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Jeanette Diane Gerault

May 2013

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

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May 2013

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Charyl Gerault, who never doubted that we, my brother, sister, and I, could and would achieve all we ever wanted or dreamed. Thank you for instilling in us the importance of learning, hard work, and higher education, no matter the obstacles or barriers. Thank you for always encouraging me to always look for the silver lining when I could not find it. There is no better, “I can see the light!” cheerleader than you. This is for you, Mom, serving as a tribute to your sacrifice and your devotion to our family. Thank you for all you have done. I could never be all I was meant to be without your love, support, and constant encouragement.

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the belief that through hard work and perseverance, you too, can aspire to achieve whatever your hearts' may dream.

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Abstract

As state and federal accountability standards demand that schools show adequate progress for school improvement, principals have found it more difficult to find the time and resources needed to adequately focus on school culture and climate. The purpose of this descriptive statistics study was to determine the relationship between elementary school principals' leadership skills and school climate. Perceptions of school leadership and school climate were measured by an employee perception survey developed within a large, diverse, suburban district in the state of Texas. The data were collected from elementary school campuses with varying demographics, located within the same school district. The design of the research involved descriptive statistics and frequencies to investigate the possible relationship between perceived school climate and perceived principal leadership skills. The intent of this descriptive statistics study was to clarify educators' understanding of important phenomena by identifying relationships among variables, school climate, and leadership skills. As previous researchers have related school climate to principal leadership and behaviors (Bulach, Booth, & Pickett, 1998; Peterson, 1990), this research concurred that there is, indeed, a relationship between the leadership skills of the principal and the school's climate. This study was significant because the behaviors of the building principal have been linked to the school climate, thus telling practitioners that effective leadership is critical. In order to develop a climate of autonomy, cohesiveness, adequate communication, and focused goals, principals must

develop leadership skills focused on respect, instructional leadership, effective communication, shared decision making, and valuing the contributions of others.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Brief Review	1
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Question	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Limitations	10
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Leadership Theory	11
School Culture	15
School Climate.....	18
The Influence of School Leaders on School Climate	21
The Influences of School Climate on Student Achievement	42
Summary	50
III. METHODOLOGY	52
Description of the Research Design.....	54
Research Question	54
Setting	54
Subjects	56
Demographics of the Population Sample.....	57
Procedures.....	59
Instrument	60
Limitations of the Study.....	63
Summary of Methodology	64
IV. RESULTS	65
Results of the Employee Perception Survey.....	65
Principal Skills, Knowledge, and Attributes.....	75
Research Question	77
Summary of Data Analysis	89
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	90
Overview of the Study	90
Discussion of Results	92
Implications for School Leaders	99
Implications for Further Research	104
REFERENCES	107

Appendices

APPENDIX A: APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH COMMITTEE	130
APPENDIX B: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM	132
APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM (ADDENDUM).....	134
APPENDIX D: FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES	136

List of Tables

Table		Page
3-1	Range of Degrees Held by Teaching Staff in Sample School District	55
3-2	Teaching Staff Demographics of the Sample School District	56
3-3	Gender of Sample School District	56
3-4	Gender of the Survey Participants	57
3-5	Demographics of the Survey Participants	58
3-6	Years of Service of Respondents to the Survey	59
4-1	Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Autonomy	67
4-2	Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Cohesiveness	69
4-3	Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Communication Adequacy	72
4-4	Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Goal Focus	74
4-5	Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Principal Leadership Skills	76
4-6	Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School Climate: My Principal Treats Me With Respect	79
4-7	Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School Climate: My Principal Is an Effective Instructional Leader	82
4-8	Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School Climate: My Principal Facilitates Communication Effectively	85
4-9	Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School Climate: My Principal Supports Shared Decision Making	86
4-10	Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School Climate: My Principal Values the Contribution I Make	89

Chapter 1 Introduction

Brief Review

As state and federal accountability standards demand that schools show adequate progress for school improvement, principals have found it more difficult to find the time and resources needed to adequately focus on school culture and climate. Despite the increased attention bringing focus to high stakes testing due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), school climate remains an important factor in developing student success. The behaviors of building level administrators have been linked to the climate of school buildings, thus telling us that effective leadership is critical.

Recently, there has been international interest in the question of how educational leaders influence student achievement outcomes through developing a positive school climate. As a result, many reviews of research directed toward the direct and indirect effects of leadership on student outcomes have surfaced. It has been suggested by educational researchers that as educational leaders focus on their relationships, their work, and their learning of the basics of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on school climate and on student achievement (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

Scratch the surface of an excellent school and you are likely to find an excellent principal. Peer into a failing school and you will find weak leadership. That, at least, is the conventional wisdom.

Leaders are thought to be essential for high-quality education.

(Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2)

School climate is a general term that refers to the feel, atmosphere, tone, and ideology of a school. Just as individuals have personalities, so do schools; the climate of

a school should be considered its personality. Characteristics of high-performing schools have been identified and should be replicated to maximize student success (Hoy, Miskel, Nelson, & Tulloh, 1996). As indicated by Fenzel and O'Brennan (2007), an effective and positive school climate fosters relationships among students, teachers, and school leaders. The campus works together as a whole to develop the climate/culture.

Researchers have used various definitions of climate as it relates to schools. Hoy and Miskel (2005) defined school climate as “the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviors of each school’s members” (p. 185). Kottkamp (1984) suggested that climate consists of shared values, interpretations of social activities, and commonly held definitions of purpose. Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1991) stated that “school climate is the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior and is based on their collective perception of behavior in schools” (p. 10). Tagiuri (1968) presented a model of organizational climate comprised of four factors: culture (psychosocial characteristics), ecology (physical and material elements), milieu (human social system elements), and social system (structural elements). *Culture* refers to rituals; artifacts; assumptions; values; norms; belief systems; history; heroes; myths; and visible and audible behavior patterns. *Ecology* refers to facilities and buildings, as well as technology used for communication, scheduling, and pedagogy. *Social system* elements include how instruction, administration, support services, decision making, planning, and formal structures are organized. *Milieu* focuses on the people in the organization and their skills, motivation, feelings, values, demographics, and leadership (Owens & Valesky, 2007).

Another definition of school climate characterizes the social atmosphere of an educational setting. It refers to the “feel” of a school and is a product of how students, teachers, staff, and parents perceive the school environment.

There is a growing body of research that shows that school climate is associated with important behavioral and educational outcomes, including achievement, bullying and substance abuse. School climate is a target for how school-improvement intervention and the growing national emphasis on school climate is an integral component of school reform. (Nation, Voight, & Pepper, 2010, p.1)

Key elements of school climate include the relationships among students, the relationships between students and teachers, relationships between teachers and administrators, and the perceptions of the adequacy of school rules. School climate has also been described by Hoy, Smith, and Sweetland (2005) as the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviors of each school’s members. In an early study by Brookover, Schneider, Beady, Flood, and Wisebaker (1978), school climate was found to be a more significant factor in student achievement than the variables of race and socioeconomic status.

The belief that a school’s environment or climate can affect student achievement is widely held. In other words, many people believe that school climate makes a difference in how students learn and their overall success. At one time, researchers studying school effectiveness thought that after student characteristics were factored out, there was little difference among schools. More recent research on the unique

characteristics of different school environments has supported the contention that school characteristics do make a difference.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) wrote that the success of corporate accomplishment is based upon the leader(s) in charge. This also holds true with the leadership of a school. The U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal Education Opportunity in 1970 (U.S. Congress, 1970) explained that the principal's leadership can almost always be identified as the key to success if a school is an energetic, innovative, child-centered place, has a distinction for excellence in teaching, and students are performing to the best of their abilities (U.S. Congress, 1970). The same report identified the principal as the most instrumental person in a school by stating in their report:

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities occurring in and around the school building. It is the principal's leadership which sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale for teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. (p. 56)

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing appreciation that school climate, the quality and character of school life, can either foster or undermine children's development, learning, and achievement. Teachers and parents have claimed for decades that it does matter for students to feel safe and supported in their school environment, to have positive relationships, to be respected, to be engaged in their work, and to feel competent. A growing number of reports, studies, and legislation emphasized the

importance of a positive school climate in reducing achievement inequities, enhancing healthy development, and promoting the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that provide the foundation for the 21st century school, life, and success.

School environment is a powerful force that plays a critical role in the overall development of the child. School is a social institution where a number of teachers have different personality traits, values, and dispositions. Teachers are charged with the responsibility to work together for the harmonious development of the children's abilities, attitudes, and the personality as a whole. Needless to mention, interaction occurs among the teachers and between the principal and the teachers, which weaves an intricate and delicate web of the school climate.

The variables associated with improved student achievement have been a focus of researchers for many years. The current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has significantly increased the pressure to improve student achievement. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) reported that effective school leadership substantially boosts student achievement. Positive school culture, climate, leadership, and quality instruction are frequently associated with effective schools.

“It turns out that leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning, according to the evidence compiled and analyzed by the authors,” says Christine DeVita, president of the Wallace Foundation, when speaking about research of Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004, p. 2).

Because of today's expectation that schools bring all students to high levels of achievement, it is imperative for educators to get to know their students as individuals;

identify their needs and motivation; and target instruction and support to each student's strengths and interests in order to develop the most conducive climate for student achievement. As educators, we have to personalize learning and instructional strategies for motivating all students to achieve academic success.

An improved school climate will positively impact staff morale and, ultimately, student learning; this is the purpose of schools (Fullan, 2002). Teachers in a school with a positive school climate experience less job-related stress and burnout, and the school has a lower attrition rate (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). Research suggested that the principal's effect on school climate influences the feelings that teachers have about their work (Littrell, Billingsly, & Cross, 1994). Teachers who feel the support of their principal find their work to be more rewarding and experience a more motivating and productive work environment. The experience of the teachers working in a school with a positive climate benefits the learning and success of their students (Van Horn, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Failure to address school culture and climate produces unintended discrepancies between school improvement efforts and intended outcomes for student achievement. Current reform efforts, such as NCLB, place emphasis on the technical aspects in their charge to schools to improve student performance. These efforts call for additional policy, more planning, more testing, and greater demands that teachers and schools just simply change (Jones, Yonezawa, Mehan, & McClure, 2008). School climate must be addressed, in conjunction with the technical aspects, in order to bring about the positive changes necessary for improvement in student achievement.

Considerable research has been conducted linking school climate to student performance. The overall conclusion of that research is that climate exists as an essential element of successful schools (Bliss, Firestone, & Richards, 1991; Carter, 2000; Cruickshank, 1990; DuFour, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1996; Edmonds, 1979; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Hoy & Feldman, 1987; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Klinger, 2000; Lezzotte, 1991, 1992, 2001). “School climate governs the lives of students and school employees and impacts the academic success of children in schools everywhere” (Scallion, 2010, p.5).

“Paying attention to culture is the most important action that a leader can perform” (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009, p.1). If the climate of a campus is not conducive to teaching and student learning, student success in the areas of emotional and social development and academic achievement will not flourish (Watson, 2001). Although the role of the school principal is multi-dimensional, there is empirical research that the most critical responsibility is in developing the school’s climate.

Overall, the principal is responsible for developing and maintaining a positive climate for teaching and learning. As high-stakes testing becomes more and more threatening to students and teachers, the job of the principal becomes increasingly focused on developing an atmosphere where teachers build relationships of respect with students and administrators build relationships of trust with teachers. The success or failure of building relationships is one of the greatest factors influencing the school climate.

Principal leadership indirectly impacts the performance of teachers under their leadership as well as the climate and culture of the building (Stewart, 2008). A study

focusing on school climate factors as they relate to principal leadership and, consequently, student achievement, is a timely concern considering the urgency and scope of the performance demands that schools, districts, and states face today.

By comparing the results of an employee perception survey to determine perceptions of school climate and perceptions of principal leadership skills, as rated by school staff, school leaders will learn more about positive school climates and work to develop practices critical to building and maintaining environments that enhance student learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant relationship between perceived leadership skills of elementary school principals and teachers' ratings of the school's climate as measured by the employee perception survey (EPS). Specifically, this study examined the perceptions of a group of elementary public school teachers and staff in a large, suburban school district in the state of Texas regarding the leadership skills of their principals and the teachers' and staffs' personal assessment of the schools' climate as defined by autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus.

Research Question

The problem was to identify teachers' and staffs' perceptions of the leadership of their schools as it related to the school climate. Arising from this issue was the question:

1. Is there a relationship between teachers' and staffs' perceptions of principal leadership skills and teachers' and staffs' perceptions of the school's climate?

Definition of Terms

Autonomy: the perception that the individual has the means and opportunity to successfully meet their job roles and responsibilities.

Cohesiveness: the perception that the individual is a successfully functioning part of the organization.

Communication: the interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information.

Communication Adequacy: the perception that the individual is part of the vertical and horizontal communication within the organization.

Environment: the physical, social, and intellectual conditions, forces, and external stimuli in a setting.

Goal Focus: the perception that the individual has a clear understanding of the organization's goals and how those goals are achieved.

Principal leadership: As perceived by teachers, principal leadership within this study encompassed items on the School Climate Survey that concerned: administrative abilities; public relations skills; interpersonal skills; the ability to deal with conflict; response time to concerns; receptiveness to criticism; and support of teachers.

School climate: For the purpose of this study, school climate was defined by the researcher as the internal and external characteristics of a school (Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy & Miskel, 1996). School climate is influenced by, and further described by the researcher as: (a) relationships built within the school community, (b) teachers' experiences, and (c) teachers' collective perceptions. This study examined school climate, both internally and externally, as it is related to teachers' perceptions about principal leadership—the personality of the school. In this study, the dimensions of

school climate were: Autonomy, Cohesiveness, Communication Adequacy, and Goal Focus as defined by the employee perception survey designed for this specific school district.

Limitations

This study is limited by:

1. The sample population of the study included 51 elementary schools within a single school district. Individual school size was not a consideration.
2. This study examined the employee perception data for one year (2010 - 2011). A study over several years would improve the validity of the results.
3. The study did not account for the demographic variables within the student population. The demographic characteristics of each campus, including ethnicity and economically disadvantaged status, were not taken into consideration.
4. The demographics of the staff of each of the campuses in the sample were not taken into account. Teacher and staff variables, such as years of experience, were not considered.
5. The results of the employee perception survey are strictly self-reported data.
6. Because collection of data was limited to one school district, the generalization of this study to other groups and/or districts should be done with caution.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Leadership Theory

The study of leadership dates back to such theorists as Plato, Sun Tzu, and Machiavelli and has become the focus of modern academic studies only in the last 60 years. So, what is leadership? The basis for most definitions of leadership stands on two functions: providing direction and exercising influence. These functions bring about several implications. First, leaders work with others to develop a shared sense of purpose and goals. Second, leaders work with and through people to build and maintain conditions for others to be effective. Finally, leadership is not a role; it is a function (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Definitions of leadership vary, as do approaches to leadership. Burns (1978) gave one comprehensive definition of leadership:

Leadership is leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations- the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their followers' values and motivations. (p. 19)

Some of the earliest studies of leadership include the Ohio State Leadership Studies of the 1940s; The Michigan Leadership Studies of the 1950s; McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, which were developed by Douglas McGregor in the 1960s; and the Blake and McCauley Leadership Grid. The Ohio State Leadership Studies focused on how leaders satisfy common group needs. The research was based on questionnaires to

leaders and their subordinates and was known as the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire and the Supervisor Behavior Description Questionnaire. The research indicated that the two most important dimensions of leadership included initiating structure and consideration. The Michigan Leadership Studies indicated that leaders could be either employee centered or job centered. An effective leader is task-oriented, relationship-oriented, and is participative. The McGregor's Theories X and Y described employee motivation in the workforce. The premise of both theories is that the role of management is to assemble the factors of production, including people.

In 1954, Borgatta, Bales, and Couch, from Harvard University, researched leader behaviors by direct observation. In contrast to the Michigan and Ohio State University studies, the Harvard study focused on face-to-face interaction with college students rather than leaders in actual organizations. The results of the study completed at Harvard were consistent with the results from Michigan and Ohio State University. Two separate leadership roles were identified, the task leader and the social leader.

Robert R. Blake and Anne Adams McCauley refined the Leadership Grid, which identified various types of managerial leadership based on concern for production coupled with concern for people. Effective managers have great concern for both people and production. They work to motivate employees to reach their highest levels of accomplishment. They are flexible and responsive to change, and they understand the need to change (Blake & McCauley, 1991).

In addition to these studies, leadership has been examined from an academic perspective through several theoretical lenses. Trait and behavioral theories of leadership attempt to describe the types of behavior and personality tendencies associated with

effective leadership. Situational and contingency theories of leadership incorporate environmental and situational considerations into leader behavior. Functional leadership theory suggests that a leader's primary responsibility is to ensure that a group's needs are satisfied. The information-processing leadership theory focuses on the role of social perception in identifying leadership abilities. The self-leadership theory, although behaviorally oriented, centers on behaviors that are directed toward the attainment of super-ordinate goals. The transactional leader focuses on managerial reward and contingent valuation, and the transformational leader focuses on motivation and goal attainment.

Quality leadership is strategically combining the forces of education to move forward toward effectiveness. Leadership sets the tone of the school, climate for learning, level of professionalism, morale for teachers, and degree of concern for students. If a school has quality leadership, it will be an innovative, child-centered place where there is excellence in teaching, and students are performing to the best of their abilities. An effective leader is one who encourages and fosters decision making in others. A leader should provide guidance in structuring the organization to best meet the needs of all involved parties.

“Romanticized, heroic images of leaders –what they do, what they are able to accomplish, and the general effects they have on individuals and organizations- have developed among both scholars and lay people” (Meindl, Ehrich, & Dukerich, 1985, p. 79). When we think of specific leaders, names such as Gandhi, Churchill, King, Mao Zedong, Napoleon, Roosevelt, and Thatcher come to mind (Hoy, & Miskel, 1996). The

term “leader” gives the image of dynamic, powerful people who have lead victorious armies and built influential and wealthy organizations. Leaders make a difference.

Management expert, Peter Drucker, believed leadership has to do with getting people to follow you, which would infer that charismatic people are leaders. Christian author, John C. Maxwell perceived that leadership is simply influence. This would mean we are all leaders in some way. Western Michigan University professor, Peter G, Northouse (2004), wrote, “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 4). Yet others, like leadership scholar, Warren G. Bennis, focused on the characteristics and traits of a good leader. He stated, “Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential” (Lauritzen, 2009, p. 7).

Leadership has been studied using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methodologies. From a quantitative psychology orientation, statistical and mathematical modeling has been used in the development of leadership scales and in testing established leader evaluation tools. Survey methodology has been widely used in leadership research. As such, traditional methods of analysis in survey research have also extended to the analysis of survey research within the study of leadership (e.g., cross tabulations, ANOVAs, regression analysis, log-linear analysis, factor analysis, etc.). From a qualitative orientation, leadership research has included a host of research techniques:

phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, interviews, case studies, historiography, etc. (Wikipedia, 2011).

