transition activities generally include mentoring

from older students, placement in separate buildings with additional adult support, and the provision of career/college exploration classes. Lastly, multiyear grouping is a strategy for keeping several teachers with a group of students for two or more years based on trust between students and teachers. With these strategies, teachers, students, and parents work to build an integrated, individualized academic and social environment designed to accommodate students as community members and to promote achievement (Lee & Friedrich, 2007).

SLCs have become popular in an effort to close the racial achievement gap left open after initiatives such as Head Start and school family partnerships, curriculum reform, high stakes testing, and teacher quality reform (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). Enthusiasm for SLC schools has grown because the research on small schools affirms their effectiveness in large schools in terms of student achievement, academic equity, graduation rates, and safety. The positive relationship between small schools and equitable student achievement across ethnicities has recently given SLC programs an elevated status in the arena of high school reform (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). However, "despite the growing body of positive evidence for small schools, the research evidence of whether SLC measures contribute to academic achievement across ethnicities in largely unknown" (Lee & Friedrich, 2007, p. 263). Although most literature on small schools has shown the positive effect of small schools on academic achievement, it is unknown whether the effect of SLC is consistent with that of small schools. For this reason, SLCs are seen by some as more problematic than small schools because of a lack of evidence—the effect of small schools on school improvement has been well documented by previous research but the effect of SLCs on school improvement is

largely unknown (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). Furthermore, a consequence of the SLCs' diverse features is the fact that they make the effectiveness of SLCs a challenge to assess, making it important to examine which combinations between the structures and the strategies ensure the effectiveness of SLCs in terms of achievement of all students.

Small Schools

Small schools are often schools that were once large schools that have been restructured into smaller schools. Often referred to as schools-within-schools, this structure is sometimes manifested by the formation of small subunits within a larger school (Lee, Ready, & Johnson, 2001). Smaller numbers of students, a more intimate and personalized learning environment, and a cohesive vision among teachers characterize small schools. With no more than 350 students in an elementary school and 500 in a high school, small schools promote environments in which parents, teachers, and students get to know one another well (Lee, Ready, & Johnson, 2001).

Small schools are a vehicle for teachers, students, parents, and other school community members to implement strategies they know will benefit the students. Small size alone does not make small schools successful. Instead, the small size serves as a platform on which other important elements of successful schools can best flourish (WestEd, 2001). For example, the manageable size of a small school allows the faculty to meet frequently to discuss the day-to-day operations of the school, as well as to design curriculum, discuss student progress and meet with parents and community members.

Origins of High School Restructuring

Academic forums have examined the idea of organizing smaller schools within large comprehensive high schools since the early 1960s beginning with Barker and Gumps's *Big School, Small School* (1964), which formally introduced the idea of partially autonomous subunits within large schools (McVey, 2008). The guiding principle was smaller units would encourage enhanced academic work while at the same time offering students an assortment of extracurricular activities more commonly offered at large schools. Wide support for this reform model was never realized, but now two things have happened that have refueled high school restructuring. The NCLB Act of 2001, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, introduced an era of increased accountability in K-12 schools in the United States to improve student achievement (National High School Center, 2007). Secondly, the U.S. Department of Education and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are supporting the development of small schools and the conversion of large schools into smaller ones (McVey, 2008).

High School Restructuring and Student Achievement

Identifying characteristics of school climate that would encourage and increase student achievement should be a top priority for schools that have undergone federally-mandated restructuring under the NCLB Act of 2001 or those in danger of such restructuring. Lee and Smith (1994) examined whether changes in school structure can improve student performance and the conditions under which some structures may be more effective than others. The researchers found that not only were student achievement gains in the first two years of high school significantly higher in the restructured schools than in the traditional schools, but those gains were distributed more equitably.

Interestingly, the researchers also found students who attended smaller high schools consistently posted higher gains in all four cognitive areas (Lee & Smith, 1994).

In a later study, Lee and Smith (1995) studied the impact of attending high schools that implemented restructuring practices on 10th grade students. The authors discovered that students who attend schools with several practices consistent with the restructuring movement learn significantly more in reading, mathematics, history, and science, whereas those who attended schools that did not have these practices in place learned significantly less. While these studies provide a powerful argument for restructured schools, what they omit is an examination and discussion of the school culture: the guiding beliefs and expectations present in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007). The culture of a school is its foundation and can lead to a schools' success or demise. Deal and Peterson (1999) remind schools, policy makers, and practitioners that improvements in student achievement will happen in schools with professional cultures that reflect a positive school climate.

Research also supports smaller class and school size. In a policy brief addressing school climate and student achievement, Yonezawa, Jones, Mehan, and McClure (2008) state that reducing class and school size can help improve the school climate and student achievement. Although smaller classes and schools do not always seem feasible, especially during a time when state governments are experiencing fiscal difficulties, policy makers should reflect on the long-term results of smaller classes and schools and provide opportunities and incentives to districts that maintain small classes and schools. In a study on small schools and the pressure they often face to consolidate, Howley and

Howley (1996) maintain several claims currently made for small schools are well-established:

1. Impoverished students have higher achievement in smaller schools.
2. The link between poverty and achievement is weaker in smaller as compared to larger schools.
3. Dropout rates are lower in smaller schools.
4. Participation rates in school activities are much higher in smaller schools
5. Smaller high schools can offer appropriate curriculum.

Reorganizing schools into SLCs can certainly improve student achievement, but buy-in from all stakeholders is necessary to do so. Oxley (2001) examined the efforts of middle and high school staff to reorganize their schools into SLCs. In the rural schools, staff members failed to sustain the SLCs. In the urban school examined, SLCs became an institutional feature, but with significantly compromised designs. Teachers in rural settings who instructed classes with higher achieving students were reluctant to relinquish them and did not wish to engage in the school-wide reform. Inner-city high school teachers were also reluctant to see their students with special needs integrated into regular classes. Additional barriers to sustaining the integrity of SLCs were class size and teacher load requirements. The researchers ultimately found small learning community teams require different preparation and development as well as reduced competition with academic departments.

Lee and Friedrich (2007) analyzed standardized data sets on 193 SLC schools. They found that despite modest achievement gains, the achievement gap between racial and ethnic subgroups was still wide, although SLC schools in large cities where the

majority of the students were minorities made consistent gains, and Hispanic students showed significant yearly gains. These results revealed that SLC schools that adopted the adult advocate and teacher advisory systems showed significantly higher student achievement than SLC schools that did not adopt those two strategies (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). This suggests that the existence of caring adults is significantly related to student achievement. However, SLC schools that adopted academic teaming, alternative scheduling, freshman transition activities, and multiyear groups showed lower achievement than SLC schools that did not adopt these strategies. Additionally, although multiyear groups and academic teaming were the most popular, SLC schools that implemented these two strategies had lower student achievement than SLC schools that did not implement these strategies (Lee & Friedrich, 2007).

Lee, Ready, and Johnson (2001) documented the difficulty in identifying rare samples to study. They studied the two types of schools-within-schools (SWS). The first type is those with one or two subunits within a larger comprehensive high school and the second type is those with a full-model design. They drew eight conclusions from their research. First, locating a rare sample through telephone interviews is complex. Second, snowball sampling (relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects) doesn't necessarily imply diffusion. Identified schools did not seem to base their design on another school's success; rather, they identified reform writers when asked about if they modeled their design on another school. Third, the SWS design is more common in theory than in practice. Most high schools offer only one or two subunits. The full-model SWS high school, fully divided into smaller subunits, is more unusual than current high school reform conversations and writings would suggest.

Fourth, the full-model SWS design does not seem to be driven by a motivation to break up the largest schools. The majority of the schools located with the SWS design were of moderate rather than large size. Fifth, the SWS structural design is more common among schools serving disadvantaged students. The researchers found that the SWS design was most common in large, urban school districts, and were unable to locate an operating full-model SWS high school in an affluent suburb or a school serving a largely college-bound clientele. Sixth, the motivation of offering students choices is integral to the SWS reform strategy. Seventh, a major impetus for dividing high schools into subunits is more social than academic. The researchers' informants indicated the major motivation for creating and sustaining subunits within the larger school is to help faculty and students to know one another better, through more contact with fewer people. The eighth and final conclusion was that advocates of SWS are passionate about the idea. The staff that was interviewed expressed strong commitment to SWS and was generally eager to participate in research on it (Lee, Ready, & Johnson 2001).

Several states have implemented small or restructured schools successfully (Christman & Macpherson, 1996; Reyes, Alexander, Fuller, & Phillips, 2007; Wedl, 1998). The Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools are currently restructuring. Each high school is creating SLCs, each of which have a different focus. Students choose the SLC they wish to attend (Wedl, 1998). Philadelphia has also successfully implemented restructuring. In 1988, only half of Philadelphia ninth graders in comprehensive high schools moved to the tenth grade; the rest repeated their sophomore year or left school (Christman & Macpherson, 1996). This inspired the development of the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative (PSC). The mission of the PSC is to nurture the restructuring of

the city's 22 comprehensive high schools in an effort to "turn the tide of disaffected adolescents pouring from the neighborhood schools" (p. 1). The collaborative, in partnership with the school district, initially focused on ninth graders but soon broadened to include the restructuring of entire schools. Its eight year effort had two principal components: the creation of SLCs in the high schools and school-based management/ shared-decision making. This second component is aimed at making the focus of decision-making closer to the site of teaching and learning. Christman and Macpherson (1996) report several benefits: constructivist teaching and learning that builds on students' experience and interests has flourished; teachers are systematically building knowledge about students' experiences at home, in school, and in the community; and partnerships with community agencies that support substantive SLC focus and identity through innovative curriculum projects were established.