Across all settings and organizations, there are three common categories of practices that have been identified as important for successful leadership: setting direction, developing people, and developing the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

School Culture

School culture is the underground, or unspoken, stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and even rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. These informal values and expectations shape how people think, feel, and act in schools. This long-lasting web of influence binds the school together and makes it special. The task of identifying, shaping, and maintaining strong, positive, student-focused cultures is dependent on the school leaders. Without supportive cultures, reforms will decline, and student learning will slip (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

The term “school culture” arose from a combination of multiple sources. It pulls greatly from the concept of organizational culture in the corporate work place (Deal, 1987; Kennedy & Deal, 1982). School leaders have learned from observation and studies of effectively managed businesses and adopted those attributes, which can benefit the operation of schools.

Much of the literature on school culture reflected noted anthropologist, Clifford Geertz’s (1973) interpretation. For Geertz (1973), culture represented a “historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols” (p. 2). He included both written (explicit) and hidden (implicit) messages encoded in language. This can range from

nonverbal messages between teacher and student (a smile or nod) to the wall of the school. Some important elements of culture, says Geertz, are the norms, values, beliefs, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and myths translated by a particular group of people.

Terrence Deal and Kent Patterson (1990) referred to culture as a set of deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over years, the development of the school's history. Other researchers suggested that culture revolves around aspects of life that give it meaning. Much like Geertz, Paul Heckman (1993) described school culture as a commonly held set of beliefs of teachers, students, and principals that guide their actions.

Culture exerts a powerful influence on a school's effectiveness because the culture tells people in the school what is truly important and how they are to act. Bruce Lane (1992) stated, "The power of the school culture model lies in recognition that movement of schools toward greater effectiveness must begin with attention to the subtle, habitual regularities of behavior that comprise the culture of the school" (p. 346).

"Strong positive cultures are places with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28). Schools with positive cultures are schools where:

- Staff have a shared sense of purpose, where they pour their hearts into teaching;
- The underlying norms are of collegiality, improvement, and hard work;
- Student rituals and traditions celebrate student accomplishment, teacher innovation, and parental commitment;

- The informal network of storytellers, heroes, and heroines provides a social web of information, support, and history;
- Success, joy, and humor abound (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28).

Essentially, the culture of the school is the foundation for school improvement (Purkey & Smith, 1982). “An academically effective school is distinguished by its culture: a structure, process, and climate of values and norms that channel staff and students in the direction of successful teaching and learning...” (Purkey & Smith, 1982, p. 68).

According to Saphier and King (1985), if specific norms of school culture are strong, improvements in instruction will be significant, continuous, and widespread. They continue by stating that if those same norms are weak, improvements will be infrequent, random, and slow. Even though the conceptual differences between culture (shared norms) and climate (shared perceptions) are small, there are differences (Hoy & Feldman, 1999). Hoy and Feldman (1999) believed that this difference is meaningful and crucial because shared perceptions of behavior are more readily measured than shared values. Climate is described as having fewer abstractions than culture (more descriptive and less symbolic), and Hoy and Feldman (1999) concluded that climate presented fewer problems in terms of empirical measurements.

We can describe climate as a narrower concept than culture. Climate is typically used to describe people’s shared perceptions of the organization. Culture encompasses not only how people feel about the organization, it includes the assumptions, values, and beliefs that give identity to the organization and specifies standards for behavior (Stolp & Smith, 1995). James Keefe (1993) noted that climate may be understood as one measure

of culture. Furthermore, he differentiates between climate as perceptions of culture that are shared by members of the organization and their satisfaction. Keefe (1993) described satisfaction as the view of aspects of the organization's culture held by each individual.

Culture includes climate, but climate does not encompass all aspects of culture (Stolp & Smith, 1995).

Strong school cultures have better motivated teachers.

Highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance and student outcomes. 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. Measuring school climate and using these assessments to focus the school's goals on learning is important for the process of improving the school's academic performance. (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009, pp. 78-79)

School Climate

School climate and culture are terms often used interchangeably; however, there are differences (Van Houtte, 2005). In some conceptualizations, culture is included as a piece of climate (Anderson, 1982; Tagiuri, 1968). Others consider climate as a subset of culture (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008). In the latter case, climate is considered to be a manifestation of culture (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Schein, 1990). Schein (1992)

provided a conceptualization in which school climate and school culture are two parts of organizational culture.

School climate has multiple definitions; however, most educational researchers agree that it is a multidimensional concept (Cohen, 2009). School climate is defined in several ways which leads to confusion surrounding the term. Defining school climate is a challenge due to striking a balance between affective and contextual qualities, social and physical aspects, and objectivity and subjectivity (Zullig, Koopman, Patton, & Ubbes, 2010). Anderson (1982) attributed some of the confusion to the fact that school climate is defined in intuitive rather than empirical ways. Some of the school climate literature equated the concept with single dimensions, such as school connectedness and school safety; however, school climate is not a one dimensional concept (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

Research has identified many elements, or dimensions, that comprise school climate, ranging from the size of the school to noise levels, the physical structure of the building, the comfort levels of the individuals, and feelings of safety. Climate includes opportunities for student-teacher interaction and teacher-staff interaction to develop interpersonal and instructional dimensions of school life. Wynn, Carboni, and Patall (2007) noted that climate can be difficult to define in an accurate and succinct manner. Tableman (2004) described climate as “the physical and psychological aspects of the school that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place” (p. 2). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) described climate as “the enduring characteristics that describe the psychological character of a particular school, distinguish it from other schools, and influence the behavior of teachers, and students, and is the psychological

‘feel’ that teachers and students have for school” (p. 82). According to Gonder and Hymes (1994), climate refers to the overall atmosphere of the school and can be measured by the attitudes of students, faculty, staff, and parents.

Cohen (2009) referred to school climate as the “quality and character of school life” (p. 100) composed of four concepts: safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the environment. School climate is based, in part, on people’s experiences of school life, the quality and consistency of interpersonal relationships and interactions, and organizational structures (Cohen, 2009; Haynes, Emmons, & Ben-Avie, 1997; Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008). Freiberg and Stein (1999) described school climate as the unique personality of the school and its distinctive qualities that encourage students and staff to come on board.

Gonder and Hymes (1994) proposed that climate consists of four facets or dimensions: academic, social, physical, and affective. The academic dimension is inclusive of all the instructional norms, beliefs, and practices existing in a school, especially with regard to high expectations, the monitoring of student progress, and efforts toward a safe and orderly climate. The social dimension is influenced by the many modes of interaction between stakeholders in a school, especially interactions between teachers and students, student-to-student communication, and the allowance for students to have a voice in decision making. The physical dimension includes all the physical aspects of a school, including the materials necessary for day-to-day operations. The affective dimension of school culture refers to the feelings and attitudes shared by students, faculty, staff, and parents. In continued research, Gonder and Hymes (1994) found a direct link between positive school climate, high staff productivity, and student

achievement. Furthermore, they found that climate and culture can greatly impact a student's success or failure.

Research indicated that climate can have an impact on a variety of aspects within in a school. It can affect every facet of a school community, from teacher morale and job satisfaction to teacher retention, student discipline, and student achievement

The key to ensuring long-lasting success may lie in a school leader's ability to examine, nurture, and purposefully plan for a positive school climate. According to Pellicer (2003), school principals who purposely tend to the various dimensions of school climate can affect positive change in student achievement (Pellicer, 2003). The Center for Social and Emotional Education, the National School Climate Center, the National Center for Learning, and Citizenship and Education Commission of the States (2008) referred to school climate as "the character of school life. It is based on patterns of school life experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, and leadership practices, and organizational structures" (p. 5).

The Influence of School Leaders on School Climate

As American education moved into a new era of accountability in the later part of the past century, this role necessitated the inclusion of leadership. As Cawelti (1984) stated, "Continuing research on effective schools has verified the common sense observation that schools are rarely effective, in any sense of the word, unless the principal is a 'good' leader" (p. 3). Fulfilling the role of school principal requires that leaders have an understanding of academic content, strengthen teachers' skills, gather and use data, and motivate stakeholders to improve student performance (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000).

Within the school building, the principal plays a primary role in providing leadership, articulating goals and behavioral expectations of teachers, and supporting staff in developing an effective school. When teachers are supported, students are supported. Both school climate and school culture require significant attention from the superintendent, principal, teachers, and staff. The basics of school leadership focus on setting direction for the school, developing people, and developing the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

A growing body of research evidence documents the effects of leadership. Moreover, anecdotal and popular accounts from business and other ventures tout the value of leadership. Some observers argue that this fascination with leadership merely reflects a general human desire to be in control of one's situation. Others say that while the impact of good leadership may be difficult to determine, the effects of poor leadership are easy to see. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003)

Research conducted over the past quarter century in schools throughout the world confirms, "...what practitioners and parents have always known. Leadership does make a difference in the capacity of schools to improve" (Hallinger, 2012, p.1). Research conducted by Gene Hall and others in the 1970s identified principal leadership as critical to supporting successful efforts in improving student achievement (Hallinger, 2012).

Hersey and Blanchard (1988) discussed leadership in relation to several factors: preferred style of leadership, maturity of followers, expectations of followers, and task at

hand. They developed the well-known Situational Leadership Model that identified four styles of leadership: autocratic (telling), democratic (selling), encouraging and social (participating), and laissez-faire style (delegating). These leadership behaviors range from leader-directed to non-directive approaches. Situational leaders must analyze the various skills, needs, and strengths of the faculty and respond to many divergent situations; the appropriate response depends on the situation and circumstances.

School principals, according to Maehr and Braskamp (1986), can manipulate climate, culture, and the effectiveness of an organization. The manipulation of those factors affects the school climate within the school. By exercising specific leadership behaviors, a principal influences the school's instructional environment, a complex organism comprised of the behaviors and attitudes of teachers, students, parents, and community members.

In a study based on the broad scope of human resources, Norton (1999) asked 100 elementary and secondary principals to detail their responsibilities. It was found that 79% of the principals rated the following processes as demanding most of their time: organizational climate and staff selection, development, and evaluation. While the general conclusion of that study was that the principal assumes a significant leadership role in the effective administration of the human resource processes, the notion that the leader of the school also has the primary responsibility for the climate of the organization is significant. Norton's (1999) study illustrated the notion that principals accept the primary responsibility for establishing a positive school climate.

Researchers have attempted to quantify the leadership process and establish relationships between dimensions of leadership, school climate, teacher effectiveness,

and student learning (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Maehr, 1990; Waters, et al., 2004). Early research by Brookover (1979), Edmonds (1979), and Rutter, Maughn, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979) found that correlates of effective schools include strong leadership, a climate of expectation, an orderly but not rigid atmosphere, and effective communication. These researchers and others suggested that the presence or absence of a strong educational leader, the climate of the school, and attitudes of the teaching staff can directly influence student achievement.

Positive school climate has been recognized as the foundation of successful schools and a strong predictor of the academic success of students (Van Horn, 2003). Research has strongly supported the fact that the leadership of a school principal directly impacts the climate of the school and, in turn, the achievement of its students (Norton, 2002). In spite of this available research, principals have largely overlooked the fact that a healthy school climate has a direct effect on student achievement (Bulach & Malone, 1994).

Direction setting, developing people and redesigning the organization were practices common to successful principals in all contexts, including those in challenging, high-poverty schools. How these practices manifested varied in relation to national context and tradition. Distributed teacher leadership and professional self-renewal emerged as processes central to sustaining success, and, in at least one US case, a change in organizational governance was necessary to allow these processes to continue over time. (Jacobson, 2010, p. 33)

In their research, Squires, Huitt, and Segars (1983) discussed leadership and school climate indicators associated with better school outcomes. Three norms of a positive school climate were suggested within those indicators. An orderly environment was first; an emphasis on academics was second; and expectations for success was last. The indicators, discovered by Squires, Huitt, and Segars, also suggested three leadership processes of modeling, consensus building, and feedback. Each of these processes supports a positive school climate. Leadership processes and school climate provide one way of understanding what makes a school effective and may also suggest areas where change may significantly affect school outcomes.

The effective schools research revealed differences in leadership, structure, and climate in schools that improved student tests scores, as compared to those with declining scores (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979). Principals who lead effective schools work tenaciously to create safe and orderly learning environments; set clear instructional objectives; expect high performance from teachers and students through increased time on task; and develop positive home-school relations (Jacobson & Bezzina, 2008). As a result, “instructional leadership” came to be seen as the linchpin between principal practices and student achievement. Emphasizing the outcomes of principals’ actions, as opposed to their pre-existing skills, researchers began analyzing the processes leaders employed to promote school improvement (Jacobson, 2010).

Correlates of effective schools were designated by Smith and Purkey (1983) after a comprehensive review of literature on effective schools. In the list comprised by Smith

and Purkey (1983), many of the variables of organizational structure common in effective schools, center on leadership.

Following are the variables listed in *Effective Schools: A Review* (Smith & Purkey, 1983):

1. School-site management: Studies indicate that the leadership and staff of a school need considerable autonomy in determining the exact means by which they address the problem of increasing academic performance;
2. Instructional leadership: It seems clear that leadership is necessary to initiate and maintain the improvement process. The principal is uniquely positioned to fill this role, and certainly his or her support is essential very early on;
3. Staff stability: Once a school experiences success, keeping the staff together seems to maintain, and promote further, success;
4. Curriculum articulation and organization: If elementary school students are expected to acquire basic and complex skills, the curriculum must focus on these skills, they must receive sufficient time for instruction in those skills, and those skills must be coordinated across grade levels;
5. School-wide staff development: In order to influence an entire school, the staff development should be school-wide rather than specific to individual teachers and should be closely related to the instructional program of the school. Staff development should be

based on the expressed needs of teachers revealed as part of the process of collaborative planning and collegial relationships;

6. Parent involvement and support: Parent involvement is not sufficient, but that obtaining parental support is likely to influence student achievement positively;
7. School-wide recognition of academic success: A school's culture is partially reflected in its ceremonies, its symbols, and the accomplishments it chooses to recognize officially. Schools that make a point of publicly honoring academic achievement and stressing its importance through the appropriate use of symbols, ceremonies, and the like encourage students to adopt similar norms and values;
8. Maximized learning time: If schools choose to emphasize academics, then a greater portion of the school day would be devoted to academic subjects, students would spend more time during class periods in active learning activities, and class periods would be free from interruptions; and
9. District support: Fundamental change, building-level management, staff stability, and so on all depend on support from the district office. While specialized help in some areas such as reading or mainstreaming seems helpful, the role of the district office is probably best conceived as guiding and helping. (pp. 443-444)

Research suggested that the principal's effect on school climate influences the feelings and attitudes teachers have about their work (Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994). Teachers who believe their principal to be supportive find work more rewarding and experience a more productive and motivating work environment. The experience of teachers working in a school with a positive climate benefits the learning and success of their students (Van Horn, 2003).

A research study conducted by Gaines (2011) supported the relationship between leadership styles, school climate, and student achievement. Gaines identified and explored how the relationship exists between the principals' leadership styles and the climate of the schools. Gaines found a strong, positive relationship between the climate and student achievement and between principal leadership styles and student achievement.

Research has related effective school leadership to significant increases in student achievement. In the study, *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*, Waters et al., (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 70 studies on education leadership and established 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly related to higher levels of student achievement.

- Culture – the principal fosters shared beliefs and a community and cooperation.
- Order – the principal establishes a set of standard operating procedures.
- Discipline – the principal protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching.

- Resources – the principal provides teachers with the materials and training necessary for the successful execution of their jobs.
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment – the principal is directly involved in the development and implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment process.
- Focus – the principal establishes clear goals and keeps the goals at the forefront of the school’s attention.
- Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment – the principal has knowledge of current curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Visibility – the principal has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students.
- Contingent Rewards – the principal recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments.
- Communication – the principal establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and students.
- Outreach – the principal advocates for and is a spokesperson on the behalf of the school to all of its stakeholders.
- Input – the principal involves teachers in developing and carrying out important decisions.
- Affirmation – the principal recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures.
- Relationships – the principal demonstrates awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff.

- Change agent – the principal is willing to and actively challenges the status quo.
- Optimizer – the principal inspires and leads new innovations.
- Ideals/beliefs – the principal communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling.
- Monitors/evaluates – the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and the impact on student learning.
- Flexibility – the principal adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the situation at hand and is comfortable with dissent.
- Situational awareness – the principal is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems.
- Intellectual stimulation – the principal ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular part of the school's culture. (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004, p. 4)

Blake and Mouton (1985) indicated that leaders who fully understand the theory of leadership and improve their ability to lead are able to reduce employee frustration and negative attitudes in the work environment. As instructional leaders, principals can foster an understanding of the school vision, facilitate implementation of the mission, and establish the school climate. Ubben and Hughes (1992) stated that principals could create a school climate that improves the productivity of both staff and students and that the leadership style of the principal can foster or restrict teacher effectiveness.

Case studies of exceptional schools, especially those that succeed beyond expectations, provide detailed portraits of leadership. These studies indicate that school leaders influence learning primarily by galvanizing effort about ambitious goals and by establishing conditions to support teachers and that help students succeed. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5)

In his article, *Relationships Between Measures of Leadership and School Climate*, Kelly (2005) declared that educational leadership is possibly the most important single determinant of an effective learning environment. Hess and Kelly (2005) stated that leaders must understand procedures and processes which create conditions necessary for organizational improvement. Skilled, effective leaders envision future needs and empower others to share and implement that vision. Building principals must be able to assess and evaluate the impact and perceptions of their leadership styles. Fullan (2002) stated, “Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement” (p. 16). It is certain that principals must deal with the varied levels of skill and ability of their faculty, in addition to the continuity of divergent situations that occur within today’s complex school environment.

In his text, *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Reform*, Sergiovanni (1992) framed moral leadership into three basic categories: the heart, the head, and the hand. Each of these areas intertwines with each other. The heart represents what one values and believes, the head signifies the mindscape of how the world works, and the hand shows one’s decisions, actions, and behaviors. Sergiovanni’s view of moral

leadership is not new; Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute on these same life principles.

The behaviors of building level administrators have been linked to the climate of school buildings, thus, telling us that effective leadership is critical. Researchers have related principal leadership and behaviors to school climate (Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett, 1998; Peterson, 1990). There is no doubt that the climate of a school can be shaped by the actions of the school principal (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). Bulach et al., (1998) found that teachers' views of teacher-principal interactions were related to school climate. The principal's instructional leadership behaviors affect the climate and instructional organization, both of which are tied to student achievement (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982). Several studies have established connections between instructional leadership and the climate of the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Hoy et al., 1991; Lane, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1995). Principals' behaviors are related to school climate through effective communication, teacher advocacy, participatory decision-making, and equitable evaluation procedures.

Sergiovanni (1996) argued that schools should not adopt corporate models for leadership. Instead, leaders should make decisions based on the shared values of the community. According to Sergiovanni (1996), the purpose of leadership is to "transform the school into a moral community" (p. 45). The role of the principal should be to gather the stakeholders to engage and guide them in discussion and to create the school's mission.

Sergiovanni (1996) further explained that school leaders need to perform the following nine tasks in order to gain the confidence of those they lead:

1. Purposing: using a moral voice to transform a shared vision into a covenant that becomes the compelling force guiding the actions of principals, teachers, parents, and students.
2. Maintaining harmony: building consensus based on the shared vision and respecting individual differences of the stakeholders.
3. Institutionalizing values: translating the shared vision into practices and norms that guide behavior.
4. Motivating: providing a balance between the psychological and cultural needs of the stakeholders.
5. Managing: providing and enacting the daily procedures that make up an efficient and effective school.
6. Explaining: working to relate requests for action directly to the common vision established by stakeholders.
7. Enabling: providing the resources necessary to achieve as well as removing the obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing the common goal.
8. Modeling: living according to the purposes and values of the community in thought, word, and action.
9. Supervising: providing the oversight necessary to ensure that goals are accomplished. (pp. 88-89)

Sergiovanni (1996) contended that it is essential for leaders to mobilize communities to face their problems and make progress toward common goals. Schools need leaders who promote understanding and problem solving in order to create

communities that engage stakeholders in achieving goals. The change strategies used by school leaders should be norms-based and include professional socialization, purposing, shared values, collegiality, and interdependence.

There is also evidence of the importance of the interrelationships between the principal's behavior, school climate, and school effectiveness (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002). Principals who possess an understanding of the phenomena of school climate act with intention in efforts to alter it as needed for the benefit of students. School leaders must understand that they can alter their style or differentiate their leadership strategies based on the specific strengths and weaknesses in the staff they lead, as identified in the research of Bulach, Malone, and Castleman (1995). The results of a healthy, positive climate will be a more productive and effective staff and improved student achievement.

According to Fullan (1998), the leadership of a principal is believed to be essential in the successful implementation of reforms that have positively impacted student achievement. Cotton and Savard (1980) found that specific leadership behaviors appeared to have a positive impact on student achievement. Effective leadership in schools substantially raises student achievement. Leithwood (1994) determined that principals who offered personal interaction with teachers, resources, and rewards/reinforcement created a supportive atmosphere that contributed to student success.

Sergiovanni communicated that virtues strengthen the "heartbeat" of schools. A strong heartbeat is a school's best defense against the obstacles leaders face as they work to improve schools. Strengthening the heartbeat of schools requires that educators rethink what leadership is, how leadership works, what is leadership's relationship to

learning, and why we need to practice leadership and learning together. When leaders strengthen the heartbeat, their schools become stronger and more resilient. These qualities help leaders to share the burdens of leadership with others, to create collaborative cultures, and to be continuous learners. Leadership inevitably involves change, and change inevitably involves learning. Both are easier to do if there is an understanding of the mindscapes administrators bring into practice, examine them in light of what we want to do, and change them. Change begins with us – with our heart, head, and hands that drive our leadership practice (Sergiovanni, 2005). “...leadership that serves school purposes, leadership that is tough enough to demand a great deal from everyone, and leadership that is tender enough to encourage the heart – these are the images of leadership we need for school as communities” (Sergiovanni, 1997, p. 3).

Frost (n.d.) wrote in her article, *Qualities of a Successful School Administrator*, that “without a strong leader at the helm, a school may fall apart and leave the students at a disadvantage” (p. 2). The traits of a successful administrator unite the entire school community in pursuit of the common educational goal.

Frost (n.d.) believed that an effective administrator takes responsibility for everything that occurs in the school. If the school succeeds, the principal succeeds. From hiring teachers to student performance on tests, the principal assumes responsibility. A principal needs a realistic understanding of what is happening in the school to be able to monitor various aspects of the educational process and implement improvements. Any administrator who shifts blame to others is less likely to be able to solve problems and address concerns within the school.

Leadership skills are naturally part of school administration. A principal needs to be able to lead the staff without dictating and mandating every move made by the staff. A strong community between the teachers, students, and staff is a result of effective leadership. A school administrator needs to take into account the information provided by teachers and the community but ultimately makes decisions that are necessary for school success. Administrators not only need to keep in mind the current educational environment, but look into the future to ensure growth. A clear vision and goals help guide the future to planning for the school.

Interactive management is another key point critical to, what Frost described as, successful administrators. An effective administrator knows how to balance managing staff, students, and all of the administrative desk work that comes with the job. The effective principal visits classrooms and has a firsthand understanding of what teachers and students are doing throughout the day.

“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 2). The impact of leadership tends to be greatest in schools where the learning needs of students are the greatest. Leithwood et al. (2004) declared, “Indeed, there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst” (p. 5).

The school principal is responsible for maximizing learning for all students while maintaining professional ethics and personal integrity through inspiring leadership. The administrator should also enable all members of the learning community to seek and

attain excellence by establishing a climate of mutual trust and respect, facilitate the implementation of a sound curriculum and appropriate instructional strategies designed to promote optimal learning for all students, demonstrate a commitment to students through a personal growth plan, and encourage the professional development of all staff in the learning community.

Leadership is critical to the development and maintenance of an effective school. Leadership encourages and provides staff with the incentives and resources to pursue new learning. Knowledgeable and skillful principals and teachers facilitate high levels of learning for students (Lauritzen, 2009). Therefore, it is important for schools to invest in administrators, teachers, and other instructional and support staff.

Leadership is also an essential condition in complex organizations for productivity and satisfaction. Commitment and energetic leadership from the principal are critical for a school to develop a positive school learning climate. If they fail to provide leadership, the school climate cannot develop positively (Lauritzen, 2009).

NASSP's *Instructional Leadership Handbook* (Keefe & Jenkins, 1984; 1990) states that it is the principal's role in providing direction, resources, and support to teachers and students for improvement of teaching and learning in the school. Instructional leadership begins with an attitude, an expressed commitment to student success, from which comes values, behaviors, and functions designed to foster, facilitate, and support student achievement.

Additionally, studies conducted by Araki (1982) indicated six characteristics of instructional leadership as the most important. (1) Instructional leadership is a shared responsibility. The principal, associate/assistant principals, directors of

instruction/instructional specialists, department chairpersons, district-level support staff, and teachers are frequently credited with providing significant instructional leadership.

(2) Instructional leadership is situational. It requires vision, flexibility, and common sense. Successful administrators know that an ideal faculty needs a spectrum of experience. Different skills are needed in different situations. (3) Instructional leadership is planned. When no planning exists, no positive changes occur. When no organized plan is present, no comprehensive strategies will exist. (4) Instructional leadership is enhanced by a common purpose. Schools with evidence of effective instructional leadership (e.g., rising test scores, risk-taking behavior, shared responsibility, etc.) exhibited general agreement among all segments concerning the primary purposes of schooling. (5) Instructional leadership involves risk-taking. Risk is directly related to positive growth. The more risks, the bigger the risks, and the more people involved in risk-taking behavior, the better the outcomes. (6) Instructional leadership is characterized by informed behaviors. Instructional leadership involves the integration of both attitudes and behaviors. Instructional leaders do not engage in behaviors simply because they are included in a job description or an evaluation checklist. Instead, they behave in certain ways because they know that these behaviors are likely to have a positive effect on teachers and/or students, and ultimately, a positive impact on the instructional program.

According to Stogdill and Bass (1981), a leader is characterized by:

- a strong drive for responsibility and task completion;
- vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals;
- originality in problem solving;

- drive to exercise initiative in social situations;
- self-confidence and sense of personal identity;
- willingness to accept consequences of decision and action;
- readiness to absorb interpersonal stress;
- willingness to tolerate frustration and delay;
- ability to influence other persons' behavior; and
- the capacity to structure interaction systems to the purpose at hand. (p. 86)

School administrators must deal with a wide array of problems, situations, and people. To lead effectively, they must have a range of abilities and skills and be willing to enhance their abilities and learn ever-changing skills. Prospective leaders typically complete administrator preparation or training programs. These preparation programs should emphasize theoretical and clinical knowledge, applied research, and supervised practice. Administrator education programs should include a study of theoretical knowledge, the technical core of school administration, developing problem-solving skills, practiced leadership under supervision, and demonstrating competence.

In studies conducted by Marzano in 2005, it was found that effective principals establish clear goals and move the school towards those goals. Principals should keep in mind that the ultimate priority is student welfare and success. The principal must keep at the forefront of their mind what is best for the school when making decisions. An effective principal fosters shared beliefs and builds a sense of community within the school, which ultimately impacts student achievement. A leader should envision a successful school, act with integrity, and communicate their vision through relationships with the stakeholders of the school (McEwan, 2003). An effective administrator

challenges and encourages others to continue to grow personally and professionally. Principals must provide opportunities for professional development, which benefit student learning. The conclusions drawn from the studies may be used to develop current leaders and transition them from “good to great,” as well as ensuring that new leaders have the tools to help them become as effective as those identified as “effective principals” in this study.

Edmonds (as cited in Reynolds, 1996), one of the leading researchers in the area of school effectiveness, studied effective schools in Michigan. Edmonds found that the most effective schools had strong leadership, a climate of high expectations, an orderly atmosphere, constant monitoring of student progress, and a school-wide focus on acquisition of basic skills (Pritchett Johnson et al., 2000).

Principals have the power, authority, and position to impact the climate of the school, but many lack the feedback to improve. If principals are highly skilled, they can develop feelings of trust, open communication, collegiality, and promote effective feedback. Effective leaders must not forget the parable of *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, which depicts how one entity or one situation can be viewed in as many different ways as the number of people studying it. If principals are blind to critical information about their schools, they could make erroneous decisions. In the complex and dynamic environment of schools, all principals need to understand effective leadership behaviors and teachers' perceptions of their behaviors. Principals must know and understand how to provide the foundation for creating an atmosphere conducive to change. Leaders must be able to correctly envision the needs of their teachers, empower

them to share the vision, and enable them to create an effective school climate (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

For developing and maintaining an appropriate school climate in which teachers and students are valued and where parents and the community are welcome, school leaders are perceived to be chiefly responsible (Pritchett Johnson, Livingston, Schwartz, & Slate, 2000).

Rather than supporting the superiority of one leadership style over another to produce a more effective school, the literature reviewed here suggests that school leaders who demonstrate support and caring for their teachers and students, who provide instructional leadership, and who involve parents and community members are likely to have effective schools. A care ethic, demonstrated appropriately by administrators, appears to be an important characteristic of the leadership in effective schools. (Pritchett Johnson et al., 2000)

In conclusion, it is the role of the effective principal to anchor these findings and work towards continuous improvement. The role of the school principal is becoming increasingly complex. In spite of the growing pressures, some principals are highly successful and are able to achieve and maintain excellence. The primary responsibility of principals, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in education is to help students experience the excitement and joy that can come from learning or discovering something new. An effective principal should facilitate this moment as frequently as possible in an

atmosphere where the students can independently discover the pleasure of acquiring new knowledge. While a single individual can play a pivotal role in the transformation of an organization or institution, no one can implement change or maintain excellence without the shared leadership of other colleagues.

Great principals lead teaching and learning in their schools; great principals take responsibility for their schools' success; great principals hire, develop, and retain excellent teachers; and great principals build a strong school community (Whitaker, 2003). These aspects of great school leaders are common in the reviewed literature.

The Influences of School Climate on Student Achievement

School culture and climate are useful terms to describe intangibles that can greatly affect learning and student success. As such, they deserve serious attention and effort to improve and maximize student performance. Comprehensive models that have been developed for school reform have undoubtedly included change in school culture and school climate (Tableman & Herron, 2004).

Considering the many definitions of school climate, The Center for Social and Emotional Education (2010) researchers generally agreed that it reflects student, teacher, parent, and community subjective experience in the school setting. This group believes there are four areas that impact perceptions of school climate: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and instructional environment.

Although Cohen (2006) indicated that the impact of climate on the learning process was first considered by Perry in 1908, effective schools research essentially began in 1966 with the *US Report on Equality of Educational Opportunity*. The report indicated that the factors that most influenced student achievement, those that had been

long-held with educators, had proven to be a challenge (Coleman et al., 1966). The report stated that factors external of school: family background, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity explained the variation in student performance better than in-school factors: facilities, teacher experience and qualifications, and expenditures. As the theory was tested, statistical outliers surfaced. Scatterings of inner city elementary schools serving predominantly low socioeconomic, African American students, performed at higher levels than expected (Rosenholtz, 1989). Further studies became known as “effective schools research.” This research offered hope that educators could make a greater impact on students with internal variables than previously believed (Jacobson, 2010).

Even before there was an interest in school social climate emanating from effective schools’ literature, theorists and researchers were exploring the notion of the quality of school life as an outcome process of schooling. To these researchers, school satisfaction for students was comparable to job satisfaction for adults. Assessing the environment was important to determine the impact of the school setting on student attitudes and behavior. In terms of daily mental health, general satisfaction was seen as important to students in school as it was to adults at work. Furthermore, positive reactions to school could increase the likelihood that students would stay in school longer, develop a lasting commitment to learning, and use education to their advantage. This concept was supported by researchers who believed that positive social environments and positive learning outcomes went hand-in-hand (MacIntosh, 1991).

The quality of education has been reflected not only in the subjects taught and achievement levels reached but also in the learning environment. The environment has reflected and influenced the behavior of students, and it has been affected by events

within and outside of the school (Condition of Education, 1998). Most educators and researchers have agreed that the total environment should be comfortable, pleasant, and psychologically uplifting; should provide a physical setting that students find educationally stimulating; should produce a feeling of well-being among its occupants; and should support the academic process. These goals, while quite difficult to attain, have been considered to be achievable through the cooperative efforts of creative educators (Castaldi, 1987). It has been the responsibility of educators to use research findings to implement any and all climate factors conducive to creating an environment that may result in increased student achievement, but these specific environmental factors are still considered ambiguous (Bennett, 2001).

Hoy and Tarter (1997) recommended that if the research purpose is to identify the underlying forces that motivate behavior in a school or the values and symbolism of the school, then a cultural approach is advised. If the study is to describe the actual behavior with the purpose of managing and changing it, then a climate approach is more appropriate.

Freiberg (1998) suggested that positive school climate can enhance staff performance, promote higher staff morale, and improve student achievement. Heck (2000) and Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) linked school climate and student achievement.

School climate may be one of the most important ingredients of a successful instructional program. Without a climate that creates a harmonious and well-functioning school, a high degree of

academic achievement is difficult, if not downright impossible, to obtain. (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1985, p. 15)

Bulach, Malone, and Castleman (1995) also found a significant relationship between student achievement and school climate. In addition, Bulach and Malone (1994) concluded that school climate was a significant factor in successful school reform.

Birdin (1992) and Zigarmi, Edeburn, and Blanchard (1991) found strong positive correlations between effectiveness scores and a selected group of climate variables. Urban (1999) stated, "Unless students experience a positive and supportive climate, some may never achieve the most minimum standards or realize their full potential" (p. 69). Hoy, Tarter, and Bliss (1990) found that long-term improvement in academic achievement was related to schools with strong academic emphasis within the context of healthy and open climates.

Stockard and Mayberry (1992) found that characteristics of positive school climates include: high expectations within the school community, including teachers, students and parents, concerning student achievement; orderly environments; positive attitudes among the members of the school community; positive regard of students; student active engagement; and healthy social relationships.

School climate has also been found to be related to student achievement in high-poverty schools (Haynes et al., 1993). Towns, Cole-Henderson, and Serpell (2001) examined four urban schools serving low-income populations with high academic success. All four schools had strong principals, high expectations for achievement, monitored student progress, maintained discipline, and strong parental involvement.

Carter (2000) reviewed 21 high-performing, high-poverty schools (nationwide) and found that, among other factors, principals in these schools were free to decide whom to hire, held high expectations, and the quest for excellence was the norm. These school administrators and faculty used data for student diagnosis and goal setting. Hughes (1995) found that effective elementary schools serving high-poverty populations had identified instructional leaders who communicate openly and who are supportive of teachers and of the academic program.

Krawczyk (2007) found a positive relationship between student academic performance and teacher perceptions of the overall school climate. However, this relationship was not applicable for all subcategories of climate. For example, neither the teacher nor student learning environment, nor the student social and physical environments demonstrated a significant relationship to achievement. Smith (2008) found a moderate positive relationship between both collegial leadership and academic press in English and math achievement in high-poverty elementary schools. Kannapel, Clements, Taylor, and Hibpshman (2005) concluded that in high-performing, high-poverty schools, the school climate factors that related to academic success are: high expectations for students; collaborative decision making between the teacher and the principal; caring staff and faculty; parent/teacher communication; strong faculty morale and work ethic; a strong academic and instructional focus; and coordinated staffing strategies.

As concluded by Staude-Sites (2012) in her study on school climate and connectedness, school climate intersects closely with the concepts of caring, connectedness, engagement, and community in school. Similar to Staude-Sites' results, a

study by John Schweitzer of Michigan State University (1979) revealed that when students feel a strong sense of community with each other and a sense of belonging to their schools, they achieve higher score on state assessments.

Noddings (1992) stated, “A child’s place in our hearts and lives should not depend on his or her academic prowess” (p. 13). Additionally, she stated, “A caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings—a career and a cared for. . . .both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways” (p. 15).

As the emphasis on student achievement and closing the achievement gap have surfaced, The National School Climate Council (2007) made recommendations for policymakers to consider in regards to the needs and challenges facing schools as it relates to accountability and school climate. These recommendations include the creation of standards for school climate, its assessment, and guidelines for selecting a school climate assessment. The guidelines for selecting a school climate assessment should include: school climate measures in accountability standards, the use of school climate assessment and improvement efforts as a method to coordinate education and mental health and home-school-community initiatives, and expansion to explicitly address school climate within school programs.

In response to the National School Climate Council’s recommendations, Alaska launched an initiative to improve the climate in their schools. As a component in a longitudinal evaluation of Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE), a survey was developed for students and staff. The data from the survey provided schools with information about how students and staff perceived their school climate and how

students perceived their connectedness to school each year. The School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) was administered to staff and students in a small number of Alaska school districts in 2005 and a larger number in 2006 and 2007.

In this study conducted by the American Institutes for Research in 2007, it was determined that not only are school climate and connectedness related to student achievement, but positive change in school climate is related to significant gains in student achievement scores on statewide assessments. These studies demonstrated that whether a school starts with high or low school climate and connectedness and high or low achievement scores, changing that climate for the better is associated with increases in student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Tableman and Herron (2004) found numerous studies that documented that students in schools with a good school climate have higher achievement scores and better socioemotional health. In their *Best Practices Brief*, findings stated that a caring school climate is associated with higher grades, engagement, attendance, expectations, and aspirations. It also contributes to a sense of academic competence, fewer suspensions, and a lower rate of retentions. There was less anxiety and depression among students as a result of higher self-esteem and self-concept.

Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, and Dumas (2003), with the development of a school-level rather than a classroom-level measure of climate, broadened the range of characteristics to be assessed when evaluating school climate. The instrument they developed included subscales measuring teacher support; consistency and clarity of rules and expectations; student commitment/achievement orientation; negative peer interactions; positive peer interactions; disciplinary harshness; student input in decision

making; instructional innovation and relevance; support for cultural pluralism; and safety concerns (Brand et al., 2003)

As stated by Peterson and Skiba (2001), school climate can affect a number of student learning outcomes in both direct and indirect ways. Some examples, they described, included how comfortable individuals feel in the school environment, whether individuals feel that the environment supports learning, how appropriately organized it is, and how safe they feel while they are there (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Unless students are able to identify well within their schools, their participation in education will be limited (Finn, 1989). In addition, Connell and Wellborn (1991) added that the climate of the school environment plays an important role in students' confidence in their abilities, as well as in teachers' beliefs regarding student efficacy. Esposito (1999) stated that school climate is an important factor of a student's school success, which is an important determinant of success in life.