Reyes, Alexander, Fuller, and Phillips (2007) conducted a study of the Houston Independent School District, which reformed 24 schools over five years. The district Board of Trustees stated that "moving away from a factory model of instruction to one where students are prepared to thrive in the 21st century would dramatically change the city's high schools" (p. 12). The redesigned schools implemented several key aspects of reform: SLCs, literacy initiatives, personalization of instruction, and adult advocacy programs. All three schools made significant progress with the SLCs. Teachers developed a more positive perception of reform and teachers noted that teacher-student relationships and overall school climate improved over time. Two of the three reformed schools maintained higher achievement scores than their comparison campuses.

Kahne, Sporte, de la Torre, and Easton (2006) studied the impact of school conversions in Chicago. The researchers examined four years of small school reform in Chicago, focusing on schools formed by converting large traditional high schools into small autonomous ones. The creation of small high schools was one significant response to the unacceptably low outcomes associated with Chicago's high schools. The researchers studied the implementation and impact of the Chicago High School Redesign (CHSRI), which opened 23 small high schools between fall 2002 and fall 2005. A major goal of this work was to assess whether students who attend the newly created small high school demonstrate improved academic performance and had lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates when compared to similar students who attend other schools in the district. The researchers discussed the results of four items – teacher context for reform, facilitators of instructional improvement, instruction, and supportive student context. The context for teachers at CHSRI schools appeared to be more desirable than the context at other Chicago schools that served similar students.

Teachers at CHSRI schools reported a greater level of teacher influence, a finding that is consistent with one of the founding principles of the initiative—that it be a teacher led reform. Second, teachers and principals in CHSRI schools do not engage more heavily in practices that facilitate instructional improvement than do staff at other Chicago schools serving similar students. Although CHSRI teachers were more likely to report working in a supportive environment, there was no evidence that this translated into practices that facilitate instructional improvement. Third, juniors at CHSRI schools did not report having an instructional experience significantly different that of their non-CHSRI peers, nor did teachers at CHSRI schools report levels of student discussion

significantly different from those teachers at non-CHSRI schools. Fourth, CHSRI schools provided students with higher expectations and more academic and social support data than did other Chicago high schools (Kahne et al., 2006).

Though it has not been determined if research results on small schools can legitimately be used to validate SLC programs, studies have shown that smaller is better (WestEd, 2001). Although a smaller size alone does not automatically translate to effectiveness, smaller sized schools offer opportunities for more personal connections and reform programs and practices known to enhance learning. Positive changes that smaller sized schools offer include strong personal bonds, parent and community involvement, simplicity and focus, improved instructional quality, improved teacher working conditions and job satisfaction, and built-in accountability. In small schools students achieve at higher levels and violence and behavior problems diminish. Attendance is higher, and fewer students drop out. Extracurricular participation increases and poor and minority students greatly benefit (WestEd, 2001).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Despite its importance, culture is possibly the least discussed element in practical conversations regarding approaches that might help to improve student achievement (Jerald, 2006). Furthermore, the role culture plays in restructured high schools has been studied even less. The purpose of this study was to identify which specific aspects of school culture correlate with high and low achieving restructured high schools as perceived by the teachers working in those schools. The researcher analyzed Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) scores of schools identified as trending upward and trending downward in a metropolitan school system in north central Georgia. The data selected was the most recent English Language Arts (ELA) data available on the Georgia Department of Education website from the last two school years, 2009–2010. Survey data was collected from certified teachers at the identified high schools to quantitatively address the research questions.

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between specific aspects of school culture in high and low achieving restructured high schools and student achievement as measured by the GHSGT. Two research questions were addressed, along with three hypotheses per question.

RQ1: Are there statistically significant differences in the cultures of restructured high and low achieving high schools?

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high and low achieving restructured high schools.

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high achieving restructured small high schools.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the low achieving restructured SLC high schools.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance?

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho1: There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho2: There is a statistically significant negative correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Study Subjects

In this study, the participating schools have been transformed into small schools or SLCs. The researcher targeted restructured high schools within the school district which were first to be restructured into their current design. Each school was determined to be high or low achieving based on whether it was trending upward or trending downward in its student achievement data. The restructured small high school identified as trending up opened in 2005 as four, separate small schools. Currently, the distinct academic foci of the four small schools are: Information Technology, Fine Arts, Health and Sciences Research, and Early College. Two of these small schools were included in

this study and are the Small School the Arts (SS/OA) and the Small School of Health and Sciences Research (SS/HSR).

The restructured high school identified as trending down opened in 2008 as the system's first SLC. There are three SLCs at this school: Fine Arts and Media Communication, Information Technology, and Early College for Engineering. In this study, these schools are Small Learning Community Fine Arts and Media Communication (SCL/FAMC), Small Learning Community Information Technology (SLC/IT), and Small Learning Community Engineering Early College (SLC/EEC).

In 1999, the goal of the district was to transform the struggling K-12 school system into one of the nation's leading urban districts (Maciejewski, 2007). In 2003, the district's graduation rate was 54%, almost 10 percentage points below the state's average. After researching several research-based school reform models, the district decided to test the small school approach at the trending up high school, which at that time had a dismal 36% graduation rate in 2005.

During the 2009-2010 school year, 918 students attended the trending down high school. Of these, 87% were labeled "poverty children" by the GaDOE, 15% of students had disabilities, and 93% of students received free or reduced lunches. Ninety-one percent were African American, 6% were Hispanic, 2% were White, 1% was Asian, and 1% percent was multiracial.

During the 2009-2010 school year, 300 students attended the trending up school. Of these, 79% were labeled "poverty children" by the GaDOE), 3% of students had disabilities, and 84% of students received free or reduced lunches. Ninety-six percent of the students were African American, 2% were Hispanic, 1% was White, and 1% was

multiracial. Lastly, during the 2009-2010 school year, 434 students attended SSHSR. Of these, 85% were labeled "poverty children" by the Georgia Department of Education , 9% of students had disabilities, and 90% of students received free or reduced lunches. Ninety-six percent of the students were African American, and 3% were Hispanic.

Currently, the GaDOE administers the GHSGT to evaluate student performance at the high school level. The tests include assessments in the areas of ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. Current high school diploma requirements mandate that a student must achieve a passing score in each subtest of the GHSGT as well as on the GHSWT. If a student does not pass a subject area test, then he/she is retested in that subject area. A student has multiple opportunities to take each test. The four core subject tests are scored Fail, Pass, and Pass Plus. Table 1 lists the scales and required performance levels.

Table 1

Scale Scores for the Performance Levels on the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT)

Subject Areas	Below Proficiency Fail (Fail)	Basic Proficiency Pass (Pass)	Advanced Proficiency (Pass +)	Honors (Pass +)
English	199 and below	200 to 234	235 to 274	275 and above
Mathematics	499 and below	500 to 534	535 and above	
Science	199 and below	200 to 234	235 to 274	275 and above
Social Studies	499 and below	500 to 534	535 and above	

The schools selected for this study have been identified as either "trending upward" or "trending downward" based on their GHSGT scores in ELA as reported by the GaDOE. A school with an upward trend has decreased the percentage of students that fail the GHSGT, and increased the percentage of students that receive a pass plus score on the GHSGT since restructuring. A school with a downward trend has increased the percentage of students that fail the GHSGT, and decreased the percentage of students that receive an advanced proficiency or honors score on the GHSGT since restructuring.

The data from the GaDOE reveals that three small schools identified as trending down have shown a reduction in student achievement as reflected in their GHSGT scores since restructuring in 2008, and a fourth small school that has shown an upward trend. The school identified as trending up restructured in 2005 and both of the small schools surveyed—Fine Arts and Health Science and Research—have shown an upward trend in GHSGT scores since the first group of eleventh grade students began taking the examination in 2007.

The researcher conducted a meeting with the principal(s) of the selected restructured high school(s). The researcher explained the purpose and research design to the principals and informed them of how they can use the data to improve the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and student achievement. The researcher also asked the principal(s) to identify dates that are convenient for the staff to complete the survey. All teachers from the trending up school which was restructured into small schools, and teachers from all three SLCs at the trending down restructured high school were asked to complete the SCS.

The SCS (See Appendix C) provides a means of determining how a school faculty and the administration perceives and judges the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and its progress toward a quality work life for students, teachers, and staff. The SCS has 50 items and yields results that identify, describe, and measure both the strengths and developmental needs at the school site, as perceived by the people who work there. The SCS has 10 elements or themes: collaborative decision making, concern for the school and stakeholders, continual school improvement focus, empowerment, human resource needs, intent and direction, leadership, management of excellence, professionalism, and teaming.

The 50 survey items reflect the 10 themes related to school culture and each item is clustered into at least one theme. Each survey item yields an average quality points score, which ranges from zero to the maximum of 100. A survey item with an average quality point score of 60 or less is considered to be a deficient culture item, and survey items with average quality point scores of 70 or greater are considered to be quality culture items. In addition to the average quality point scores of individual SCS items, the survey provides an overall average quality point score for the school, with the same range and point score indicators for deficient and quality culture.

The SCS was set up to be administered in two ways, and the principals chose the most efficient and convenient method for their staff. The first method was the use of the Turning Point® clickers (Turning Technologies, Youngstown, OH). With this data collection method, the 50 survey questions were presented in a PowerPoint® (Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA) presentation. One question appeared per slide, and after the presenter read the question, the teachers pressed the button that represented their response

to that item. After all teachers submitted their answer, a graph showing the array of answers appeared on the screen. The survey was administered in this manner until all questions were answered.