Because schools are a central place for social bonding (Welsh, 2001), Gregg (1999) argued that similar to families, school communities support the growth of the whole child. In addition, Haynes et al. (1997) explained that a child's school experiences have an everlasting impact on their academic success and their ability to adjust socially later in life. Wilson (2004) concurred with the belief that students' school experiences are fundamental to their ability to successfully transition into adulthood.

Ashby and Krug (1998) found school climate to be part of the school environment associated with attitudinal and affective dimensions and the system of beliefs of the school that have the greatest influence on children's cognitive, social, and psychological

development. The climate of the school is heavily reflected in the social interactions in all areas of the school (e.g., the classroom, faculty lounge, and lunchroom).

With the concept of school climate being defined in numerous ways over the past 30 years, it has been found that the construct has migrated from school safety concerns to relationships of caring and concern between adults and students, to the culture of the school, and the role added of valuable professional relationships and networking for educators. Most recently, school climate is equated with making schools more personalized for students. School climate has consistently been directly linked to achievement measures of language, reading, and mathematics and have also been found to moderate the negative effects of disruptive behavior and children's academic achievement (Posner & Rothbart, 1998). A positive school climate supports learning and overall student development.

Summary

Leadership is filled with definitions, theories, styles, functions, competencies, and historical examples of successful and diverse leaders. Leadership is critical in developing a positive school climate. While leadership is clearly not the job of just one person, the principal must be a key player in guiding, leading, inspiring, and supporting staff and students in establishing relationships where they can work and learn. The principal must create and communicate the vision of a positive school climate and provide direction, modeling, and support to others as they move toward that vision. The leader has to maintain vigilant watch of the environment, provide feedback about the school's progress with climate, and stay the course during difficult times. The principal, as leader, must pay attention to the needs of others in the school, assuring that they have the training,

knowledge, and skills required to help create a positive climate. The leader establishes, uses, and maintains effective communication systems so that all school stakeholders can contribute to the positive climate. The leader should make it clear that decisions about climate have to do with student learning rather than adult convenience. Effective principals recognize the importance of staff leadership in all successful reform efforts. They rely on staff leaders to develop and move efforts ahead, to inspire peers, and build ownership. Ultimately, leaders influence student learning by promoting a vision and goals, ensuring the availability of resources, and establishing processes to enable teachers to teach to the best of their abilities.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The climate of a school can be defined as the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members (Hoy & Hannum, 1997). Schools with a positive climate have been shown to positively impact students (Hoy, 1972). School climate is quite complex and has been recognized as an important component of effective schools (Lehr, 2004). Lehr (2004) declared that there is strong evidence to support that school climate has definite implications for student development and learning. The body of empirical and ethnographic research has suggested that “positive school climates are associated with and/or predictive of increased student achievement, increased school connectedness, decreased high school dropout rates, enhanced risk prevention/health promotion efforts, and increased teacher retention rates” (Education Leadership Coalition on School Climate, 2012, p. 5).

In this study, the researcher investigated employee perceptions in order to determine if there was a relationship between staff members’ perceptions of their principal’s leadership skills, a derivative of the district’s school Employee Perception Survey (EPS), and their schools’ climate, also derived from the school district’s EPS. Previous research indicated that educators play a critical role in developing and promoting a school’s climate, be it positive or negative (Lehr, 2004).

Hoy and Hannum (1997) examined the relationships between student achievement and school climate. The hypothesis of their study was that all aspects of school health are positively related to student achievement. The researchers found that stronger overall organizational health, or climate, of the school was related to higher levels of student achievement in basic skills.

Through their research, educational researchers have suggested that there may also be a relationship between principal influence and the effectiveness of their schools (Dow & Oakley, 1992). Schools with a positive climate have been shown to positively impact students (Hoy, 1972). A principal's leadership style influences the climate that, in turn, impacts student performance. Lehr (2004) suggested that principals who invest time and energy into developing a positive school climate are investing in preventative measure to glean the result of a healthy environment for the academic and emotional development of students and staff.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school staff members' perceptions of the leadership skills of elementary school principals and teachers' ratings of the school's climate as measured by the EPS. Specifically, this study examined the perceptions of elementary public school teachers in a large, suburban school district in the state of Texas regarding the leadership of their principals and the teachers' personal assessment as categorized by (1) autonomy: the perception that the individual has the means and opportunity to successfully meet their job roles and responsibilities; (2) cohesiveness: the perception that the individual is a successfully functioning part of the organization; (3) communication adequacy: the perception that the individual is part of the vertical and horizontal communication within the organization; and (4) goal focus: the perception that the individual has a clear understanding of the organization's goals and how those goals are achieved. The EPS helps to provide information about whether or not staff members' perceptions of principal leadership skills on the EPS could be related to school climate, also measured by employee perceptions.

Description of the Research Design

The design of the research involved examining descriptive statistics and frequencies to investigate the possible relationship between perceived school climate and perceived principal leadership skills. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provided simple summaries about the sample and the measures.

The primary use of descriptive statistics is to describe information or data through the use of numbers (create number pictures of the information).

The characteristics of groups of numbers representing information or data are called descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to describe groups of numerical data such as test scores. (Key, 1997, p. 1)

The purpose of this study was to clarify the understanding of important phenomena by identifying relationships among variables, school climate, and leadership skills.

Research Question

The purpose of the study was is to identify teachers' perceptions of the leadership of their schools as it related to the school climate. The study sought to answer the following research question:

1. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal leadership skills and teachers' perceptions of school climate?

Setting

The setting for this study was a large, suburban school district in the state of Texas. This school district encompasses 186 square miles of land. In excess of 104,000

students were enrolled for the 2010-2011 school year. The district houses a number of large industrial businesses within its borders, including international corporations and a number of small factories and plants.

A total of 7,759 teachers, counselors, supervisory personnel, attendance officers and administrators comprise the professional staff of the sample school district. The average number of years of experiences for teachers is 11.89 years.

Table 3-1 depicts the level of educational degrees held by the teaching staff of the sample school district. Seventy-five percent of the teachers in this district earned a bachelor's degree; 24.4 % of the teaching staff earned both a bachelor's degree and master's degree; and .06% earned a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and a doctorate.

Table 3-1

Range of Degrees Held by Teaching Staff of Sample School District

Level of Degree	#	%
Bachelor's	5,819	75.0
Masters	1,893	24.4
Doctorate	47	0.6

Table 3-2 illustrates the demographic variance in the sample school district. A majority, or 77.5%, of the teachers of the district were White, 10.4 % were African American, and 10 % were Hispanic. Combined, Native Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders comprised less than 2% of the sample staff.

Table 3-2

Teaching Staff Demographics of the Sample School District

Staff Ethnicity	#	%
African American	807	10.4
Hispanic	776	10.0
White	6,013	77.5
Native American Indian	15	0.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	101	1.3

Depicted in Table 3–3, the percentages of male and female staff of the sample district are revealed. Seventeen percent of the staff members are male and 83% are female.

Table 3-3

Gender of Sample School District

Staff Gender	#	%
Male	1,319	17.0
Female	6,440	83.0

Subjects

The set of teachers and staff that was used for this study was narrowed to only elementary school teachers and staff and elementary principals from the 51 elementary schools in the sample school district. The study included 4,207 teachers and staff members including special education teachers, special education paraprofessionals, instructional paraprofessionals, clerical paraprofessionals, librarians, instructional

specialists, and 51 principals. Of the 51 schools, 34 qualified under federal standards for Title I support. The percentage range of schools with students qualifying for Economically Disadvantaged status was from 1.6% to 90.1%.

Demographics of the Population Sample

One factor considered was the demographics of the surveyed participants. Although not drastically different from the demographics of the sample district as a whole, the demographics of the surveyed group does present different results. Among the 4,207 participating elementary school employees, 5.92% were male and 94.07% were female.

Table 3-4

Gender of the Survey Participants

Staff Gender	#	%
Male	249	5.92
Female	3,958	94.07

Also notable is the ethnic breakdown of the teacher and staff population depicted in Table 4-12. The statistics indicated that nearly 73% of the participants were White, almost 16% were Hispanic, approximately 9% were African American, less than 3% were Asian, and less than 1% of the surveyed staff was American Indian or Pacific Islander.

Table 3-5

Demographics of the Survey Participants

Staff Ethnicity	#	%
African American	362	8.61
Hispanic	670	15.92
White	3,060	72.73
American Indian	8	0.20
Asian	104	2.48
Pacific Islander	1	.03

One other piece of demographic information that may have influenced staff perceptions of school climate and principal leadership skills is the number of years of experience held by teachers and staff. The number of years of experience of those surveyed ranged from less than a year to more than 20 years. Table 3-6 illustrates the number of years of experience of the surveyed staff. Twelve percent of the surveyed group had more than 20 years of educational experience, 23.90% fell within the range of 11-20 years, and 22.57% of the staff held 6-10 years of experience. The largest group, those with 1-5 years of experience, comprised 38.33% of the group. Those with the least amount of experience, 0-1 years, represented the smallest group of those surveyed.

Table 3-6

Years of Experience of Respondents to the Survey

Number of Years of Experience	#	%
0-1 years of experience	113	2.68
1-5 years of experience	1,613	38.33
6-10 years of experience	950	22.57
11-20 years of experience	1,005	23.90
20 + years of experience	525	12.49

Procedures

Each elementary school included in the survey had an elected representative to attend the school district's Personnel Services Committee. This elected staff member was trained by district personnel to facilitate the administration and collection of the EPS on each individual campus on an annual basis. Each of the participants was notified at least one week prior to the administration of the EPS of the date and time the survey would be administered. Each participant was required to sign in for their attendance and participation in the EPS. The district's Department of Campus Improvement and Research counted the names on the sign-in sheet and compared them with the number of collected surveys.

The Personnel Services Committee representative explained to staff members that the purpose of the survey was to provide an opportunity for them to share their feelings about the work environment and the leadership skills of the administrators. All respondents were directed to answer the questions as they pertained to the campus in which they worked at during the 2010-2011 school year.

The responses to this survey were kept confidential. The principal did not see the individual surveys. The bubbled response data were returned to the principal as a summary of the responses. The data were returned to the principal after any identifying information was removed from the response by the Department of Campus Improvement and Research. As an additional measure of confidentiality, the principal and other campus administrators were asked to leave the area before the surveys were distributed and completed by their staff.

The survey was administered once. Any staff members not present at the administration of the survey did not have an opportunity to respond. Once the surveys were completed, they were hand delivered by the Personnel Services Committee building representative to the Department of Campus Improvement and Research for data analysis and disaggregation.

Each campus principal was expected to share the results of the EPS with the administrative team, Campus Improvement Committee, and the entire staff as part of the campus improvement and goal setting process. Additionally, the data were shared with the district's Associate Superintendent for School Administration and Curriculum and Instruction and the Assistant Superintendents for Elementary and Secondary School Administration.

Instrument

The EPS is an employee attitude survey that provides an important view of the organization through the eyes of the staff. The survey was developed by the school district's Department of Planning and Research to allow employees to provide honest, confidential input about their perceptions of their job and the organization, along with the

school climate, and their perceptions of the principals' leadership skills. This discreet feedback provided a powerful tool for understanding and meeting the needs of the students and staff. The feedback from the EPS is also used by principals and other school leaders to develop plans for improvement in school climate and as a self-reflection tool for principals to further develop leadership skills.

Employees that are satisfied are motivated to perform better; therefore, there is improved loyalty and job performance. The EPS defined for school leadership, in detail, employees' needs and concerns. Employee satisfaction can be improved when needs are met and concerns are shared openly with school administrators.

The EPS provided employees the opportunity to evaluate their school by rating 20 statements about the climate of the school and five statements concerning the leadership skills of the school's principal using a 5-point Likert rating scale: SA (Strongly Agree); A (Agree); N (Neutral); D (Disagree); and SD (Strongly Disagree). Each employee received a survey questionnaire, in person, to ensure confidentiality and candid responses.

The first 20 EPS questions/responses were clustered into four categories: Autonomy: the perception that the individual has the means and opportunity to successfully meet their job roles and responsibilities; Cohesiveness: the perception that the individual is a successfully functioning part of the organization; Communication Adequacy: the perception that the individual is part of the vertical and horizontal communication within the organization; and Goal Focus: the perception that the individual has a clear understanding of the organization's goals and how those goals are achieved. The school climate statements rated by the staff were:

I feel...

1. Intrinsically rewarded for doing my job.
2. I have the opportunity to develop my skills.
3. I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions.
4. I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization.
5. The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable.
6. I have the information I need to do my job effectively.
7. Like I belong at this school.
8. I can give input when decisions are made that affect me.
9. Safe at work.
10. Quality work is expected of all adults working at this school.
11. Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school.
12. Comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators.
13. That I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance.
14. Information and knowledge are shared openly at this school.
15. My ideas and opinions count at work.
16. Recognized for good work.
17. Clear about what my job is at this school.
18. That others are clear about what my job is at this school.
19. Quality work is expected of all students at this school.
20. Decisions made for this campus are data driven.

Following the school climate survey items, participants rated the following five items related to principal leadership:

My principal...

1. Treats me with respect.
2. Is an effective instructional leader.
3. Facilitates communication effectively.
4. Supports shared decision making.
5. Values the contributions I make.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by:

1. The sample population of the study included 51 elementary schools within a single school district. Individual school size was not considered in the study.
2. This study examined the EPS data for the 2010-2011 school year. A study spanning several years would improve the validity of the results.
3. The study did not account for the demographic variables within the student population. The demographic characteristics of each campus, including ethnicity and economically disadvantaged status, were not included in the study.
4. Staff demographics of each of the campuses in the sample were not accounted for in the study. Teacher/staff variables (e.g., years of experience) were not considered in the study.
5. The results of the EPS were strictly self-reported data.

6. The collection of data was limited to one school district; therefore, caution should be taken when generalizing the results of this study to other groups.

Summary of Methodology

Chapter Three described and explained the methods, instrument, and procedures used in this study. The type of research that was completed was discussed along with the research design. The procedure for administering the survey, the response collection, and the reporting of the responses was discussed. A snapshot of the demographics of the school district, as well as a description of the demographics of the sample population, was included. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4

Results

This study explored the relationship between school climate and principal leadership skills in an effort to expand the vast body of knowledge involving the influence of school leadership over school climate. An explanation of descriptive statistics is provided as it relates to the research question. Ultimately, this section discusses the findings of the study and a summary interpretation of the data as they relate to the research question.

Results of the Employee Perception Survey

In order to answer the research question, *Is there a relationship between principal leadership skills and school climate?*, the employee perception survey was developed and administered within the school district in which the data were collected. The survey was divided into several sections: School Climate was subdivided by elements of autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus; areas of School Leadership were subdivided by principal, assistant principal, and counselors. For this study, only the sections of School Climate and Principal Leadership were considered; the data for the assistant principals and counselors were not studied. The archival data collected by the district reported responses by teachers and staff members on the following dimensions: autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus.

First, the findings of the perceptions held by teachers and staff of school climate will be discussed. Autonomy is the perception that the individual has the means and opportunity to successfully meet their job roles and responsibilities. Recent research and theory embrace that effective schools are organizations where autonomy of the staff is present. The belief that schools are conventional bureaucracies which are structured as

hierarchies is being rejected. Schools are systems in which the work of teachers is mostly independent of the principal's immediate supervision (March & Olsen, 1976). With respect to autonomy, a total of 4,162 teachers provided answers to six items, *I feel intrinsically rewarded for doing my job; I have the opportunity to develop my skills; I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions; I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization; the amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable; and I have the information I need to do my job effectively*. The highest level of agreement (87%) was expressed by teachers for the item, *I have the opportunity to develop my skills*. A similar level of agreement (82%) was expressed for the item, *I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization*. Of importance to practitioners is that only 58% of the teachers indicated that they thought the amount of work they were asked to do was reasonable. Another survey item that merits discussion was that only 77% of teachers agreed that they were intrinsically rewarded for doing their job. Delineated in Table 4-1 are the responses to the items in the autonomy category.

Table 4-1

Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Autonomy

Autonomy Survey Item	SA/A	N	D/SD
I feel intrinsically rewarded for doing my job.	77%	14%	9%
I have the opportunity to develop my skills.	87%	9%	4%
I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions.	76%	14%	11%
I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization.	82%	12%	6%
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable.	58%	17%	25%
I have the information I need to do my job effectively.	76%	14%	9%

Depicted in Figure D-1 (Figure D-1 Appendix D) are the teachers' and staff members' responses to the Autonomy item, *I feel intrinsically rewarded for doing my job*. Seventy-seven percent (3,204) of the survey respondents felt intrinsically rewarded for doing their jobs, 14% (592) responded neutrally, and 9% (366) responded negatively. Although the majority of participants responded agree or strongly agree, 23% of elementary teachers and staff did not feel intrinsically rewarded for doing their jobs.

Depicted in Figure D-2 are the teachers' responses to the Autonomy item, *I feel I have the opportunity to develop my skills*. Of the 4,197 teachers and staff members who responded to this statement, 87% (3,639) felt they had the opportunity to develop their skills. Three hundred ninety-one (9%) of the participants answered neutrally, and 167 (4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had the opportunity to develop their skills.

Seen in Figure D-3 are the teachers' responses to the Autonomy item, *I feel I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions*. Although the majority, 76% (3,162), responded favorably, this result indicated that 25% (1,024) of the teachers and staff in the district's elementary schools did not feel they were able to think for themselves in carrying out their jobs.

Shown in Figure D-4 are the teachers' responses to the Autonomy item, *I feel I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization*. Regarding the responses, 18% (749) combined neutral (12% or 494) and disagree/strongly disagree (6% or 255) felt they did not have adequate opportunities for growth within the organization. At the same time, 82% (3,433) of teacher and staff either strongly agreed or agreed that they did have adequate opportunity for professional growth in the organization.

The teachers' responses to the Autonomy item, *I feel the amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable*, are delineated in Figure D-5. More disagreement was present for this survey item than for the other Autonomy survey items. Although the majority, 58% (2,443), responded favorably and may be found to be statistically insignificant, this result left a staggering 42% (1,741) of the teachers and staff in the district's elementary schools who did not feel the amount of work they were asked to do was reasonable. To a school administrator, this statistic should be extremely meaningful. Teachers and other staff members clearly felt overburdened with the amount of work they were asked to perform in their jobs.

Depicted in Figure D-6 are the teachers' responses to the Autonomy item, *I feel I have the information I need to do my job effectively*. Collectively, the neutral and disagree/strongly disagree responses comprised 23% (993) of the total responses. More

than 20% of elementary school teachers and staff did not feel they had the information they needed to effectively perform their jobs.

Cohesiveness refers to the perception that the individual is a successful functioning part of the organization. Cohesiveness gives the participants a clear sense of identity within the organization. Building consensus among a school staff on specified norms and goals is a focus of many school improvement strategies. A cohesive atmosphere promotes collaborative planning and collegial working conditions (Deal, Intili, Rosaler, & Stackhouse, 1977). Revealed in Table 4-2 are teacher responses to the five Cohesiveness survey items. The most agreement (92%) expressed by teachers was for feeling safe at work. The lowest level of agreement (66%) was expressed for being able to give input when decisions were made that affected the teachers.