The second method was paper and pencil method in which the teachers received a colored answer sheet in which they marked their answers. The survey questions were presented in a PowerPoint presentation and the teachers were selected their answer on the colored sheet. The colored response sheets were used so the researcher could differentiate the responses from the three SLCs. Both methods of data collection for the SCS were completed individually and anonymously. Furthermore, survey results were reported as an aggregate, with no individually identifiable information.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the researcher used a student's *t*-test of independent means to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the culture of high and low achieving restructured high schools. The student's *t*-test is used to test the significance of the difference between two means (Holcomb, 2004). It yields a *p*-value, which indicates the probability that chance or random sampling errors created the difference between the means. A difference is statistically significant when the *p*-value is equal to or less than .05. If a researcher declares a difference to be statistically significant, he or she is rejecting the null hypothesis (Holcomb, 2004). To determine if there were differences in the quality of the cultures of restructured high and low achieving high schools, the researcher used the student's *t*-test to compare the means (i.e., average quality points score) on the SCS from the small schools and the schools restructured into SLCs.

To determine if there was a relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance as measured by student achievement on the ELA section of the GHSGT, the researcher calculated the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson r) to compare the average quality points score on the SCS for each individual school to its performance on the ELA section of the GHSGT.

Correlation is a measure of the relation between two or more variables, which are typically interval scales. Correlation coefficients can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect *negative* correlation while a value of +1.00 represents a perfect *positive* correlation. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation.

Pearson's *r* assumes the variables being tested are interval, and determines the extent to which values of the two variables are "proportional" to each other. The value of correlation (i.e., correlation coefficient) does not depend on the specific measurement units used. This linear relationship between two variables is represented by the correlation coefficient (*r*). When the correlation coefficient is squared, the resulting value, r^2, will represent the proportion of common variation in the two variables (i.e., the "strength" or "magnitude" of the relationship). In order to evaluate the correlation between variables, it is important to know this "magnitude" or "strength" as well as the *significance* of the correlation (Salkin, 2000).

In this study, the researcher will determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the quality of school culture (as measured by the average point score on the SCS) and student achievement as measured by the ELA score on the GHSGT.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between specific aspects of school culture in high and low achieving restructured high schools and student achievement as measured by the GHSGT. The researcher administered the SCS to teachers from five restructured high schools. Two of the high schools were restructured into small schools and three into small learning communities. Student achievement was measured by the schools' overall performance on the ELA portion of the GHSGT. The study sought to answer two research questions and to test three hypotheses with each question.

RQ1: Are there statistically significant differences in the cultures of restructured high and low achieving high schools?

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high and low achieving restructured high schools.

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high achieving restructured small high schools.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the low achieving restructured SLC high schools.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance?

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho1: There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho2: There is a statistically significant negative correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Evidence of the Quality of School Culture in Restructured High Schools

In this study, the participating schools have been transformed into small schools or SLCs. The researcher targeted restructured high schools within the school district which were the first to be restructured into their current design. Each school was determined to be trending upward or trending downward. The school identified as trending up opened in 2005 as four, separate small schools. Currently, the distinct academic foci of the five schools are: Technology, Fine Arts, Health and Sciences Research, and Early College.

The strategy of reconstructing high schools into small schools has only become popular in recent years, but the idea of small schools is not new. Small schools can be traced back to 1919, when six small schools in Texas were designed to use smaller homeroom groups to create a sense of loyalty and a greater feeling of belonging, to provide more counseling for all, to increase control of discipline cases, and to avoid the administrative confusion that accompanies many homeroom situations (Plath, 1965). From the 1920s to the 1950s small schools were created in Illinois, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Georgia, New York, and Pennsylvania. By the 1960s, 50 schools around the

nations had adopted some form of decentralization (Plath, 1965). At this time the term, "schools-within-a school" became popular, and was defined as "An organizational design whereby a large secondary school is divided into smaller schools" (Plath, p. 1). Each small school had its own administrative leadership, guidance staff, and students as well as building spaces designed to its exclusive use. Additionally, a part of each student's day was spent within his or her small school, and although faculty members were assigned to each small school, a student's curricular class activities were provided by this group and by faculty shared among the several small schools. The dilemma of two trends led to the development of secondary school organization for the 1960s: the dramatic growth of high schools, and the persistent concern for the individual student as secondary institutions became larger. This dilemma caused school leaders to rethink the purposes of school, goals of secondary education, typical school organization, theory in school organization, and accepted principles of organization.

Culture can be defined as the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by members of the school community. This system of meaning often shapes what people think and how they act (Stolp & Smith, 1994). In this study the quality of school culture in each of the five restructured high schools was measured using the SCS. The 50 items of the survey are organized into ten themes that reflect the nature of school culture as previously described in the literature. The following tables illustrate the degree to which each of these school culture elements or themes were evident in each of the five schools.

Table 2 lists the average quality points score for each of the 50 items on the SCS for all five schools in the study.

Table 2

Average Quality Points Scores for the 50 SCS Items in the Five Restructured High Schools

SCS Item No.	SS/HSR Average QP Scores	SS/OA Average QP Scores	SLC/IT Average QP Scores	SLC/FAMC Average QP Scores	SLC/EEC Average QP Scores	Five Schools Average QP Scores
1	48	60	62	48	62	56
2	54	56	56	47	72	57
3	46	54	58	48	72	56
4	53	66	66	57	72	63
5	55	65	64	46	48	56
6	53	46	66	50	48	53
7	51	59	58	47	34	50
8	47	49	61	42	48	49
9	55	53	65	49	52	55
10	52	50	65	41	48	51
11	62	94	63	56	56	66
12	76	83	66	49	68	68
13	48	57	63	41	50	52
14	60	44	70	51	48	55
15	59	83	66	62	48	64
16	56	80	74	41	48	60
17	65	79	75	60	72	70
18	57	68	68	48	48	58
19	59	85	65	51	58	64

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

SCS Item No.	SS/HSR Average QP Scores	SS/OA Average QP Scores	SLC/IT Average QP Scores	SLC/FAMC Average QP Scores	SLC/EEC Average QP Scores	Five Schools Average QP Scores
20	42	51	65	46	54	52
21	46	52	71	44	50	53
22	54	78	70	49	50	60
23	62	92	60	52	50	63
24	60	80	74	56	48	64
25	61	69	66	52	58	61
26	60	62	69	54	60	61
27	63	81	69	58	46	63
28	63	84	70	50	46	63
29	48	63	58	51	42	52
30	49	71	66	53	40	56
31	72	76	69	51	56	65
32	45	75	68	50	58	59
33	54	88	66	66	68	68
34	72	81	68	59	58	68
35	55	73	71	52	52	61
36	61	74	69	53	58	63
37	47	60	66	54	54	56
38	57	59	61	50	52	56
39	56	58	68	42	40	53
40	58	61	69	59	48	59

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

SCS Item No.	SS/HSR Average QP Scores	SS/FA Average QP Scores	SLC/IT Average QP Scores	SLC/FAMC Average QP Scores	SLC/EEC Average QP Scores	Five Schools Average QP Scores
41	62	74	68	64	56	65
42	55	62	54	51	52	55
43	60	65	63	48	60	59
44	53	64	58	50	44	54
45	47	54	63	43	50	51
46	46	58	66	52	50	54
47	64	66	66	63	64	65
48	48	53	56	49	40	49
49	47	63	59	41	40	50
50	61	74	66	49	44	59
Average QP Scores	56	75	65	51	53	58
SD	7.49	11.69	4.82	6.15	9.12	5.67

The average quality points scores for the two small schools were 56 and 67, and scores for the three smaller SLCs were 65, 51, and 53, respectively. Variability, in responses as reflected in the standard deviation scores for each restructured small high school, ranged from a low of 4.82 for SLC/IT to a high of 12.62 for SS/FA. These scores indicate the degree to which teachers lack or have shared perceptions of the school culture.

The average quality points score of 56 for SS/HSR identifies the school as having a deficient culture despite showing an upward trend in student performance. The average

quality point score of 75 for SS/OA identifies the school as having a quality culture. SS/OA was the only school survey with an average quality points score above 70, making its culture quality.

Two of the three SLC restructured high schools had average quality points scores flagged as deficient culture, with SLC/FAMC and SLC/EEC having scores of 51 and 53 respectively. Both of these scores fall below the deficient culture threshold score of 60.

In addition to examining the average quality points score for each of the five schools to determine the quality of the culture in each of the schools, the researcher further examined the specific elements or themes of school culture. These themes represent clusters of the 50 items of the SCS instrument, and fall into 10 themes.

Table 3 lists the mean scores for the ten SCS themes at SS/OA. All of the themes received average quality point scores in the "Quality" range, meaning the scores were 70 or higher except for Empowerment, which received a score of 68. The range of standard deviations among the ten themes was 3, and this small degree of deviation indicates that the teachers' opinions across themes did not have a great deal of variability. Stated simply, teachers' views on each of the themes were very similar. However, the standard deviation on each individual theme was high, showing that there was dissention among the teachers on their perception of the culture (Table 3).