Table 4-2

Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness Survey Item	SA/A	N	D/SD
I feel like I belong at this school.	83%	11%	6%
I feel I can give input when decisions are made that affect me.	66%	18%	16%
I feel safe at work.	92%	5%	3%
I feel quality work is expected of all adults working at this school.	84%	8%	8%
I feel a Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school.	81%	15%	5%

Illustrated in Figure D-7 are the teachers' responses to the Cohesiveness item, *I feel like I belong at this school*. Collectively, 17% (728) teachers and/or staff members did not feel a sense of belonging at their school. Although this number may not be statistically significant, it should be highly meaningful to practitioners and to school principals. Eighty-three percent of teachers did feel like they belonged at their school.

Figure D-8 reveals the teachers' responses to the Cohesiveness item, *I feel I can give input when decisions are made that affect me*. Only 66% (2,759) of teachers and staff felt that they were able to provide input in decisions affecting them. Principals and other practitioners cannot let this statistic go without notice. Employees who do not feel their input is valuable are dissatisfied with the decisions that are made and those who make them.

The teachers' responses to the Cohesiveness item, *I feel safe at work*, are present in Figure D-9. When examining perceptions of safety, 5% (215) of respondents replied neutrally, and only 3% (115) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although only 330 (8%) of 4,191 respondents did not indicate they felt safe in their workplace, this number should be meaningful to principals. Employees who do not feel safe while doing their jobs are not happy, productive employees. This idea directly relates to Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs.

Figure D-10 illustrates the teachers' responses to the Cohesiveness item, *I feel quality work is expected of all adults working at this school*. Although the majority, 84% (3,509), responded favorably, this result reflected 16% (681) of the teachers and staff in the district's elementary schools who did not feel quality work was expected of all teachers and staff members.

Delineated in Figure D-11 are the teachers' responses to the Cohesiveness item, *I feel a Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school*. A high percentage, 81% (3,374), of respondents perceived that a Professional Learning Community was encouraged and practiced at their school.

Communication Adequacy is the perception that the individual is part of the vertical and horizontal communication within the organization. Communication is critical in effective organizations. Information needs to travel well and be free of distortion so that employees receive information needed for efficient functioning. Revealed in Table 4-3 are teacher responses to the four Communication Adequacy survey items. The most agreement (72%) expressed by teachers was for *I feel I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance*. The lowest level (62%) of agreement was expressed for *I feel my ideas and opinions count at work*. It should be noted that the levels of teacher agreement to these items were substantially lower than their agreement to the Autonomy and Cohesiveness survey items.

Table 4-3

Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Communication Adequacy

Communication Adequacy Survey Item	SA/A	N	D/SD
I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators.	68%	15%	17%
I feel I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance.	72%	16%	12%
I feel information and knowledge are shared openly at this school.	66%	18%	16%
I feel my ideas and opinions count at work.	62%	21%	17%

Depicted in Figure D-12 are the teachers' responses to the Communication Adequacy item, *I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators*. Of the respondents, only 68% (2,851) replied agree/strongly agree. Fifteen percent (620) responded neutrally, and 17% (724) responded disagree/strongly disagree for a total of 32% (1,344) unfavorable responses. Principals and other administrators must give attention to this statistic. One in every three teachers and staff members did not feel as though they could discuss concerns with administrators. Open communication is how concerns are addressed, problems are solved, and progress is made.

Figure D-13 reveals the teachers' responses to the Communication Adequacy item, *I feel I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance*. Collectively, 28% (1,180) teachers and/or staff members did not feel as though the feedback received helped personal performance. Although this number may not be statistically significant,

it should be meaningful to practitioners and to school principals. In order for school improvement to move forward, employees must receive open, honest, and constructive feedback for employees to improve performance and become the best they can be.

Delineated in Figure D-14 are the teachers' responses to the Communication Adequacy item, *I feel information and knowledge are shared openly at this school*. Principals need to take note of the 37% of staff who felt information and knowledge was not openly shared with them. More than one in three staff members perceived information was being withheld from them.

Shown in Figure D-15 are the teachers' responses to the Communication Adequacy item, *I feel my ideas and opinions count at work*. Although the majority, 62% (2,586), responded favorably, this left a large 38% (1,606) percentage of the teachers and staff in the district's elementary schools who did not feel that their ideas and opinions counted at work. This statistic demonstrates that almost one in every four of the surveyed sample did not perceive their ideas and opinions to be significant to others at work.

Goal Focus refers to the perception that the individual has a clear understanding of the organization's goals and how those goals are achieved. Delineated in Table 4-4 are teacher responses to the five Goal Focus survey items. High levels of teacher agreement were expressed for *I am clear about what my job is at this school* (92%); *I feel quality work is expected of all students at this school* (88%); and *I feel decisions made for this campus are data driven* (86%).

Table 4-4

Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Goal Focus

Goal Focus Survey Item	SA/A	N	D/SD
I feel recognized for good work.	67%	19%	15%
I feel clear about what my job is at this school.	92%	6%	3%
I feel that others are clear about what my job is at this school.	80%	12%	7%
I feel that quality work is expected of all students at this school.	88%	7%	5%
I feel that decisions made for this campus are data driven.	86%	12%	3%

Depicted in Figure D-16 are the teachers' responses to the Goal Focus item, *I feel recognized for good work*. Of the 4,185 respondents, 34% perceived their good work to not be recognized or did not know if their good work was recognized. In a positive work climate, everyone should feel acknowledged for good work. Principals will have to focus on the 34% (1,400) of staff members who did not feel recognized for their good work.

Revealed in Figure D-17 are the teachers' responses to the Goal Focus item, *I feel clear about what my job is at this school*. Of the respondents, 92% (3,863) of employees were clear about their job responsibilities, 6% (231) responded neutrally, and 3% (107) were not clear about their job responsibilities.

Revealed in Figure D-18 are the teachers' responses to the Goal Focus item, *I feel that others are clear about what my job is at this school*. Of the respondents, 80% (3,363) responded positively, either agreed or strongly agreed. Twelve percent (516) of teachers and staff members replied with a neutral response to feeling as though others

knew what the respondents' job was at the school, and 7% (312) did not feel that others understood their jobs at the school.

Depicted in Figure D-19 are the teachers' responses to the Goal Focus item, *I feel that quality work is expected of all students at this school*. Collectively, 12% (483) of teachers and/or staff members did not feel as though quality work was expected of all students. Although this number may not be statistically significant, it should be meaningful to school principals. Expectations for success among administrators and staff members must be set high in order to attain student achievement success.

Presented in Figure D-20 are the teachers' responses to the Goal Focus item, *I feel that decisions made for this campus are data driven*. The suggested indication of the responses is that 15% of respondents either did not know or did not believe decisions were data driven in their school

Principal Skills, Knowledge, and Attributes

The second set of findings reported was the perceptions the teachers and staff held in regard to principal leadership skills. Teachers and staff members were asked to assess their principal's leadership skills. In this study, the Principal Leadership Skills assessed by teachers and staff members were identified as: respect towards staff, instructional leadership, effective communication, support of shared decision making, and perceived value placed on the contributions of staff members. Employees had the opportunity to respond to five evaluative statements on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) to share their perceptions of their principal's leadership skills. Delineated in Table 4-5 are participants' responses to these five evaluative statements.

Table 4-5

Responses to the Survey Items Regarding Principal Leadership Skills

Principal Leadership Survey Item	SA/A	N	D/SD
My principal treats me with respect.	88%	7%	5%
My principal is an effective instructional leader.	81%	12%	7%
My principal facilitates communication effectively.	77%	13%	10%
My principal supports shared decision making.	72%	15%	13%
My principal values the contributions I make.	74%	15%	10%

Depicted in Figure D-21 are the teachers' responses to the Principal Leadership Skills item, *My principal treats me with respect*. Of the respondents, 3,694 (88%) felt that they were treated respectfully by their principals. Three hundred seven (7%) of the faculty responded neutrally, and 204 (5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although 12% is a small percentage, 511 teachers felt that their principals did not treat them with respect. When a campus has between 75 to 120 staff members, this statistic, when divided out among the districts' elementary employees, suggests that the district essentially has the equivalent of five campuses where employees did not feel respected by their principals.

Revealed in Figure D-22 are the teachers' responses to the Principal Leadership Skill item, *My principal is an effective instructional leader*. Of the respondents, 7% (307) of teachers and staff indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that their principal was an effective instructional leader.

Shown in Figure D-23 are the teachers' responses to the Principal Leadership Skill item, *My principal facilitates communication effectively*. Regarding effective

communication skills, 77% (3,218) of teachers and staff felt that their principal facilitated communication effectively. Thirteen percent (537) of teachers and staff responded neutrally, and 10% (440) of employees disagreed/strongly disagreed. When taken collectively, 23% (977) of the elementary employees did not feel that communication was facilitated effectively by their principal. These results indicated that nearly one in every four teachers and staff perceived their principal to be an ineffective communicator.

Revealed in Figure D-24 are the teachers' responses to the Principal Leadership Skill item, *My principal supports shared decision making*. When staff members were asked to respond to this statement, 15% (627) of the responses were neutral, 13% (530) of responses were disagree/strongly disagree, and only 72% (3,039) replied agree/strongly agree.

Presented in Figure D-25 are the teachers' responses to the Principal Leadership Skill item, *My principal values the contributions I make*. Regarding responses, 74% (3,123) employees agreed/strongly agreed, 15% (640) gave a neutral response, and 10% (433) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Research Question

To answer the question, *Is there a relationship between school climate and principal leadership skills?*, the data were examined using the indicators for Principal Leadership Skills with the indicators for School Climate. The five Principal Leadership Skills statements participants were asked to respond to were: 1) My principal treats me with respect; 2) My principal is an effective instructional leader; 3) My principal facilitates communication effectively; 4) My principal supports shared decision making;

and 5) My principal values the contributions I make. When comparing the data between School Climate and Principal Leadership Skills, several areas of importance were noted.

Evidenced in Table 4-6 is the first principal leadership survey indicator, *My principal treats me with respect*, and several related School Climate survey questions. One of the related items, *I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions*, 76% of teachers and staff indicated that they were in agreement with the statement, 14% responded neutrally to the statement, and 11% responded either disagree or strongly disagree to the same statement. When combined, 25% of the 4,186 of teachers and staff surveyed did not believe that they had the opportunity to think for themselves; this statistic translates to over 1,000 teachers and staff members. This statement relates to the principal leadership statement, *My principal treats me with respect*, in which 88% of those surveyed agreed with the statement.

Also relating to the 88% of those in agreement with *My principal treats me with respect* is the statement, *I feel like I belong at this school*. As the leader of the organization, principals have the influence to set the tone of acceptance, whether positive or negative. Feeling respected can be the antecedent to feeling a sense of belonging. The results of the survey illustrated that 83% (3,460) of teachers and staff members felt that they belonged at their school, 17% (728) responded either negatively or neutral, indicating they did not feel that they belonged at their school.

Continuing the connection between the principal leadership indicator, *My principal treats me with respect* and school climate, consideration was given to the statement, *I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators*. Only 68% (2,851) of teachers and staff members felt comfortable discussing their

concerns with building administrators. Fifteen percent (620) responded neutrally, and 17% (724) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Combined, 32% of the respondents felt that they were not comfortable discussing concerns with the administrators they work with on a daily basis. When examined in practical terms, one-third of the people surveyed were not comfortable expressing concern with their supervisor.

Regarding this set of statements, 88% of the staff surveyed felt respected by their principal; however, 5% of the staff disagreed with feeling respected by their principal. Seven percent had neutral feelings, neither positive nor negative, about feeling respected by their principal. Although neither 5% nor 7% are very large percentages, these statistics reflect that 12% of 4,205 people surveyed, or over 500 staff members, did not feel respected by their principal.

Table 4-6

Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School

Climate: My Principal Treats Me With Respect

School Climate Item	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	Principal Leadership Item
I feel I have the opportunity to think for myself. (<i>Autonomy</i>)				76								88			My principal treats me with respect.
I feel I belong at this school. (<i>Cohesiveness</i>)			83										88		My principal treats me with respect.
I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with campus administrators. (<i>Communication Adequacy</i>)					68								88		My principal treats me with respect.

Delineated in Table 4-7, connections were also evident between the principal leadership item that questioned the principal as an effective instructional leader and several of the survey items in the section concerning school climate: *I feel I have the opportunity to develop my skills; I have adequate opportunities for professional growth; I have the information I need to do my job effectively; Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school; and Quality work is expected of all students at this school.* Perceptions characterizing the principal as an effective instructional leader were indicated by 81% (3,413) of employees reporting they agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 12% (487) answered neutrally, and 7% (307) of staff members disagreed with the statement, *My principal is an effective instructional leader.* When considering instructional leadership, one responsibility of the principal is to find or offer opportunities for teachers and staff to develop skills and to support quality teaching and learning. The perceptions of 4,197 elementary school staff were that 87% (3,639) agreed that they had the opportunity to develop their skills, 4% (167) disagreed with the statement, and 9% (391) responded neutrally. Demonstrating similar statistical evidence of effective instructional leadership were the responses to the statement, *I feel Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school.* Eighty-one percent (3,374) agreed/strongly agreed, 15% (621) were neutral, and 5% (193) disagreed/strongly disagreed. Also representing analogous results was the statement, *I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization;* 82% of the 4,182 respondents agreed, 12% gave neutral responses, and 6% did not feel they were given adequate opportunities. Also related to the strength of effectiveness of the instructional leader was the statement, *Quality work is expected of all students at this school.* Eighty-eight

percent (3,706) of the teachers and staff perceived that quality work was expected from the students.

In contrast to the other statements under this category is the statement, *I have the information I need to do my job effectively*. This survey item demonstrated that nearly one of every four employees surveyed did not feel they had what was needed to effectively do their job. Only 76% of the respondents agreed that they had what was needed to be effective in their job. As the instructional leader, the principal is responsible for ensuring teachers have what is needed to effectively run their classrooms.

Table 4-7

*Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School**Climate: My Principal Is an Effective Instructional Leader*

School Climate Item	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	Principal Leadership Item
I feel I have the opportunity to develop my skills. (Autonomy)			87									81			My principal is an effective instructional leader.
I feel I have adequate opportunities for professional growth. (Autonomy)			82									81			My principal is an effective instructional leader.
I feel I have the information I need to do my job effectively. (Autonomy)				76								81			My principal is an effective instructional leader.
I feel professional learning communities are encouraged and practiced at this school. (Cohesiveness)			81									81			My principal is an effective instructional leader.
Quality work is expected of all students at this school. (Cohesiveness)			88									81			My principal is an effective instructional leader.

Another principal leadership item, depicted in Table 4-8, which related to several of the school climate survey items was the statement, *My principal facilitates communication effectively*. Fink and Resnick (2001) acknowledged that the responsibility to establish a pervasive culture in the school that fosters an enthusiastic,

two-way exchange of knowledge between all active members of the school from administrators to teachers to students falls on the school principal. Of the 4,195 employees who responded to this item, 77% (3,218) of the respondents agreed that their principal effectively communicates, 13% (537) answered neutrally, and 10% (440) believed their principal did not effectively communicate. If the neutral and disagree responses are considered together, 23% of elementary employees did not feel their principal was an effective communicator. Consequently, when staff were asked to respond to five of the school climate items: *I feel I have the information I need to do my job effectively; I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrator; I feel information and knowledge are shared openly at this school; I feel I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance; and I am clear about what my job is at this school*, results were within 11 percentage points for all of the statements listed above with the exception of staff being clear about their job responsibilities. Two-thirds or 2,775 of staff felt information and knowledge were shared openly at their school; however, 34% (1,416) did not share the same sentiments. Only 68% (2,851) of teachers and staff felt comfortable sharing their concerns with campus administrators. Conversely, 32% (1,344) did not feel comfortable sharing their concerns with administrators.

In reaction to the statement, *I feel I have the information I need to do my job effectively*, 76% (3,199) responded agree/strongly agree, 14% (601) responded neutrally, and 9% (392) disagreed. Nearly 1,000 teachers and staff did not feel they had the information needed to do their jobs effectively. Also related to the principal's ability to communicate effectively was the statement, *I feel that I am given feedback that helps me*

improve my performance. Seventy-two percent (3,015) of the teachers and staff members agreed/strongly agreed, 16% (677) were neutral, and 12% (503) strongly disagreed/disagreed in response to improved performance based on feedback. When providing feedback, according to Jung and associates (1973), it is useful to describe observed behaviors, as well as the reactions they caused within the environment. They offered these guidelines: the receiver should be ready to receive feedback; comments should describe rather than interpret; feedback should focus on recent events or actions that can be changed, but they should not be used to try to force people to change.

One critical type of feedback for administrators is letting staff members know how well they are doing their jobs. Effective school leaders provide plenty of timely positive feedback. They also provide negative feedback privately, without anger or personal attack, and they accept criticism without becoming defensive.

Contrary to the other school climate items on the survey related to effective communication by the principal, the statement, *I feel clear about what my job is at this school*, produced results favorable toward the communication of the principal. Of the 4,195 responses to this survey item, 92% (3,857) either agreed or strongly agreed, 6% (231) replied neutrally, and 3% (107) employees were not clear about what their job was at their school.

Table 4-8

*Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School**Climate: My Principal Facilitates Communication Effectively*

School Climate Item	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	Principal Leadership Item
I feel I have the information I need to do my job effectively. (<i>Autonomy</i>)				76							77				My principal facilitates communication effectively.
I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators. (<i>Communication Adequacy</i>)					68						77				My principal facilitates communication effectively.
I feel that I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance. (<i>Communication Adequacy</i>)				72							77				My principal facilitates communication effectively.
I feel that information and knowledge are shared openly at this school. (<i>Communication Adequacy</i>)					66						77				My principal facilitates communication effectively.
I am clear about what my job is at this school. (<i>Goal Focus</i>)		92									77				My principal facilitates communication effectively.

Shown in Table 4-9, the next group of statements where connections were made was between the statement, *My principal supports shared decision making*, and related climate statements, *I feel I can give input when decisions are made that affect me*, and *I feel my ideas and opinions count at work*. Of the respondents, 72% (3,039) of teachers

and staff felt their principal supported shared decision making, whereas 28% (1,157) of elementary teachers and staff responded either neutrally or disagreed with the statement. Only 66% (2,759) of the surveyed group felt they were able to provide input on decisions that affected them, whereas 34% (1,437) did not feel they could contribute to decisions that affected them. Similarly, 38% of teachers and staff did not feel that their ideas and opinions counted at work, while 62% indicated that their ideas and opinions did count in the workplace. Within the realm of decision making, 86% (3,575) of the surveyed group felt decisions were data driven for their campus, 12% (497) were neutral for this item, and 3% (108) disagreed with the statement, *I feel decisions made for this campus are data driven.*

Table 4-9

Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School

Climate: My Principal Supports Shared Decision Making

School Climate Item	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	Principal Leadership Item
I feel I can give input when decisions are made that affect me. (Cohesiveness)					66						72				My principal supports shared decision making.
I feel my ideas and opinions count at work. (Communication Adequacy)					62						72				My principal supports shared decision making.
I feel that decisions made for this campus are data driven. (Goal Focus)			86								72				My principal supports shared decision making.