Table 3

Comparison of Means for School Culture Survey Themes at Small School Arts (SS/OA)

SCS Theme	Mean*	SD
Collaborative Decision-Making	75	10.3
Concern for School/Stakeholders	79	12.9
Continual School Improvement Focus	77	11.6
Empowerment	68	10.6
Human Resources Needs	75	14.0
Intent/Direction	81	12.9
Leadership	76	10.3
Management of Excellence	82	9.9
Professionalism	72	12.5
Teaming	78	11.0

*Average Quality Points Score

Table 4 lists the mean scores for the SCS themes at SS/HSR. Teachers at this school ranked empowerment, collaborative decision-making, and teaming, as the least desirable themes. Only two theme averages were not deficient—the mean for Concern for the School. Stakeholders were 60.9 and the mean for Intent and Direction was 62.6. There were no quality themes at SSHSR. The variability among standard deviations was 4.9, indicating that the teachers' opinions across themes did not have a great deal of variability.

Table 4

Comparison of Means for School Culture Survey for Small School Health Sciences and Research (SS/HSR)

SCS Theme	Mean*	SD
Collaborative Decision-Making	51.1	6.7
Concern for School/Stakeholders	60.9	7.7
Continual School Improvement Focus	58.0	6.1
Empowerment	50.4	4.9
Human Resources Needs	59.9	9.8
Intent/Direction	62.6	9.4
Leadership	54.2	6.2
Management of Excellence	57.4	8.2
Professionalism	53.5	5.9
Teaming	52.0	7.2

*Average Quality Points Score

The theme the teachers ranked the least favorably, Empowerment, also had the lowest standard deviation. This indicates that the teachers were in agreement with their negative perceptions of Empowerment at SS/HSR. In an examination of the 50 individual SCS items, the teachers rated 74% of items deficient culture and only 6% of items as quality culture.

Table 5 lists the mean scores for the SCS themes at SLC/EEC. Teachers at this school ranked all ten themes as deficient; the mean scores for all themes were 58 or less.

Table 5

Comparison of Means for School Culture Survey Themes at Small Learning Community Engineering and Early College (SLC/EEC)

SCS Theme	Mean*	SD
Collaborative Decision-Making	57.3	10.1
Concern for School/Stakeholders	51.1	11.8
Continual School Improvement Focus	52.0	9.3
Empowerment	49.8	6.9
Human Resources Needs	56.9	7.5
Intent/Direction	53.6	9.8
Leadership	54.6	9.6
Management of Excellence	53.4	11.0
Professionalism	57.1	10.1
Teaming	58.0	11.2

*Average Quality Points Score

The teachers ranked Teaming, Collaborative Decision-Making, and Professionalism the most favorably; and Empowerment, Concern for the School and Stakeholders, and Continual School Improvement focus the least favorably. It is worth noting that Empowerment, the theme that teachers ranked the lowest, also had the smallest standard deviation, meaning that there was not much variation among the teachers' perceptions of Empowerment at SLC/EEC. The range of standard deviations for this school was 4.9, indicating that the teachers' opinions across the themes did not have a great deal of variability.

Table 6 lists the mean scores for the SCS themes at SLC/FAMC. Teachers at this school ranked all ten themes as deficient; the mean scores for all themes were less than 54. Though the mean scores for all themes were deficient, teachers ranked Intent and Direction and Teaming the most favorably, and Collaborative Decision-Making, Empowerment, and Management of excellence the least favorably.

Table 6

Comparison of Means for School Culture Survey Themes at Small Learning Community Fine Arts (SLC/FAMC)

SCS Theme	Mean*	SD
Collaborative Decision-Making	47.8	2.3
Concern for School/Stakeholders	49.6	4.6
Continual School Improvement Focus	52.2	5.0
Empowerment	48.2	4.6
Human Resources Needs	49.6	7.9
Intent/Direction	53.8	5.9
Leadership	51.7	6.5
Management of Excellence	49.0	4.2
Professionalism	52.2	8.5
Teaming	53.2	6.5

*Average Quality Points Score

The standard deviations for each individual theme were less than 9; this indicates that for each theme the teachers' opinions did not have a great deal of variability—the teachers collectively had similar negative feelings about each of the ten themes. It is

worth noting that Collaborative Decision-Making, the theme that teachers ranked the lowest, also had the smallest standard deviation, meaning that there was not much variation among the teachers' perceptions of Collaborative Decision-Making at SLC/FAMC. Almost without exception, the teachers felt as though Collaborative Decision-Making was the weakest area of culture in SLC/FAMC. Lastly, the range of standard deviations for this school was 6.2, indicating that the teachers' opinions across the themes did not have a great deal of variability.

Table 7 lists the mean scores for the SCS themes at SLC/IT. Teachers in this SLC ranked all themes in the 60's; there were no deficient or quality themes in this school. The teachers ranked Professionalism, Management of Excellence, and Intent and Direction the most favorably, and Collaborative Decision-Making, Empowerment, and Human resource needs as the least favorably. The highest standard deviation any individual theme was 6.3. This indicates that across the themes, teachers' opinions did not have a great deal of variability. This also shows that the teachers' opinions in each individual theme did not have a great deal of variability. It is worth noting that Human Resource Needs was one of the lowest-ranked themes by teachers. The standard deviation for this theme was 1.4, indicating that there was almost no variability in the teachers' perceptions of Human Resource Needs at SLC/IT.

In addition to examining the SCS results, the researcher also examined ELA data from the 2009 and 2010 GHSGT. The goal of the school district is to decrease the percentage of students that fail the GHSGT and increase the percentage of students that receive advanced proficiency or honors ratings.

Table 7

Comparison of Means for School Culture Survey Themes at Small Learning Community Information Technology (SLC/IT)

SCS Theme	Mean*	SD
Collaborative Decision-Making	63.8	5.6
Concern for School/Stakeholders	65.4	5.5
Continual School Improvement Focus	64.9	5.0
Empowerment	64.0	4.1
Human Resources Needs	64.4	1.4
Intent/Direction	65.3	6.1
Leadership	65.1	5.9
Management of Excellence	65.9	6.3
Professionalism	66.1	4.8
Teaming	65.0	4.3

*Average Quality Points Score

Evidence of School Performance in Restructured High Schools

High and low achieving restructured high schools were defined in this study as schools whose student achievement levels, as measured on the ELA portion of the GHSGT, had been trending up or trending down, respectively. School identified as trending up were increasing in the percentage of students at the highest proficiency levels and decreasing the percentage of students at the lowest proficiency levels. Schools identified as trending down were increasing in the percentage of students at the lowest proficiency levels and decreasing the percentage of students at the highest proficiency

levels. The following tables list of the performance trends for high and low achieving restructured high schools in the district.

Table 8 lists the ELA GHSGT data from 2009. In 2009, SLC/FAMC had the highest percentage of students that earned advanced proficiency or honors and SS/HSR has the lowest. However, SS/FA had the lowest percentage of students that were below proficiency, and SLC/EEC had the highest percentage.

Table 8

2009 English Language Arts Georgia High School Graduation Test Results

Restructured High Schools	# Below Proficiency	# Basic Proficiency	# Advanced Proficiency	# Honors	Total	% Below Proficiency	% Advanced Proficiency + Honors
			Small Schools				
SS/FA	4	39	26	4	73	5%	41%
SS/HSR	20	50	20	2	92	22%	24%
			Small Learning Communities Schools				
SLC/FAMC	5	22	30	5	62	8%	56%
SLC/EEC	14	28	16	0	58	24%	28%
SLC/IT	12	33	18	2	65	18%	31%

Table 9 lists the ELA GHSGT data from 2010 and illustrates the classification of the schools as trending up, and the SLCs as trending down. In 2010, SS/FA had the highest percentage of students that earned advanced proficiency or honors and SLC/FAMC and SLC/IT had the lowest. SS/FA also had the lowest percentage of students that were below proficiency, and SLC/EEC had the highest percentage.

Table 9

2010 English Language Arts Georgia High School Graduation Test Results

Restructured High Schools	# Below Proficiency	# Basic Proficiency	# Advanced Proficiency	# Honors	Total	% Below Proficiency	% Advanced Proficiency + Honors
Small Schools							
SS/FA	0	19	47	7	73	0%	74%
SS/HSR	10	36	33	6	85	12%	46%
Small Learning Communities Schools							
SLC/FAMC	10	21	16	3	50	20%	38%
SLC/EEC	10	10	17	0	37	27%	46%
SLC/IT	5	29	19	2	55	9%	38%

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between specific aspects of school culture in high and low achieving restructured high schools and student achievement as measured by the GHSGT. Two research questions, each with accompanying null hypotheses, examined the relationship between school culture and performance in restructured high schools

RQ1: Are there statistically significant differences in the cultures of restructured high and low achieving restructured high schools?

The researcher posited three null hypotheses regarding the differences in culture between the high and low achieving restructured high schools, and the results varied by school. The first series of comparisons was between each of the small schools (SS/OA

and SS/HSR) and each of the small learning communities (SLC/IT, SLC/FAMC, and SLC/EEC).

As shown in the following results comparing the SS/OA with the three SLCs, there was no statistically significant difference between SS/OA and SLC/IT, but there was a statistically significant difference between SS/OA and the remaining two SLCs—SLC/FAMC and SS/OA. The specific results are shown below.

Comparisons between the SS/HSR and the three SLCs had similar results. There were no statistically significant differences between SS/HSR and SLC/IT, but there were statistically differences between SS/HSR and the two remaining SLCs—SLC/FAMC and SLC/EEC.

The researcher conducted hypothesis testing using a *t*-test comparison of independent means for each of the high and low achieving restructured high schools. The results detailed previously are shown by each null hypothesis.

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high and low achieving restructured high schools.

SS/OA to SLC/IT: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/OA (M = 75; SD = 12.62, $p \leq .05$) and SCL/IT (M = 65, SD = 4.82, $p \leq .05$), and the null is accepted.