Table 4-10 illustrates the relationship between the last principal leadership statement, *My principal values the contributions I make*, and the school climate survey items. When asked to respond to the statement, *I feel I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions*, the results were similar to the numbers for perceptions of valued contributions. Only 74% of teachers and staff members felt the contributions they made were valued by their campus principal, and 25% of the teachers and staff members responded with either a neutral or unfavorable response. In other words, over 1,000 employees who responded to this item did not believe that their contributions were valued and appreciated by their principal. Correspondingly, 76% of employees surveyed responded that they did not feel they had the opportunity to think for themselves. Twenty-five percent of those same 4,186 staff members felt *they just carry out instructions*.

The examination of the data related to contributions of staff being valued by the principal indicated some connection between several other items within the school climate section and principal leadership. Teachers and staff responded in a substantially negative manner, with only 58% being in agreement with the statement, *The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable*. One fourth (1,040) of teachers and staff responded disagree/strongly disagree, and 17% (701) participants answered neutrally. Again, 74% of teachers and staff members felt the contributions that they made were valued by the principal on their campus, and 25% of teachers and staff members responded with either a neutral or negative reply. Over 1,000 employees did not feel that their contributions were valued and appreciated by their principal, and 42% (1,741) felt that they were asked

to do an unreasonable amount of work. Employees who feel valued and perceive that their work is appreciated are more likely to produce at higher rates.

Also directly related to the principal leadership item, *My principal values the contributions I make*, are the school climate survey items, *I feel my ideas and opinions count at work* and *I feel recognized for good work*. Strongly agree/agree was selected by 62% (2,586) of respondents to the item, *I feel my ideas and opinions count at work*, while 38% (1,606) employees provided a negative (17%) or neutral response (21%). As employees responded to an item closely related to what the principal valued on the campus, *I feel recognized for good work*, 67% of the teachers and staff felt recognized for good work. Nineteen percent (776) of the staff responded neutrally, and 15% (624) responded that they did not feel recognized for good work. Of the 4,185 staff members who responded to this item, 1,400 of them could not agree that they felt recognized on their campus for doing good work.

Table 4-10

*Relationship of the Percentages of Perceptions of Principal Leadership and School**Climate: My Principal Values the Contributions I Make*

School Climate Item	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	Principal Leadership Item
I feel I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions. (Autonomy)			87								74				My principal values the contributions I make.
I feel the amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable. (Autonomy)						58					74				My principal values the contributions I make
I feel my ideas and opinions count at work. (Communication Adequacy)						62					74				My principal values the contributions I make
I feel recognized for good work. (Goal Focus)						67					74				My principal values the contributions I make

Summary of Data Analysis

In this study, 25 survey items were analyzed and compared to determine if there was a relationship between school climate and principal leadership skills. Twenty items were categorized into four areas of school climate: autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus. Five items identified staff perceptions of principal leadership: respect, instructional leadership, effective communication, shared decision making, and valuing contributions. Relationships were determined between the perceptions of school climate and perceptions of principal leadership and illustrated through descriptive statistics and frequencies.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

This chapter includes a summary of the findings and implications supported by this study, as well as recommendations based upon these findings. This study examined the relationship between staff perceptions of school climate and principal leadership skills in elementary schools.

Overview of the Study

Despite the increased attention bringing focus to high stakes testing due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), school climate remains an important factor in developing student success. The behaviors of building-level administrators have been linked to the climate of school buildings, thus telling administrators that effective leadership is critical. Researchers have related principal leadership and behaviors to school climate (Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett, 1998; Peterson, 1990). According to Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998), there is no doubt that the climate of a school can be shaped by the actions of the school principal. Bulach et al. (1998) determined that teachers' views of teacher-principal interactions were related to school climate. Principals' instructional leadership behaviors affect the climate and instructional organization, both of which are tied to student achievement (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982). In his book, *Theory and Research in Administration*, Halpin (1966) says:

Anyone who visits more than a few schools notes quickly how schools differ from each other in their "feel." In one school the teachers and the principal are zestful and exude confidence....In a second school the brooding discontent of the teachers is palpable; the principal tries to hide his incompetence and his lack of a sense

of direction behind a cloak of authority, and yet he wears this cloak poorly because the attitude he displays to others vacillates randomly between the obsequious and the officious. (p. 67)

In this study, the researcher investigated employee perceptions in order to determine if a relationship was present between staff members' perceptions of their school's principal's leadership skills, and their schools' climate, both derived from the school district's EPS. The design of the research involved descriptive statistics and frequencies to investigate the possible relationship between perceived school climate and perceived principal leadership skills. The purpose of this descriptive statistics study was to clarify the understanding of important phenomena by identifying relationships among variables, school climate, and leadership skills for practitioners.

The survey used in this research examined four theoretical dimensions of school climate: autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus. Autonomy describes the relationship of the organization with its environment. A positive climate demonstrates an ability to remain independent from negative impact outside of the organization and use those forces constructively. Cohesiveness frames the sense of identity within the organization. A positive climate attracts the members to the organization, the members take pride in being a part of the organization, and they strive to remain a part of the organization. Within the cohesiveness framework, members work in collaboration to influence and to be influenced by the organization. A cohesive organization has members who are proud to be a part of it.

The third dimension is communication adequacy. Communication adequacy is key in positive climates. This dimension describes the flow of communication. In a

positive climate, communication travels well and is relatively distortion free. Members receive the information they need to perform their jobs effectively. Lastly, goal focus allows participants to understand the goals of the organization and accept them. The goals must be appropriate for the organization and consistent with the demands of the climate.

Discussion of Results

A principal's leadership style, whether positively or negatively received, influences the climate that, ultimately, impacts student performance (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). As discussed by Hoy (1972), it was determined that schools with an open, healthy climate positively impact students. Schools with positive climates typically have principals who exhibit leadership skills that impact people and schools in positive ways.

The following research question and research hypothesis were analyzed in this study: Does a relationship exist between school climate and the school's principal's leadership skills? The hypothesis investigated by the researcher was: A relationship does exist between school climate and principal leadership skills.

To answer the research question, the relationship between staff members' perceptions of principal leadership skills and staff members' perceptions of school climate was examined. Through the use of a district developed Employee Perception Survey (EPS), staff members responded to survey items concerning principal leadership skills and school climate. The staff members' responses to school climate and school leadership were evaluated for the 2010-2011 school year.

By focusing on relationships between and among variables, the research design of this study was descriptive statistics and frequencies found within the responses to an EPS.

The study took place in a large, suburban school district, which employed approximately 13,633 employees and operated 83 schools for the 2010-2011 school year. The focus of this study included 51 elementary schools and approximately 4,200 elementary teachers and staff, including classroom teachers, special educators, instructional paraprofessionals, clerical support staff, instructional specialists, and librarians.

Within the EPS for staff members, 25 staff survey items were analyzed for this study. Twenty items, divided into four categories: autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus, addressed school climate, and five items were directed toward principal leadership skills. The 20 survey items related to school climate were:

I feel...

Autonomy:

1. Intrinsically rewarded for doing my job.
2. I have the opportunity to develop my skills.
3. I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions.
4. I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization.
5. The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable.
6. I have the information I need to do my job effectively.

Cohesiveness:

7. Like I belong at this school.
8. I can give input when decisions are made that affect me.

9. Safe at work.
10. Quality work is expected of all adults working at this school.
11. Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school.

Communication Adequacy:

12. Comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators.
13. That I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance.
14. Information and knowledge are shared openly at this school.
15. My ideas and opinions count at work.

Goal Focus:

16. Recognized for good work.
17. Clear about what my job is at this school
18. That others are clear about what my job is at this school.
19. Quality work is expected of all students at this school.
20. Decisions made for this campus are data driven.

Following the school climate survey items, participants rated the following five items related to principal leadership:

My Principal...

1. Treats me with respect.
2. Is an effective instructional leader.
3. Facilitates communication effectively.
4. Supports shared decision making.
5. Values the contributions I make.

Response categories within the school climate survey's 5-point Likert scale ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

The results of the study produced the following conclusions:

1. The evaluation of the results of the EPS implied that a relationship existed between school climate and the principal leadership skill of treating employees with respect. It was evident that teachers and staff members sought to be treated with professional respect by their principal. They desired to be consulted on matters that directly or indirectly impacted them, their classroom, and the school. Teachers operated under the stress of high stakes testing and the pressure of accountability from both state and federal guidelines. Principals, whose teachers perceived the school's climate as positive, focused on building a strong sense of community or a sense of family with related characteristics. These characteristics included respect for every staff member. Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson and Yeh (2009), suggested an upbeat, welcoming, solution-oriented, no-blame professional environment. Principals who have the ability to enable others and create teamwork or principals that are transformational leaders may inspire teachers to feel respected, thereby positively impacting school climate (Sergiovanni, 1996).
2. As presented in previous research, this study found that instructional leadership by the principal has a fundamental role in developing a school climate conducive to student success. The far reaching effects of a school's general performance and instructional practices are directly

related to the principal's instructional leadership practices. Teachers and staff members expect the principal to create a quality learning environment for all. The role of the principal as an instructional leader consists of facilitating a learning climate, defining the mission of the school, coordinating staff development, supervising and evaluating teachers, involving parents and the community, sharing leadership responsibilities, and collaborating with staff. The perceptions of staff members indicated on the EPS demonstrated the relationship between the staff members' need to have a strong instructional leader in their principal and the school's overall climate. No principal can afford to be ignorant of the instructional process; however, the principal's primary role is to create conditions in which teachers operate as autonomous professionals.

3. A positive school climate requires effective communication skills exhibited by principals. Leaders engage in some aspect of communication the majority of the time. Open and clear communication can build respect, confidence, collegiality, a sense of belonging, and teamwork. On the contrary, barriers to communication can deplete energy from the team or an individual and derail the goals of the school and create negativity. Stephen Covey (1990) recommended, "Seek first to understand, then be understood" (p. 235). He, along with many others, believed this principle is paramount in interpersonal relations and communication. To communicate effectively with teachers, students, and community members, the principal must first understand where the person is "coming

from.” Teachers crave feedback, praise, perception checking, describing positive and negative behaviors observed, constructive criticism, and ways to improve. Providing feedback to staff is especially important for principals in order to inform them of how well they are doing their jobs. Principals with strong school climates provide plenty of timely positive feedback, as well as tactful constructive criticism in a private setting. Teachers need to be able to openly provide feedback to the principal as well. Students succeed in a climate where teachers and principals communicate openly, without anger or defensiveness. Again, the relationship between the school climate and principal’s skills becomes apparent.

4. Shared decision making is a leadership skill that teachers and staff feel is important to the school’s climate, as demonstrated in the results of the EPS. The principal who seeks the input of those who are closest to the learning process and are the most familiar with student needs, is building cohesiveness and value among the staff. Teachers want to be consulted on matters that relate to them and to their jobs. Principals should learn to trust the judgment of the staff. Principals that do not share the decision-making process with others on their campus may find a staff who has lost confidence in their own abilities or who have developed a sense of resentment toward the principal. Both results of the principal making unilateral decisions are counterproductive to building a positive school climate. The terms “shared leadership,” “teacher leadership,” “distributed

leadership,” and “transformational leadership” surfaced in previous research (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). With the evolution of these terms, it has become vividly apparent that there was great dissatisfaction with the previous leadership models that focused extensively on the principal as the center of expertise, power, and authority (Tedla, 2012). It was determined by this study that staff members desire to play a central role in the effectiveness and improvement of their school climate.

5. Stephen Covey (1990) observed, next to physical survival, “the greatest need of a human being is psychological survival, to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, to be appreciated” (p. 235). Once that vital need is met, individuals can focus on influencing or problem-solving. As confirmed by the research of this study, staff members desire acknowledgement for the contributions they make to the school. The principal needs to acknowledge good work and reinforce it. Teachers and staff thrive when a principal shows appreciation for their efforts. Praise and recognition can serve to motivate and inspire the individual(s) receiving the praise, as well as other teachers, staff, and students. Previous studies indicated that when teachers feel appreciated and that their efforts are recognized, they are happier, and happier people are motivated to work harder. MacNeil et al. (2007) also added the following statement:

Strong school cultures have better motivated teachers. Highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance, student behaviors and student outcomes. And research suggests that schools that have motivated teachers and high student success with trusted leadership have high levels of teacher morale. (p. 5)

The inverse is also true; when staff feel their efforts are not noticed or valued by the principal, their motivation to continue, be creative, or innovative diminishes. Thus, there is a relationship between the principal leadership skill of recognizing the contributions staff make and the climate of the school.

Implications for School Leaders

This study sought to have an immediate impact on school leaders who seek to influence and cultivate positive school climates for schools by improving leadership knowledge, skills, and attributes. A school principal has a unique and diverse set of responsibilities that include, among many other things, leadership. Due to the fact that the leadership of the principal affects the learning and working environment of students and teachers, either positively or negatively (Pepper & Thomas, 2002), it is the recommendation that principals use the 25 EPS items examined within this study as models. By focusing on these survey items, principals may be driven to identify their own leadership strengths, as well as leadership weaknesses. Through this self-assessment, school principals can begin to develop plans to address the needs of their own organizations.

Many times, researchers' focus on the direct effect of principal behavior on student learning has been replaced by a focus on the overall influence principals' behaviors have on student achievement (Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Witziers, Bozkers, & Kruger, 2003). Stewart (2008) established that principal leadership indirectly impacts the performance of teachers under their leadership, as well as the climate and culture of their schools. School leaders from every level are responsible for shaping school climate and culture. Principals communicate their fundamental values and beliefs in their work each and every day. Through their words and actions, teachers reinforce values.

Providing school leaders with information about school climate as it relates to principal leadership skills, and ultimately student achievement, was a long term goal of this research study. The survey provides useful and understandable information which can guide the actions of administrators who strive to maintain or improve the perceived climate of the school. For practical purposes, it would be beneficial for administrators to continue to investigate various measures of school climate and principal leadership skills that meet the needs of their individual campuses.

The theoretical foundation and review of the literature presented convincing evidence to inform school principals and practitioners about the importance of principal leadership in developing a positive, productive school climate and culture. Studies by Johnson and Johnson (2005) and Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) gave credibility to the significance of transformational leadership theory and the responsibility of the school principal in cultivating nurturing relationships, empowering people, and inspiring individuals to realize and work towards a common vision of organizational success. Transformational leadership further implies that the principal's role in developing and

maintaining a school's climate where teachers are nurtured, empowered, and inspired, has an influence on what teachers are inspired to accomplish for and with students.

School leaders do several things when sculpting culture. First, they read the culture – its history and current condition. Leaders should know the deeper meanings embedded in the school before trying to reshape it. Second, leaders uncover and articulate core values, looking for those that reinforce what is best for students and that support student-centered professionalism. It is important to identify which aspects of the culture are destructive and which are constructive. Finally, leaders work to create a positive context, strengthening cultural elements that are positive and adjusting those that are negative and dysfunctional (Deal & Peterson, 1998).

While the leadership style of the school administrator contributes greatly to the organizational climate and culture, the significance of the interactions between collegial relations and leadership cannot be emphasized enough. Donaldson (2006) identified good leadership as a relationship which mobilizes. In other work, Donaldson (2001) explained that public schools have many informal leaders who are leaders by nature of their sharing, trust, openness, and affirmation that mobilizes others.

School leaders and leadership researchers should concentrate more directly on existing evidence about school and classroom climate with powerful effects on student learning as they make decisions for their school improvement and research design. Positive effects on school climate are associated with school leaders offering individualized support by showing respect for individual staff members, demonstrating concern about their personal feelings, maintaining an open communication, and valuing staff opinions and contributions. Evidence from numerous studies validates significant

positive effects on school climate when principals stand out as the instructional leader by clarifying goals to identify new opportunities for the school; developing, articulating, and inspiring others with a vision of the future; and promoting cooperation and collaboration among staff toward common goals.

School climate makes a difference. Positive and sustained school climate is associated with and is predictive of positive youth development, effective risk prevention, student learning and academic achievement, increased student graduation rates, and increased teacher retention (Cohen & Grier, 2010). School climate is an important factor in the successful implementation of school reform programs (Bulach & Malone, 1994; Dellar, 1998; Gittelsohn et al., 2003; Gregory, Henry, & Schoeny, 2007). School climate influences how educators feel about being in school and how they teach. Delineated in recent research is that school climate intensely affects the lives and well-being of educators and impacts teacher retention. School climate has great influence on enhancing or minimizing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, feelings of personal accomplishment, and staff attrition rates (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). The leadership of the principal sets the tone and climate of the school. When school faculty and staff feel supported by the principal, they are more committed to their profession (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). For example, teachers' perceptions of school climate influence their ability to implement school-based programs (Beets et al., 2008).

A principal's leadership skills, knowledge, and attributes can keep a school moving forward. When a principal is self-serving, unethical, inconsiderate of the "heartbeat" of the school, the climate of the entire school can suffer. Principals who are

respectful, who value shared decision-making and contributions of staff members, who facilitate communication, and who are strong instructional leaders, generally have the confidence and respect of stakeholders.

The various stakeholders play an active role in shaping the climate. Positive interactions, respect, and valuing each other lead to successful students, teachers, administrators, parents, and communities (Fraser, 2011). Practitioners should take precautions to protect the climate of their schools because school climates can quickly become toxic and unproductive without careful attention by principals (Deal & Peterson, 1998).

Some of the ways principals can shape school climate on their campuses, as identified in literature by Deal and Peterson (1998), and supported through this research study are:

1. Communicate core values through words and actions;
2. Celebrate the accomplishments, both in and out of school, of staff and students;
3. Speak knowledgably and eloquently about the overall mission of the school;
4. Maintain the attention on students by focusing on success and achievement;
5. Honor and recognize those who work to serve the children and the purpose of the school;
6. Observe traditions to support the heart of the school; and
7. Recognize exemplary work of teachers, staff, and students.

Overall, the theories in which this study was built provided a strong foundation that reflected the important function of relationships as a basis for meeting the needs of teachers and staff. Consequently, there is an improvement of the school's capacity to help all students experience academic and emotional success.

Research indicated that school climate can have an impact on a variety of aspects within a school. It can affect every component of a school community from teacher morale and job satisfaction to teacher retention, student behavior, and student achievement.

The quintessential factor to ensuring enduring success may lie in a school principal's ability to scrutinize, nurture, and purposefully plan for a positive school climate. This may be accomplished by creating, sharing, and fostering autonomy, cohesiveness, communication adequacy, and goal focus. School principals who purposely attend to the various dimensions of school climate can affect positive change in student achievement (Pellicer, 2003). Aspects of principal leadership skills also play a major part in developing and maintaining a school climate conducive to teaching and learning. Positive climates develop when principals demonstrate respect for staff, effective instructional leadership, effective communication skills, shared decision making with stakeholders, and appreciation for staff contributions.

Implications for Further Research

The following recommendations are made based upon the findings and conclusions of this study. It is recommended that principals use the 20 school climate survey items and the five related principal leadership items examined within this study as benchmarks to further develop positive climates for teaching and learning. As noted

previously, the leadership of the principal affects, either positively or negatively, the learning and working environment of students and teachers (Pepper & Thomas, 2002).