SS/OA to SLC/FAMC: There is a statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/OA (M = 75; SD = 12.62, $p \geq .05$) and SCL/FAMC (M = 51, SD = 6.15, $p \geq .05$), and the null is rejected.

SS/OA to SLC/EEC: There is a statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/OA (M = 75; SD = 12.62, $p \geq .05$) and SCL/EEC (M = 53, SD = 9.12, $p \geq .05$), and the null is rejected.

SS/HRC to SLC/IT: There is a statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/HSR (M = 56; SD = 7.49, $p \geq .05$) and SCL/IT (M = 65, SD = 4.82, $p \geq .05$), and the null is rejected.

SS/HSR to SLC/FAMC: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/HSR (M = 56; SD = 7.49, $p \leq .05$) and SCL/FAMC (M = 51, SD = 6.15, $p \leq .05$), and the null is accepted.

SS/ HSR to SLC/EEC: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/HSR (M = 56; SD = 7.49, $p \leq .05$) and SCL/IT (M = 65, SD = 6.15, $p \leq .05$), and the null is accepted.

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high-achieving restructured small high schools.

SS/OA to SS/HSR: There is a statistically significant difference in the cultures of SS/OA (M = 75; SD = 12.62, $p \geq .05$) and SS/HSR (M = 56; SD = 7.49, $p \geq .05$), and the null is rejected.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the low achieving restructured SLC high schools.

SLC/IT to SLC/FAMC: There is a statistically significant difference in the cultures of SLC/IT (M = 65, SD = 4.82, $p \geq .05$), and SLC/FAMC (M = 51, SD = 6.15, $p \geq .05$), the null is rejected.

SLC/IT to SLC/EEC: There is a statistically significant difference in the cultures of SLC/IT (M = 65, SD = 4.82, $p \geq .05$), and SLC/EEC (M = 53, SD = 9.12, $p \geq .05$), the null is rejected.

SLC/FAMC to SLC/EEC: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of SLC/FAMC (M = 51, SD = 6.15, $p \leq .05$), and SLC/EEC (M = 53, SD = 9.12, $p \leq .05$), the null is accepted.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance?

The second research question sought to determine if there was a relationship between the quality of school culture and student achievement as measured by the ELA section of the GHSGT. As with the first research question, there were three hypotheses tested.

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho1: There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho2: There is a statistically significant negative correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

The researcher conducted a Pearson's *r* correlation to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between the quality of school culture and student achievement as measured by the ELA portion of the GHSGT. The Pearson's *r* for these variables was 0.577862, which represents a positive correlation of medium strength on a scale with "1" being perfect correlation. Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected as there is statistically

significant between the culture at the reconstructed high schools and student achievement. The second hypothesis is accepted as the direction of the correlation is positive. The third hypothesis is rejected as the direction of the correlation is not negative.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the five restructured high schools' average quality points scores and GHSGT scores, as measured by the percentage of students scoring at a Pass Plus proficiency level. As shown in the figure, the distance between the GHSGT scores and the SCS scores ranges from a low of seven for SS/OA and SLC/EEC to a high of 27 for SLC/IT. Overall the figure also shows the gap between GHSGT scores and the SCS average quality point scores was smallest for the two small schools previously identified as high achieving, or trending up, and the gap was widest between the SLCs, previously identified as low achieving or trending down. In other words, the misalignment between culture and achievement grew as the performance of the schools declined.

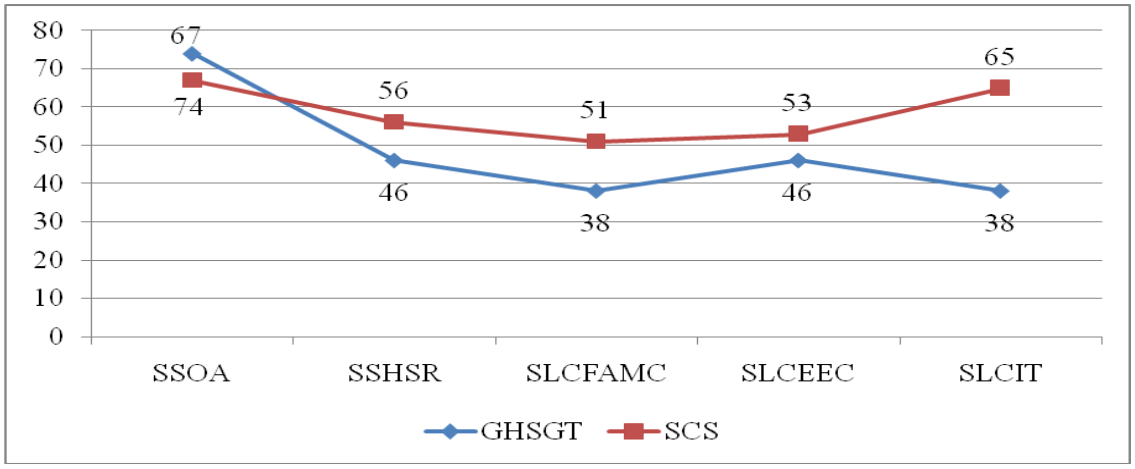

Figure 1. Comparison of Student Achievement and SCS Average Quality Points Scores for Restructured High Schools

Summary

School culture is a phenomenon that has been long studied in the literature, but minimal attention has been paid by practitioners when trying to affect the quality of work life in schools and the levels of student achievement. In this chapter, the researcher analyzed the quality of school culture in five restructured high schools and found that there is a statistically significant difference in culture among schools with varying levels of student achievement. Confounding these variables are other factors such as the length of time the currently structure has been in place and the attitudes and behaviors of teachers. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Public schools today are held more accountable for student achievement than ever before; this is primarily defined as higher test scores (Gruenert, 2005). Although culture may be a vague concept in a system where administrators need concrete results with regard to student achievement, linking culture and student achievement challenges administrators, teachers, and stakeholders to focus their energies on more human aspects of school leadership and teachers' perceptions of school culture. As many of the nation's high schools are being restructured from the large, comprehensive, one size fits all model to "communal" models that often consist of small schools and SLCs, there is a need not only to determine if changes in school structure can improve student performance, but also to determine the role of culture in student achievement at restructured high schools.

Lee and Smith (1995) presented evidence that restructuring high schools can indeed made a difference for students; using data on more than 11,000 students enrolled in 820 high schools they discovered clear links between high school restructuring and improved student learning. Though this study offered solid evidence that students learn more in restructuring schools, it was not able to show how or why these links occur. The current study investigated the effects of school culture on student achievement in restructured high schools.

Related Literature

School culture matters (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). It is a critical element of effective leadership, and there is increasing evidence that organizations with stronger cultures are more adaptable, have higher member motivation and commitment, are more cooperative and better able to resolve conflicts, have greater capacity for innovation, and are more effective in achieving their goals (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Though researchers have different perspectives on leadership and its alignment to culture, it seems clear that both teacher and student performances improve in positive cultures (Gruenert, 2005).

Definition of Culture

Geertz (1973) described culture as the web of significance in which we are all suspended. Deal and Kennedy (1982) defined culture as the shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together. Hoy (1990) suggests that culture encompasses the values and norms of the school or organization. Barth (2002) added culture is "the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (p. 6). Though researchers have offered several different definitions of culture, none is universally accepted as the one best definition (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Elements and Benefits of Effective School Culture

Fairman and Clark (1982) identified 10 dimensions of organizational health that are present in schools with healthy, effective cultures: Goal focus, communication, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation, and problem-solving adequacy. Saphier and King (1985) identified

12 elements that are representative of healthy cultural norms in schools: collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring celebration and humor, involvement in decision making, protection of what's important, traditions, and open and honest communication as healthy cultural norms.

There is no one best culture, nor is there a magic formula for a healthy culture; however, knowledge of successful schools identifies common features in professional learning communities. In these cultures, staff, students, and administrators value learning, work to enhance curriculum and instruction, and focus on students and student achievement (Peterson, 2002). In schools with professional learning communities, the culture possesses: a widely shared sense of purpose and values, norms of continuous learning and improvement, a commitment to and sense of responsibility for the learning of all students, collaborative, collegial relationships, and opportunities for staff reflection, collective inquiry and sharing personal practice. Additionally, these schools often have a common professional language, communal stories of success, extensive opportunities for quality professional development, and ceremonies that celebrate improvement, collaboration and learning (Peterson & Deal, 2002). These elements build commitment, strengthen motivation, and facilitate learning for staff and students.

Eaker and Keating (2008) added that while all professional learning communities do not mirror each other, they all reflect three critical cultural shifts. The first shift is a shift in fundamental purpose from teaching to learning. When schools passionately adopt the mission of ensuring high achievement for all students, they are driven to pursue different questions and work in different ways. The second shift is a shift in the work of

teachers. To help all students learn, teachers must work collaboratively. Teachers should not work in isolation; they should work in high-performing, collaborative teams. Everyone wins when the school shifts from a culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration. The third shift is a shift in focus. The only way to discover if collaborative efforts have been effective is to focus on results. Therefore, educators shift their focus from "inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results" (p. 15).

Elements and Consequences of Ineffective School Culture

Toxic school cultures possess the same elements as positive cultures. They have values, rituals, stories, traditions, and a several cultural players (Deal & Peterson, 2009). However, in schools with a toxic culture, these elements have a negative connotation. Instead of being positive, they become crippling. In a comparison of positive and toxic cultures, Peterson (2002) notes that schools with negative cultures hinder growth and learning. These schools lack a clear sense of purpose, have norms that reinforce inertia, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration, and have hostile relations among staff. These schools are unhealthy for staff and students. Furthermore, negative cultures can seriously damage staff development. In these schools positive experiences are attacked because they do not fit the cultural norms. In other instances, teachers are ridiculed for sharing their positive experiences at professional development trainings. In some schools, professional development is not valued because teachers do not believe they have anything new to learn. Positive teachers in these schools either leave the school, become outcasts, or eventually join the negativity crowd (Peterson, 2002).

School Culture and Student Achievement

Culture is a very powerful force in schools and its connection to school improvement is particularly strong (Lindahl, 2006). Developing and nurturing positive relationships with staff is a critical component of developing and maintaining a positive school culture. When positive school cultures exist, teacher performances will improve which, in turn, will lead to improved student performances (Gruenert, 2005; Jones, 2009). A school principal who creates a culture that promotes and encourages learning is absolutely essential to improve student achievement in schools (Sergiovanni, 2001). School principals who care and focus on the specific aspects of the dimensions of school climate that affect the culture of the school promote student achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). MacNeil and his colleagues summarize these ideas by asserting that "school principals seeking to improve student performance should focus on improving the school's culture by getting the relationships right between themselves, their teachers, students and parents" (p. 78-79).

MacNeil et al. (2009) stated that the culture and climate of the school affects student achievement and the school principal directly influences the culture and climate of a school. Several researchers have demonstrated a relationship between school culture and student achievement. Hoy, Tarter, and Bliss (1990) found that healthy schools that promote high academic standards, appropriate leadership, and collegiality provide a climate more conducive to student success and achievement. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1997) found that school culture and climate were among the top influences in affecting improved student achievement. They also found that state and local policies, school organization, and student demographics exercise the least influence on student learning.

In an assessment of 81 Indiana schools, Gruenert (2005) found that more collaborative schools tend to have higher student achievement. More specifically, the study showed how student performance in both math and language arts was positively correlated to a collaborative school culture. MacNeil et al. (2009) investigated whether schools rated exemplary, recognized, and acceptable differed in their school climates as measured by the 10 dimensions of the Organizational Health Inventory. They found that each of the schools that demonstrated higher student achievement as shown by their exemplary rating also demonstrated healthier climates than schools with acceptable ratings. Exemplary schools consistently demonstrated higher scores on each of the 10 dimensions of organizational health than acceptable schools. The schools with higher student achievement consistently exhibited healthier school climates.

Small Learning Communities

The term "small learning community" (SLC) refers to an individualized learning unit within a larger school setting where students and teachers are scheduled together and have a common area of the school in which to hold most or all of their classes (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). In SLCs an interdisciplinary team of teachers shares a group of no more than 500 students for a large part of their instructional time in a physical space dedicated to their collaboration (Oxley, 2001). "The main purpose of SLCs is to raise academic achievement for all student enrolled in large high schools by creating smaller learning communities within them" (Lee & Friedrich, 2007, p. 265). The United States Department of Education (2001) states that the term SLC refers to a smaller subunit within a larger school, such as an academy, house plan, school-within-a-school, or other structural unit. Current SLC high schools create the smaller subunits by combining

different SLC structures and strategies defined by the federal government. Since 2000, various SLC models have been implemented in over 1,000 high schools across the country.

SLCs have become popular in an effort to close the racial achievement gap left open after initiatives such as Head Start and school family partnerships, curriculum reform, high stakes testing, and teacher quality reform (Lee & Friedrich, 2007). Enthusiasm for SLC schools has grown because the research on small schools affirms their effectiveness in large schools in terms of student achievement, academic equity, graduation rates, and safety. The positive relationship between small schools and equitable student achievement across ethnicities has recently given SLC programs an elevated status in the arena of high school reform (Lee & Friedrich, 2007).

Small Schools

Small schools are often schools that were once large schools that have been separated into smaller schools, often referred to as *schools-within-schools* or are sometimes manifested by the formation of small subunits within a larger school (Lee, Ready, & Johnson, 2001). Smaller numbers of students, a more intimate and personalized learning environment, and a cohesive vision among teachers characterize small schools.

High School Restructuring and Student Achievement

Identifying characteristics of school climate that would encourage and increase student achievement should be a top priority for schools that have undergone federally-mandated restructuring under the NCLB Act of 2001 or those in danger of such restructuring. Lee and Smith (1994) examined whether changes in school structure can improve student performance and the conditions under which some structures may be

more effective than others. The authors found that not only were student achievement gains in the first two years of high school significantly higher in the restructured schools than in the traditional schools, but those gains were distributed more equitably. Interestingly, the authors also found that students who attended smaller high schools consistently posted higher gains in all four cognitive areas (Lee & Smith, 1994). Lee and Smith (1995) studied the impact of attending high schools that implemented restructuring practices on 10^{th} grade students. The authors determined that students who attend schools with several practices consistent with the restructuring movement learn significantly more in reading, mathematics, history, and science, whereas those who attended schools that did not have these practices in place learned significantly less. The culture of a school is its foundation and can lead to a schools' success or demise. Deal and Peterson (1999) remind schools, policy makers, and practitioners that improvements in student achievement will happen in schools with professional cultures that reflect a positive school climate.

Study Methodology

The study was conducted at five restructured high schools in a large metropolitan school district in north central Georgia. This school system was chosen because all of its high schools had already been restructured or were in the process of being restructured. The study was guided by the following research questions.

RQ1: Are there statistically significant differences in the cultures of restructured high and low achieving high schools?

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high and low achieving restructured high schools.

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the high achieving restructured small high schools.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference in the cultures of the low achieving restructured SLC high schools.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance?

Ho: There is no statistically significant relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho1: There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Ho2: There is a statistically significant negative correlation between the quality of school culture and school performance.

Variables Examined

Currently, the GaDOE administers the GHSGT to evaluate student performance at the high school level. The tests include assessments in the areas of ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. Current high school diploma requirements mandate that a student must achieve a passing score in each subtest of the GHSGT as well as on the Georgia High School Writing Test. If a student does not pass a subject area test, then he/she is retested in that subject area. A student has multiple opportunities to take each test. The four core subject tests are scored Fail, Pass, and Pass Plus.

The schools selected for this study have been identified as either "trending upward" or "trending downward" based on their GHSGT scores in ELA as reported by the GADOE. A school with an upward trend has decreased the percentage of students

that fail the GHSGT, and increased the percentage of students that receive a pass plus score on the GHSGT since restructuring. A school with a downward trend has increased the percentage of students that fail the GHSGT, and decreased the percentage of students that receive an advanced proficiency or honors score on the GHSGT since restructuring. The data from the GaDOE shows that SLC/EEC and SLC/FAMC have shown a downward trend since restructuring in 2008. SLC/IT has shown an upward trend. The small schools high school restructured in 2005 and both schools surveyed—SS/OA and SS/HSR—have shown an upward trend in GHSGT scores since the first group of eleventh grade students began taking the exam in 2007.

The researcher conducted a meeting with the principal(s) of the selected restructured high school(s). The researcher explained the purpose and research design to the principals and informed them of how they can use the data to improve the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and student achievement. The researcher also asked the principal(s) to identify dates on which the staff can complete the survey. All teachers from SS/OA, SS/HSR, and teachers from all three SLCs (SLC/EEC, SLC/FAMC, and SLC/IT) were asked to complete the SCS. The SCS provides a means of determining how a school faculty and the administration perceives and judges the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and its progress toward a quality work life for students, teachers, and staff. The researcher offered two methods for data collection. The first method was the use of the TurningPoint clickers, in which the staff would view the questions on a screen and choose their answer by clicking the corresponding button. The anonymous results for each question displayed immediately on the screen. The other method was the paper and pencil method in which the researcher projected each survey

question on a screen and the staff was given a paper answer document. The academy leader immediately voiced his concern about the anonymity of using the clickers; even though he understood the responses were anonymous, he felt as though the teachers would be inclined to wonder which staff member scored items as particularly high or low. The other academy leaders had similar concerns, so it was decided that the paper and pencil method would be used for all the SLCs.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the researcher used an independent student's *t*-test to examine significant differences in the culture of high and low achieving restructured high schools and to determine the relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance. To determine if there were differences in the cultures of restructured high and low achieving high schools, the researcher used the *t*-test to compare the average quality points on the SLC from the small schools and the schools restructured into SLCs. To determine if there was a relationship between the quality of school culture and school performance, the researcher ran a Pearson's *r* correlation to compare the average quality points on the SCS for each individual school to its performance on the ELA section of the GHSGT.

Limitations

The researcher initially contacted a central office high school administrator for guidance on which restructured high schools to target. The administrator offered two suggestions, and the researcher contacted all principals and academy leaders from those two identified schools. Although the researcher contacted principals from six small schools and three SLCs, the schools suggested by the Office of High Schools

administrator were the only schools that participated in the study. Of the six targeted small schools, only two principals agreed to participate in the study, and of the three targeted SLCs, all three principals agreed to participate in the study. This being said, one limitation of this study is that when this study originated only four of the District's formerly comprehensive high schools were restructured. Thirteen small schools and SLCs were formed from the four schools. Of these, only 20% of small schools were surveyed, and 100% of SLCs were surveyed. It is important to note that when the study began, the high school restructured into small learning communities was the only school that was restructured for the past two school years. Therefore, it was the only restructured high school with small learning communities eligible for the study. The small number of schools surveyed makes it difficult to generalize the findings across restructured high schools.