By focusing on these survey items, principals may be driven to assess their own leadership strengths, as well as their areas of leadership weaknesses. Principals working toward increasing their leadership skills that are noted in the school climate survey would be improving their transformational leadership skills which, in turn, might improve their schools' climate and performance (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Hackman & Johnson, 2000; Horan, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Leithwood, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1996).

As national and state demands and mandates for student achievement are likely to continue, improving the level of school performance in the United States has become a national priority (Marzano, 2000). Because of this, data from this study should be shared with school principals. Furthermore, this study's findings could aid school districts as they make developing and supporting leadership a priority. Leadership development programs geared toward developing these skills could be implemented to increase the presence of transformational leadership in schools and may positively impact student performance.

Nearly all research related to the topic of principal leadership and its impact on school performance stressed the importance of effective leadership. Principals should give thought to their relationships with and reactions to staff and students. Principals are the pillars of their schools. They set the tone and hold the responsibility to develop and maintain a climate conducive to working, teaching, and learning.

As found in this study, as well as in a previous study by Usdan, McCloud, and Podmostko (2000), fulfilling the role of school principal requires that leaders have an

understanding of academic content, strengthen teachers' skills, gather and use data, and motivate stakeholders to improve student performance. In order to develop a climate of autonomy, cohesiveness, adequate communication, and focused goals, principals must develop leadership skills focused on respect, instructional leadership, effective communication, shared decision making, and valuing the contributions of others. As discussed earlier in this study, the key to ensuring long-lasting success may lie in a school leader's ability to examine, nurture, and purposefully plan for a positive school climate.

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APPENDIX A

APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HUMAN

SUBJECT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Appendix A

Approval From the University of Houston Human Subject Research Committee

 UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON <hr style="width: 100%; border: 0.5px solid black;"/> Learning. Leading.	UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON Division of Research Institutional Review Board Application	Generated at: 7/14/2012 6:10:20 PM										
<p>Institutional Review Board Application ID : (2152) Title : The Relationship Between Leadership Skills of Elementary School Principals and School Climate</p>												
Approval details for the Application Id: 2152												
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 10%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;">Decision</th> <th style="width: 35%;">Approver Name</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Date</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Comment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">PI signature</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Approved</td> <td>Gerault, Jeanette Ms.</td> <td style="text-align: center;">07/14/2012</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Decision	Approver Name	Date	Comment	PI signature	Approved	Gerault, Jeanette Ms.	07/14/2012	
	Decision	Approver Name	Date	Comment								
PI signature	Approved	Gerault, Jeanette Ms.	07/14/2012									
<p style="color: #c00000; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">University of Houston</p> <p style="color: #c00000; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Division of Research</p>												

APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research Form



[Redacted] **Independent School District**

Department of Campus Improvement and Research

[Redacted] Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent School Improvement and Accountability

To: Jeanette Gerault
From: [Redacted] Ed.D.
Date: June 19, 2012
Re: Approval of Application to Conduct Research in [Redacted] ISD

Your request to conduct the following research project in [Redacted] ISD has been approved: *The Relationship Between School Leadership, School Climate, and Student Achievement*.

As you pursue this project, please refer to the conditions listed below:

- Keep Dr. [Redacted] principal of [Redacted] Elementary, informed of all activities involved with the project.
- You may only use the Employee Perception Survey data provided to you by the Department of School Improvement and Accountability.
- Practice confidentiality while conducting the various steps necessary to complete the project.
- Use a random code system to record data collected. Never use names or ID numbers.
- Use a pseudonym instead of the district or campus name in your research.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM (ADDENDUM)

Appendix C
Consent to Participate in Research Form (Addendum)



[REDACTED] **Independent School District**

Department of Campus Improvement and Research

[REDACTED] Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent School Improvement and Accountability

To: Jeanette Gerault
From: [REDACTED] Ed.D.
Date: June 29, 2012
Re: Approval of Application to Conduct Research in [REDACTED] ISD (Addendum)

As an addendum to your research approval memo dated September 30, 2011, you are also approved to use the following data for research purposes only:

- Elementary Summary of 2012 Employee Perception Survey

No additional data may be collected.

Practice confidentiality while conducting the various steps necessary to complete the project.

Use a random code system to record data collected. Never use the actual campus names.

Use a pseudonym instead of the district or campus name in your research.



APPENDIX D

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

Appendix D
Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants' Responses

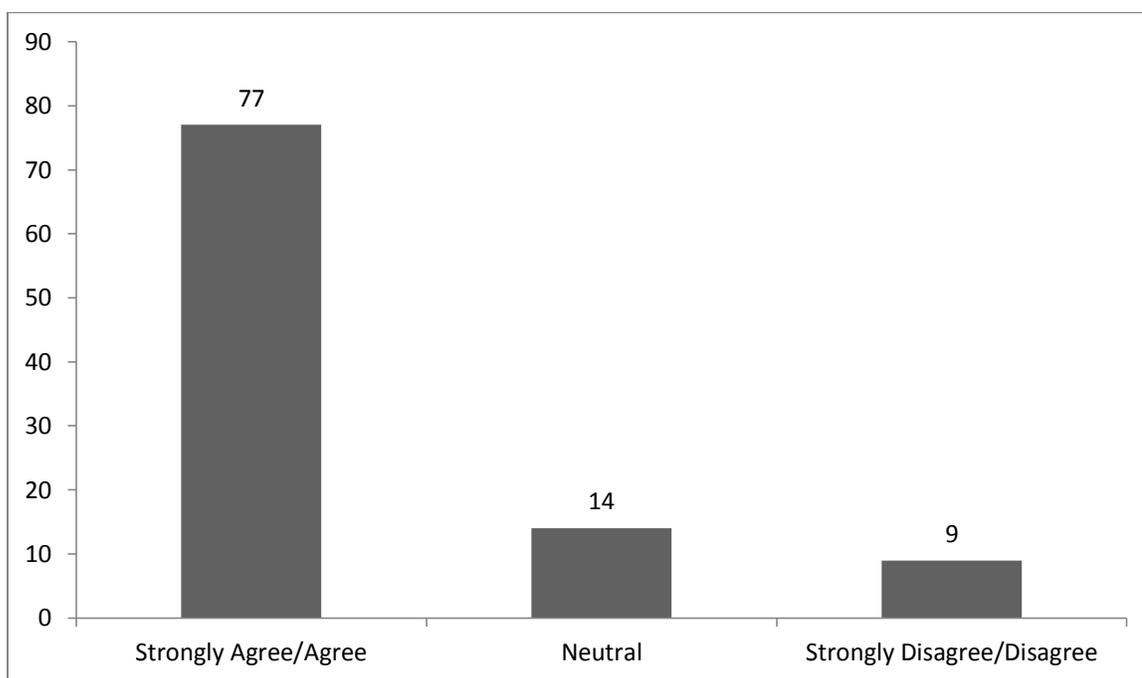


Figure D-1. Responses in percentages to Autonomy item, I feel intrinsically rewarded for doing my job.

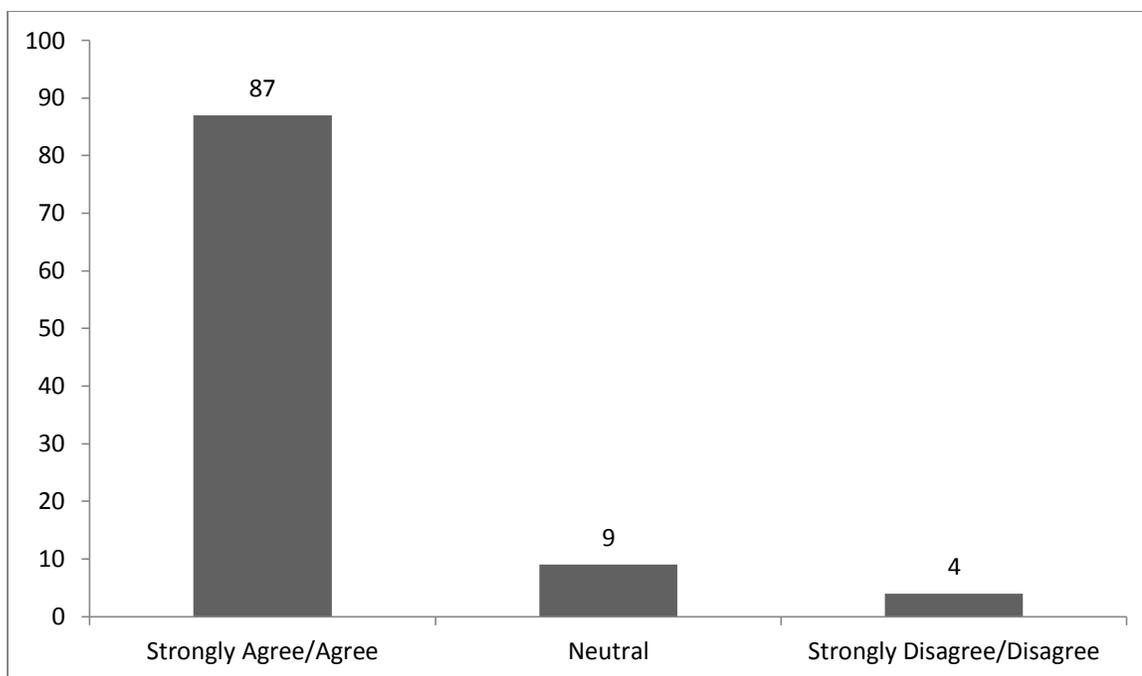


Figure D-2. Responses in percentages to Autonomy item, I feel I have the opportunity to develop my skills.

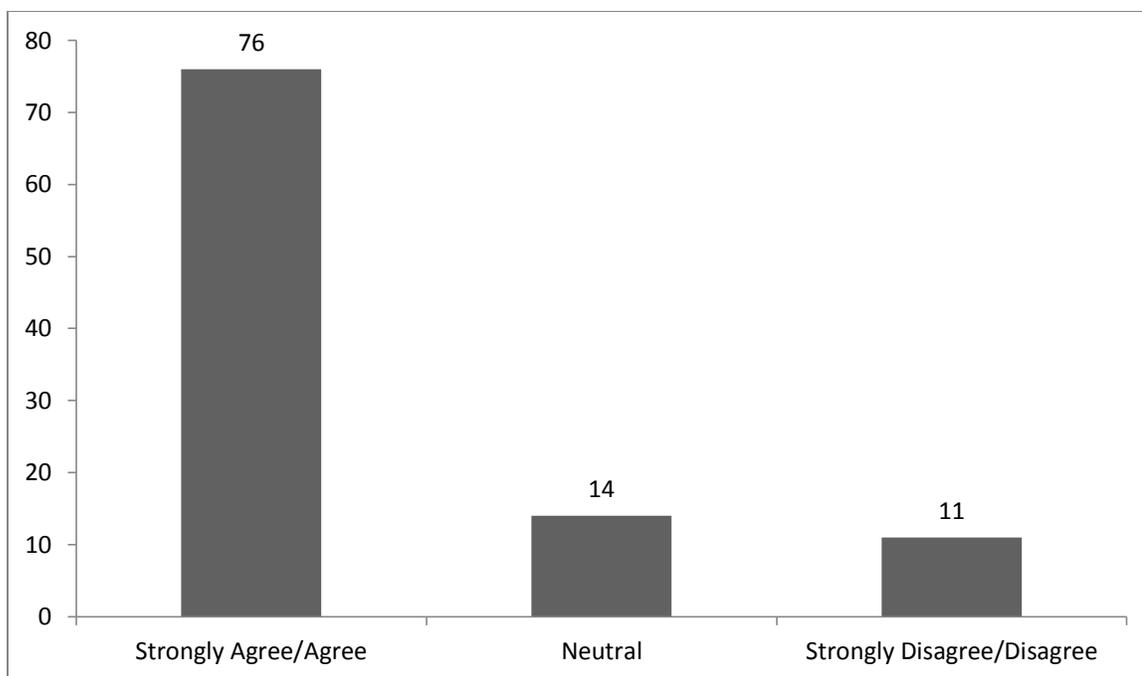


Figure D-3. Responses in percentages to Autonomy item, I feel I have the opportunity to think for myself, not just carry out instructions.

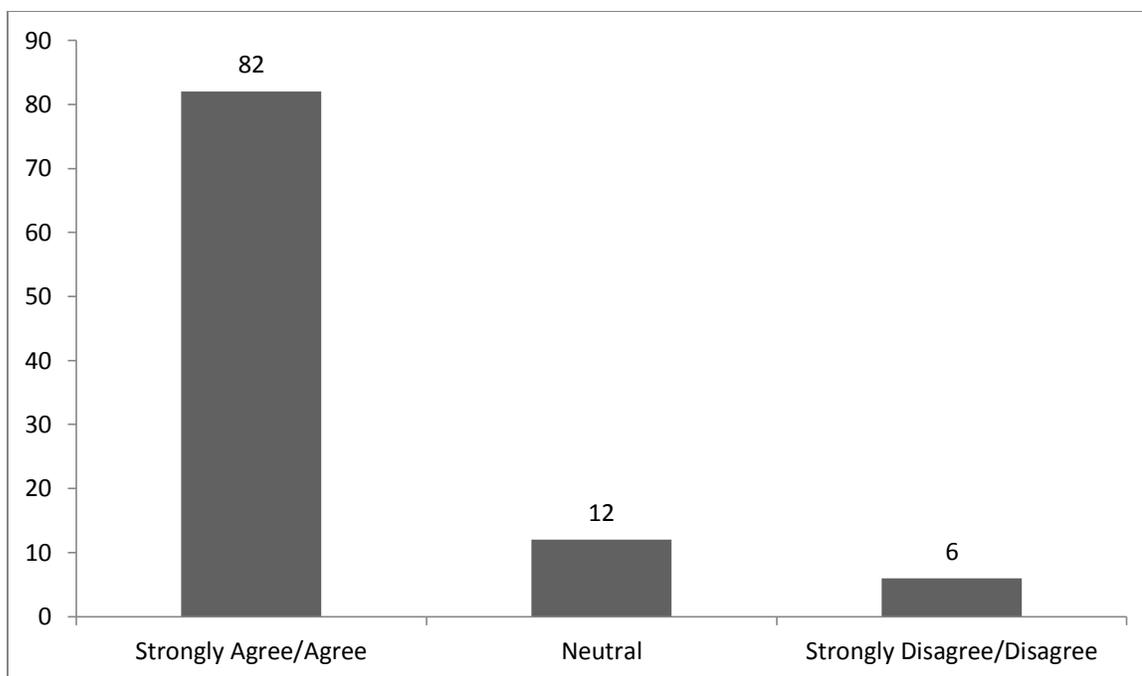


Figure D-4. Responses in percentages to Autonomy item, I feel I have adequate opportunities for professional growth in this organization.

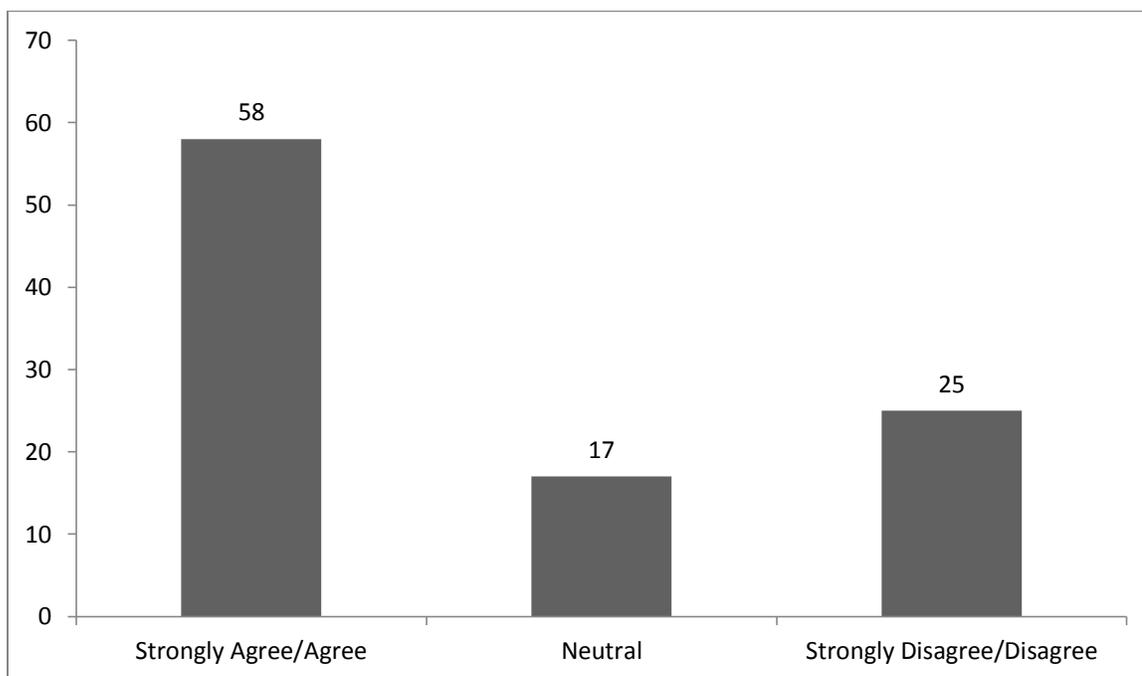


Figure D-5. Responses in percentages to Autonomy item, I feel the amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable.

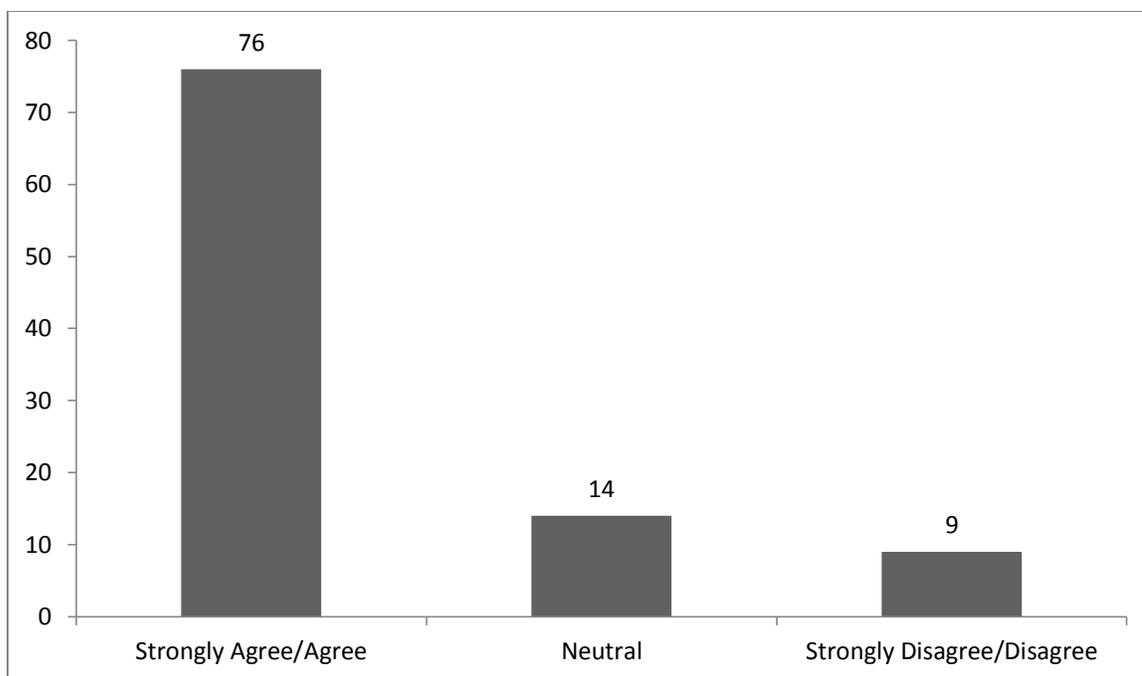


Figure D-6. Responses in percentages to Autonomy item, I feel I have the information I need to do my job effectively.