Another limitation of the study was the small number of years in which data were available from the participating schools. The high school restructured into small schools was the first in the district to be restructured at the start of the 2005–2006 school year. However, the school only had ninth-grade students that year, and each school year another grade was added until the school eventually served grades 9-12. The first group of eleventh grade students took the GHSGT during the 2007–2008 school year. The first school to be restructured into SLCs came on line in 2008. The first group of eleventh grade students attending the newly restructured school took the GHSGT in 2009. Only two years of GHSGT data were available when this study began—2009 and 2010. The schools were labeled as trending up or trending down based on a comparison from one school year to the next instead of over several school years.

The researcher conducted a meeting with the principal(s) of the selected restructured high school(s). The researcher explained the purpose and research design to the principals and informed them of how they can use the data to improve the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and student achievement. The researcher also asked the principal(s) to identify dates on which the staff can complete the survey. All teachers from the small schools including SS/OA and SS/HSR, and teachers from all three SLCs including SLCIT, SLC/EEC, and SLC/FAMC were asked to complete the SCS. The SCS provides a means of determining how a school faculty and the administration perceives and judges the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and it's progress toward a quality work life for students, teachers, and staff. The SCS has 50 items and yields results that identify, describe, and measure both the strengths and developmental needs at the school site, as perceived by the people who work there.

Discussion

The two small schools were particularly interesting. Though GHSGT results show that both small schools are trending up, the perceptions of the teachers at the two schools were remarkably different. First, for SS/OA, 9 of 10 themes were quality items. The remaining theme, Empowerment, was neither quality nor deficient. However, SS/HSR had no quality themes, in fact, eight themes were deficient. In both schools, Collaborative Decision-Making was rated poorly by the teachers, and Concern for the School/ Stakeholders was rated highly. Another interesting finding was that for both small schools, Leadership was neither ranked very high or very low. This seems to suggest that the teachers believe that leadership alone has little bearing on the culture of a school.

The three SLC schools also yielded interesting results. It is important to note that although as an entire school, the SLCs are trending down, as an individual SLC, the SLC/IT is trending up. This being said, an interesting point about the three SLC schools is that all themes for the two downward trending schools were deficient. Although SLC/IT had no quality themes, they also had no deficient themes. Professionalism was ranked highly by teachers in all three SLCs. Empowerment was ranked poorly by teachers in all three SLCs. Management of excellence and Concern for the School/Stakeholders were ranked highly in SLC/IT, but these themes were ranked poorly or average in the other two SLCs. This seems to suggest that in a school with a positive culture, management of excellence and concern for the school and stakeholders are important factors.

When the data from the upward trending schools was analyzed, it was found that all three schools ranked Concern for the School/Stakeholders very highly, and Collaborative Decision-Making ranked very poorly. This is interesting because it indicates that these teachers believe that school leaders who truly care for the students, faculty, staff, and parents is a much larger factor in creating a healthy culture than involving the same stakeholders in the determination of actions to be taken to improve the quality of the school.

To conduct research in the district, a researcher must complete a research request application, list the targeted schools, and submit a proposal. It is up to the district to approve the proposal, and agree to allow research to be conducted in the selected schools. Once approved, the approval letter is sent to the researcher and all principals of approved schools. However, research is conducted at individual schools at the principal's

discretion. Therefore, even if the district approves a school, the principal can decline participation. If I had this study to do over again, I would get district IRB approval for all highs schools in the district, so that even if some principals opted not to participate the participation rate would still be higher than if only certain schools were targeted initially.

Also, the results show concrete data—schools in which teachers perceive the culture as healthy have higher achievement in ELA, and schools in which teachers perceive the culture as unhealthy have lower achievement in ELA. However, a qualitative piece of the study that included teacher interviews would have further explained this phenomenon. For example, SS/OA the highest performing school surveyed and the school with the best SCS results, the teachers ranked Management of Excellence, Intent/Direction, and Concern for School/Stakeholders highest and Professionalism the lowest. While there was no surprise with the themes the teachers ranked the most favorably, it seems odd that relatively satisfied teachers at a high-performing school would rank Professionalism so poorly. One would assume that a high level of professionalism would need to be present to develop and maintain a healthy school culture. A more in-depth examination of the specific SCS items comprising professionalism shows that the teachers at SS/OA are unhappy with the quality of relationships at the school. This can be explained by a comparison survey conducted at SS/OA that was requested by the principal of SS/OA, When the researcher initially approached the principal to request permission to conduct the survey at his school, he agreed and requested two individual group surveys—the teachers of the arts (chorus, dance, band, visual art, drama) and the teachers of core subjects. The principal stated that he "had a hunch about the results and would be interested in the data from the two

different groups." When the surveys were separated by teacher group, the teachers of the arts ranked the school much more favorably than the teachers of the core subjects. Of the 12 items listed under Professionalism, the teachers of the arts selected eleven quality items and no deficient items; the core teachers chose only two quality items and nine deficient items. Since SS/OA is for students that want to study and specialize in the arts, it makes sense that the teachers of the arts have more buy-in and are more approving of the existing school culture. Therefore, the higher standard deviations for this school as a whole are explained by the differences in perception of the two groups of teachers. In a wrap-up conversation with the principal he noted that "as a former band director, he is very passionate about the arts and that his arts teachers enjoy having artistic freedom." He added that he "had high expectations of his arts department" and he spoke very highly of the performances and work displayed by the students in the arts department. The principal seemed to believe that the core teachers believed that he valued the work of the arts teachers more than the work of the core teachers. If more principals, academy leaders, and teachers were interviewed, the data could be explained through the eyes of people who work in the surveyed environment daily.

The amount of time each school had been restructured may have played a factor in the results. The small schools school was the first school in the district to be restructured in 2005. The small schools school was restructured into small schools in which each school has an autonomous principal. The SLCs high school was restructured in 2008 into academies, each of which has an academy leader, but one principal runs the entire school. Certainly, it could be suggested that the small schools school has had more

time to "get it right," however; given the limited differences in the SCS average quality points scores for between the small schools and the SLCs, time may be less of a factor.

Another topic that may have played a role in the results is the initial teacher buy-in. Since has been restructured for six years, there are more novice teachers that never experienced the old comprehensive high school. Many of these teachers only know the small schools format. However, with this being only the third year of restructuring, many of the teachers currently employed at the SLCs school worked at the school before restructuring, when the schools had a different name. It is possible that the teachers at the former comprehensive high school had no desire to work in SLCs and that they do not particularly care for the new model. One last factor that may have affected the results is the model of each school—small schools or SLCs. The school district did not offer any information as to how they decided which high schools would be transformed into small schools and which high schools would be transformed into SLCs. Perhaps one model may show greater results than the other, or one model may be preferred by teachers.

These factors offer several implications for future research. Future research should focus on comparing core teachers in small schools and/or SLCs to the specialized teachers. For example, in SS/HSR a study could be conducted using the SCS to compare the core teachers to the teachers specializing in medicine and research. From the brief talk with the SS/OA principal, it seems clear that sometimes dual cultures are unknowingly created when schools are separated into small schools and view themselves as distinct entities. Another area for future research is comparing the effectiveness of the models. For instance a study comparing this district's small schools to its SLCs may reveal which components of each model lead to its effectiveness or to its demise. Another

worthy study could compare the effectiveness of each school's specialization. For example a study comparing schools restructured into arts schools, those restructured into technology schools, and/or those restructured into health and research schools would offer insight on best practices and perceptions of culture in specialized settings.

Finally, the results of this study contribute significantly towards a better understanding of school culture as perceived by the teachers who work there. The data in this study reveal that when teachers perceive their school culture as healthy, student achievement is higher. While it is clear that high school transformation has been successful for some schools, the small schools' graduation rate in 2005 before restructuring was 36% and in 2010 it was 94%, it is also clear that the culture plays a huge role in the success of a school. "A lot of districts spend a lot of time thinking through restructuring their schools, but it's really about changing the culture and the instruction," says Robert Atterbury, associate superintendent for high school transformation (Maciejewski, 2007, p. 2).

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Appendix A: Research Request Approval from the Atlanta Public Schools

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Making A Difference

RESEARCH, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY
130 TRINITY AVENUE, S.W., 7TH FLOOR
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-3624
PHONE: 404-802-2780
FAX: 404-802-1719

Ms. Holley S. Thomas
560 Ventura Lane
Atlanta, GA 30349

Dear Ms. Thomas:

Your request to conduct research within the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) was reviewed in accordance with the guidelines. Your research study entitled "The Effects of Culture on Student Achievement in Restructured High Schools" was approved under the following conditions:

1. Your study will be confined in APS to The New Schools of Carver, The Schools of South Atlanta, Maynard Jackson High School, and the Schools of Therrell. Principals have the final approval on whether research studies are conducted in their schools. Please note, all staff participation in this study will be voluntary.
2. Your research design includes interviews and administration of surveys to select APS staff. You plan to involve all teachers in grades 9-12 in each of the small schools (approximately 100 teachers) for an hour interview, half an hour overview session and a one hour survey during non instructional time.
3. **No students or parents will be directly involved in your research study**. However, teachers must complete the Consent to Participate document indicating they are voluntarily participating in this study.
4. Activities related to your research study should not interfere with the ongoing instructional program in the classroom or with the state and local testing programs at the school.
5. The confidentiality of APS staff members, teachers, and schools must be ensured. Pseudonyms will be used for people, departments and the school. References to APS as "a large urban school system" are required in the title and text of your final report before publication or presentation outside of APS.
6. Teachers and other APS staff can participate in or assist with research studies **only** on a voluntary basis.
7. The data collection phase of your research study must be completed by the end of the 2011 calendar year.
8. If changes are made in the research design or in the instruments used, you must notify the Department of Research, Planning and Accountability prior to beginning your study.

This letter serves as official notification of the approval of your proposed research study, pending the above conditions. Remember that a copy of the results of your completed study must be submitted to the Department of Research, Planning and Accountability. Please contact Dr. Cari Ryan at 404-802-2717 or cryan@atlantapublicschools.us if you need further assistance.

Sincerely,

Cari Ryan, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate

Appendix B: Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board

Protocol Exemption Report

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-02692-2011 **INVESTIGATOR:** Holley Thomas

PROJECT TITLE: The effects of school culture on student achievement in restructured high schools

DETERMINATION:

√ This research protocol is exempt from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category(ies) 2. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

☐ Exemption of this research protocol from Institutional Review Board oversight is pending. You may **not** begin your research until you have addressed the following concerns/questions and the IRB has formally notified you of exemption. You may send your responses to irb@valdosta.edu.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Although not a requirement for exemption, the following suggestions are offered by the IRB Administrator to enhance the protection of participants and/or strengthen the research proposal. If you make any of these suggested changes to your protocol, please submit revisions so that IRB has a complete protocol on file.

Barbara H. Gray Date: 8/18/11
Barbara H. Gray, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

cc: Dr. Don Leech (Dept. Head)
Dr. Simmie Raiford (Advisor)

Form Revised: 09.02.2009

Appendix C: School Culture Survey

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
1		1	2	3	4	5	
	Focusing all decisions, control, and leadership in one person, top - down	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Leadership resides in teams, with everyone taking leadership responsibilities, from the bottom-up.
2		1	2	3	4	5	
	Teachers are not the primary focus of the school's leadership.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Teachers are viewed as key to organizational health and school success.
3		1	2	3	4	5	
	An organizational structure that is heavily layered with top management making almost all policies and most meaningful decisions.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	An organization with few layers where most policies impacting a team are made by the team members and implemented by an elected team leader.
4		1	2	3	4	5	
	Teams cannot describe what skills/strengths team members have and how they complement each other.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Employees and teams are encouraged to describe the skills and strengths they have and how they complement each other.
5		1	2	3	4	5	
	School Leadership characterized by authoritarian decision-makers with an "I am the boss around here" attitude.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	School Leadership characterized as using coaching skills to achieve a "we are all in this together"

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
							attitude.
6		1	2	3	4	5	
	Lack of delegation — do it yourself, if you want it done right.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Delegates to others. The sharing of response-bility is promoted and employees are empower-ed to act.
7		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little or infrequent responses to requests from the school's leadership.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Teachers, parents, students, and community members are given timely and consistent responses.
8		1	2	3	4	5	
	Team members are never given an opportunity to give performance feedback to the School's Principal and Leadership Team.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Team members give feedback to the Principal and Leadership Team on their performance.
9		1	2	3	4	5	
	Training for teachers and staff focuses on participation in large, centralized training programs based on "top- down" perceived generalized group needs.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Learning activities for teachers and staff are determined by the learner and groups are formed only if common needs are identified.
10		1	2	3	4	5	
	Resources are centralized and appear to be available at the principal's whim or to those with the	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Resources are distributed to each team member based on a fair,

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
	best begging skills.						equitable formula that is transparent, public, and understood.
11		1	2	3	4	5	
	The school is not organized around the idea of school increasing performance.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	The school is organized around self-managing improvement teams with emphasis on increasing school performance.
12		1	2	3	4	5	
	Our school has no unique positive qualities that set it apart from other schools.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Our school projects a unique character as well as an image consistent with the vision of a quality school.
13		1	2	3	4	5	
	Few incentives provided for team and school success.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Incentives are essential for school success and are integral to each self-managing team.
14		1	2	3	4	5	
	Improvement activities are isolated and lack overall school support.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	School improvement activities are coordinated and part of the school's structure and strategic plan.
15		1	2	3	4	5	
	School's management is centralized, with the principal supported by numerous	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	School is lead by the principal (with a small support staff, assistants, secretary,

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
	assistant principals and support staff.						etc) and elected team leaders working with self-managing teams.
16		1	2	3	4	5	
	Lack of visibility of the school's leadership.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Leadership is visible, accessible, and frequent contacts are initiated.
17		1	2	3	4	5	
	Faculty and staff are trained to do one job and can only perform the one job.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Faculty and staff can perform multiple jobs and cross train regularly.
18		1	2	3	4	5	
	Success is based on a model of close supervision of students, teachers, and staff.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Success is based on everyone having a clearly defined role and cooperation among students, teachers, and staff serving in clearly defined roles.
19		1	2	3	4	5	
	Improvement is not measured and no accurate methodology for measurement has been implemented.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Improvement efforts are measured, tracked, and publicly reported.
20		1	2	3	4	5	
	Decisions are centralized in one person or a very small, select few.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Decisions are decentralized with the vast majority of decisions being pushed down in the

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
							organization.
21		1	2	3	4	5	
	Hiring decisions are made in isolation by the principal or a select few and not by persons they will work directly with.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Hiring decisions are made by team members who will in fact work with the new person hired.
22		1	2	3	4	5	
	Few signs that leadership is being modeled— few leadership behaviors viewed.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Leadership is modeled at every opportunity — others are encouraged to model leadership.
23		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little indication that anyone in the school's leadership team "cares."	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Strong evidence exists that the school's leadership cares about the school family.
24		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little recognition and celebration for successes.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Much emphasis is placed on recognizing individual and team successes with celebrations.
25		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little support for pilots of employee ideas — especially those with short timelines.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Full support for employee motivated/directed pilot programs with short implementation timelines.
26		1	2	3	4	5	
	School's organizational design restricts each employee from taking action without official	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	School's organizational design encourages employees to take immediate

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
	approval.						and appropriate action when needed.
27		1	2	3	4	5	
	Lack of vision-unsure where the school is going.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	A clear vision about where the school is going and what is to be achieved is re-created regularly with everyone.
28		1	2	3	4	5	
	Key stakeholders view the school as "not being a good school" with no clear strategy to achieve success.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	A view of the school as an "excellent school" is developed based on a clear strategy for success.
29		1	2	3	4	5	
	No one knows what is going on.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Everyone participates in everything.
30		1	2	3	4	5	
	The School's Strategic School Improvement Plan is created and implemented by one person or a very small group of persons.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Everyone participates in the creation and implementation of the School's Strategic School Improvement Plan.
31		1	2	3	4	5	
	New ideas are viewed as a nuisance and are punished.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	New ideas are embraced, supported, and encouraged.
32		1	2	3	4	5	
	A lack of integrity which promotes mistrust, confusion, and	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	High standards of integrity are observable in all leadership

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
	little confidence.						actions.
33		1	2	3	4	5	
	Core values for the school are not written, are not public, and are vague or unknown to employees.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	School has a set of core values that are written, public, and known by all employees.
34		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little or no positive marketing of the school.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	The school is marketed in the best possible light via a word-of-mouth strategy and other significant image-building strategies.
35		1	2	3	4	5	
	An organization with no balance between job responsibility and authority.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	An organization that balances job responsibi-lity with authority.
36		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little or no emphasis placed on encouraging key school stakeholders to promote high ideals.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	The hearts of key school stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community, etc.) are encouraged by promoting enthusiasm and high ideals.
37		1	2	3	4	5	
	School leaders spend little or no time listening (deeply) to teachers.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	School leadership time is spent freely and productively listening to teachers.
38		1	2	3	4	5	
	Emphasis on	Well	Below	At	Above	Well Above	Focus on

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
	buying large centralized school improvement project(s) from outside venders.	Below Expectation	Expectation	Expectation	Expectation	Expectation	teachers and staff developing and creating custom improvement resources they believe best fits the school.
39		1	2	3	4	5	
	Job security is a day-to-day question with decisions seemingly being made randomly, with little regard for employees' needs.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Job security is important, and once you become a member, job security is promoted at all costs.
40		1	2	3	4	5	
	Relationships are very poor with many levels of anger and hostility toward others.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Relation-ships are positive. Everyone treats others with respect and civility, based on high standards of human relations.
41		1	2	3	4	5	
	Little or no data is provided to teams or individual team members on student achievement data.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	Teams and individual team members are provided specific student achievement data.
42		1	2	3	4	5	
	An environment dominated by bureaucratic rules and humiliating working conditions.	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	A few powerful rules based on the school's core values which promote good working conditions and

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
							empower employees.
43		1	2	3	4	5	
	How do you grade the quality of work life at your school?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	
44		1	2	3	4	5	
	Are team members given the necessary information, resources, and decision making authority needed to do quality work at your school?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	
45		1	2	3	4	5	
	Does the leadership at your school effectively empower teachers and staff with real power?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	
46		1	2	3	4	5	
	Are teachers and staff organized into empowered, self managing teams with elected team leaders?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	
47		1	2	3	4	5	
	What is the quality of the relationships at your school?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	
48		1	2	3	4	5	
	Are all teachers and staff actively involved, with specific responsibilities, in the school's strategic improvement plan?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	
49		1	2	3	4	5	
	Is your school	Well	Below	At	Above	Well Above	

Item	From Statement	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	To Statement
	organized and designed effectively creating a high performance culture?	Below Expectation	Expectation	Expectation	Expectation	Expectation	
50		1	2	3	4	5	
	The 'To' statements and indicators in the previous 49 questions are reflective of "effective organization, empowerment of participants and a quality of work life for all." Question: Based on your school's organization design and approach to leadership is it "Likely" to aggressively move forward meeting higher and higher standards as noted in this survey?	Well Below Expectation	Below Expectation	At Expectation	Above Expectation	Well Above Expectation	