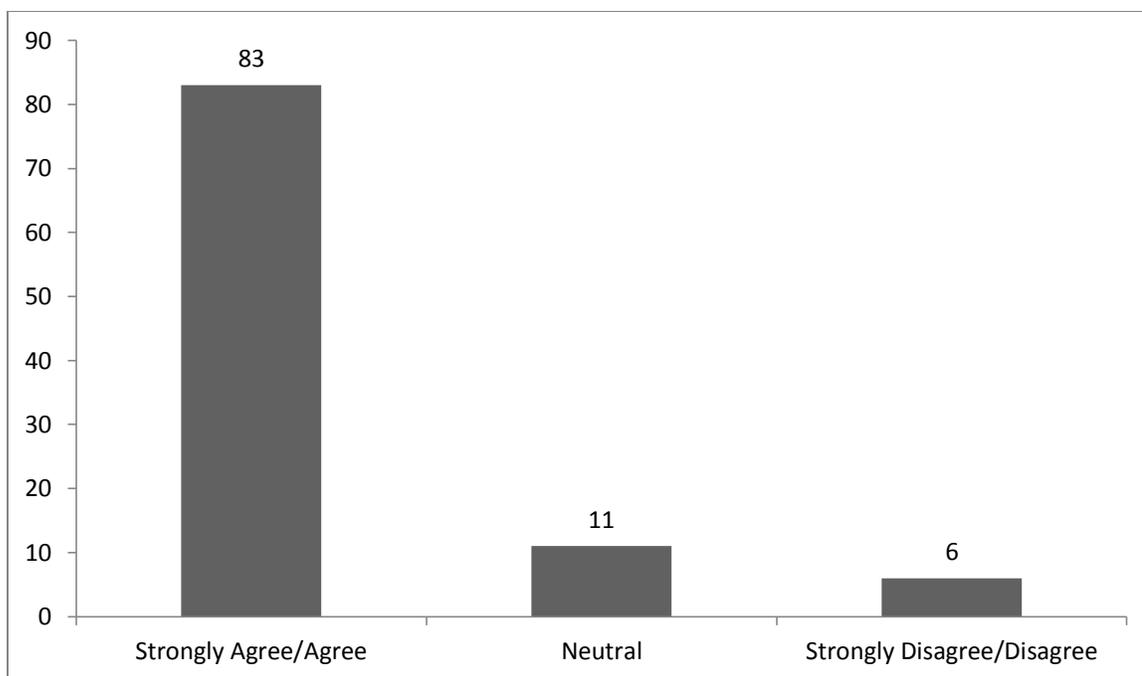


Figure D-7. Responses in percentages to Cohesiveness item, I feel like I belong at this school.

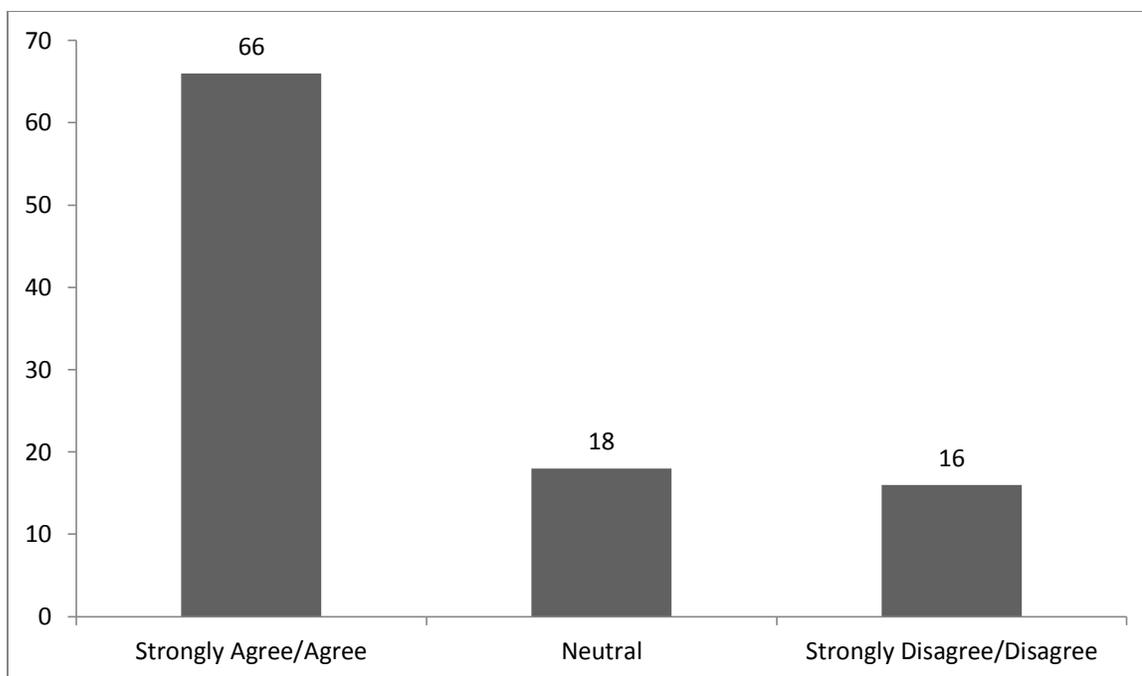


Figure 4-8. Responses in percentages to Cohesiveness item, I feel I can give input when decisions are made that affect me.

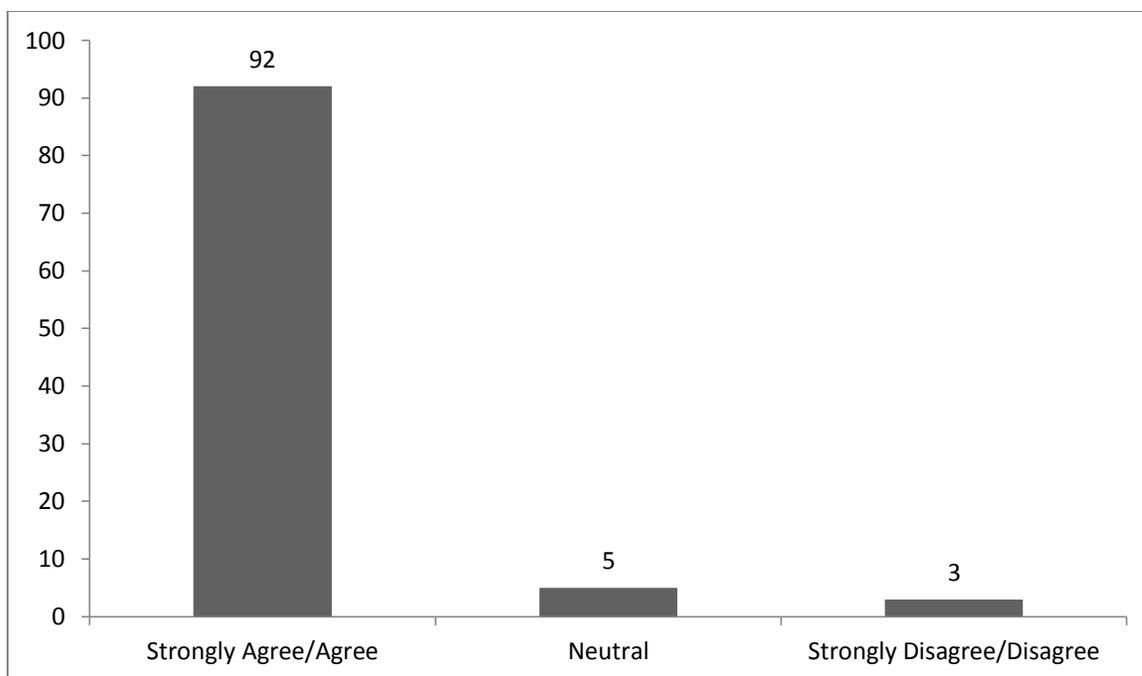


Figure D-9. Responses in percentages to Cohesiveness item, I feel safe at work.

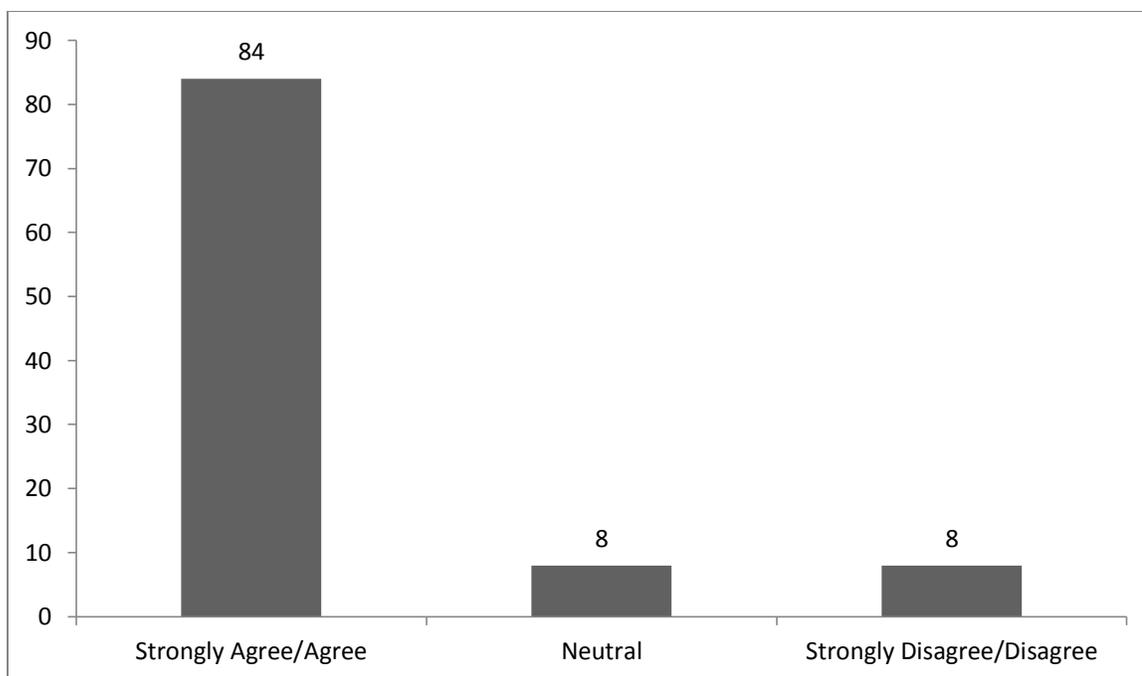


Figure D-10. Responses in percentages to Cohesiveness item, I feel quality work is expected of all adults working at this school.

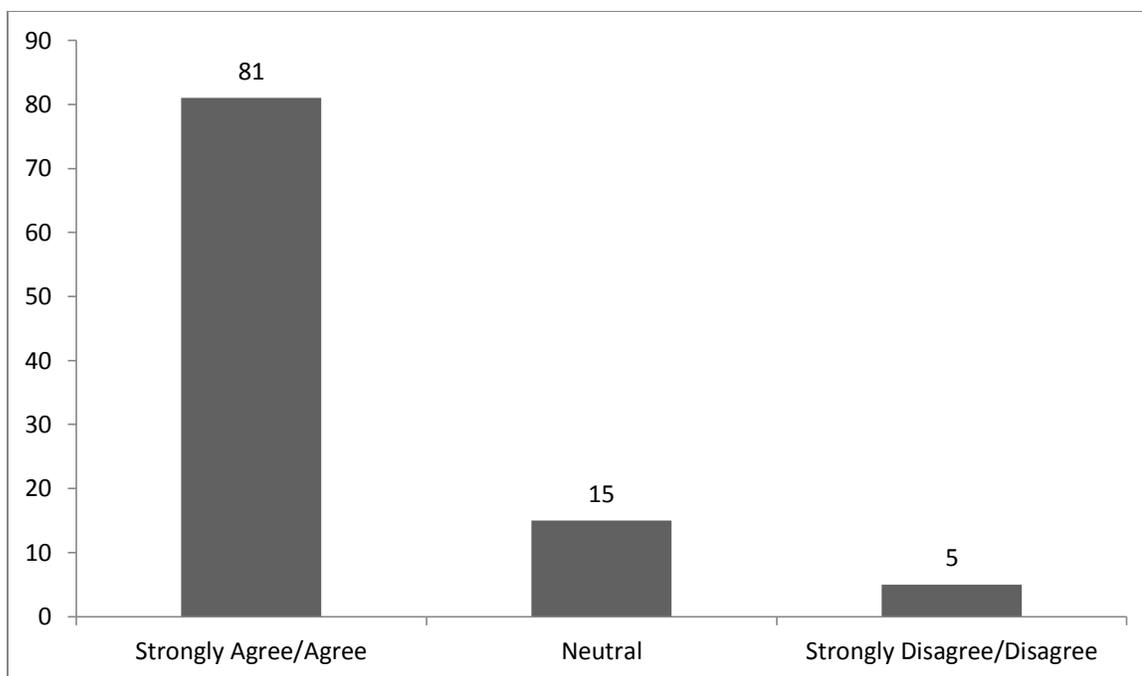


Figure D-11. Responses in percentages to Cohesiveness item, I feel a Professional Learning Community is encouraged and practiced at this school.

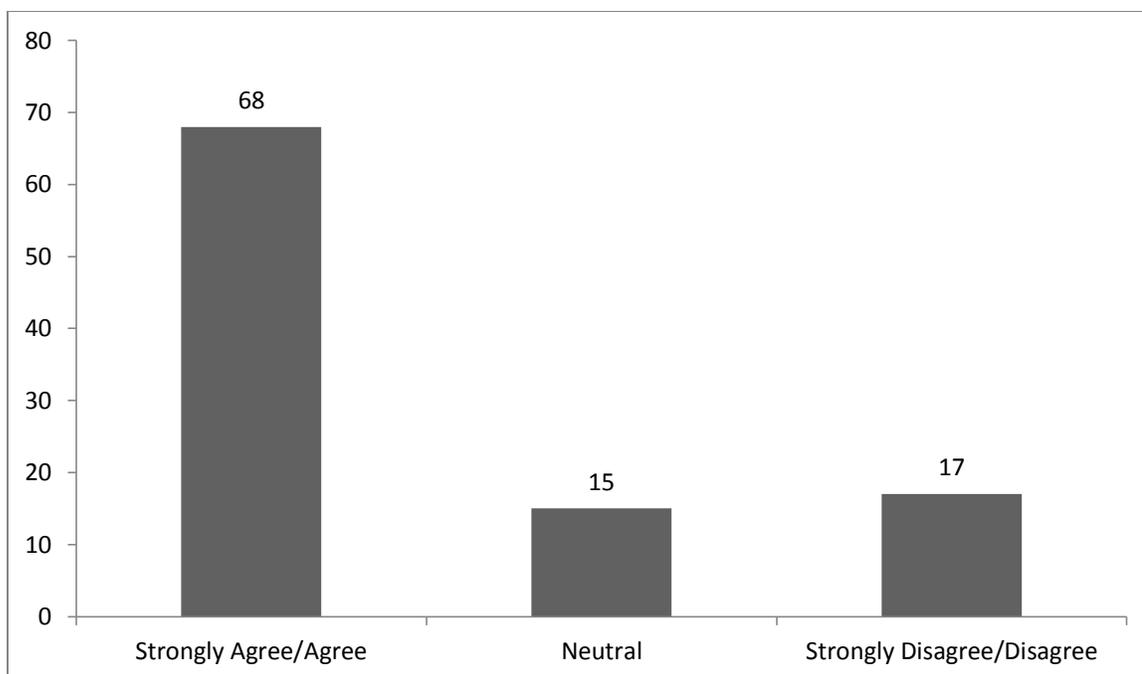


Figure D-12. Responses in percentages to Communication Adequacy item, I feel comfortable discussing my concerns with my campus administrators.

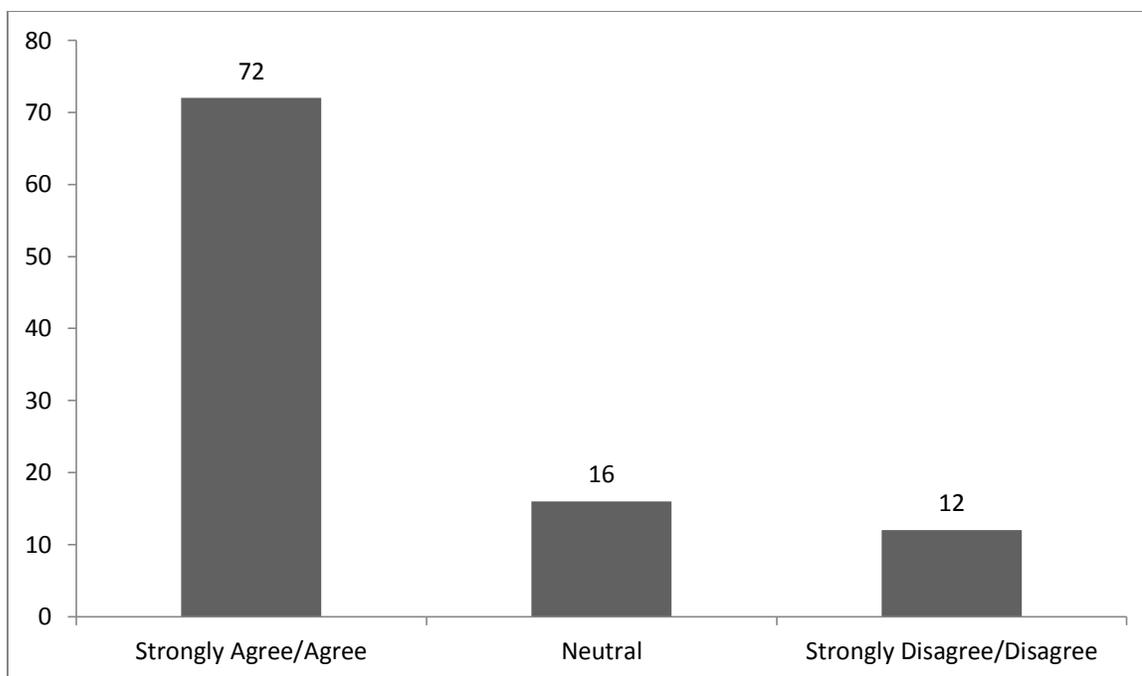


Figure D-13. Responses in percentages to Communication Adequacy item, I feel I am given feedback that helps me improve my performance.

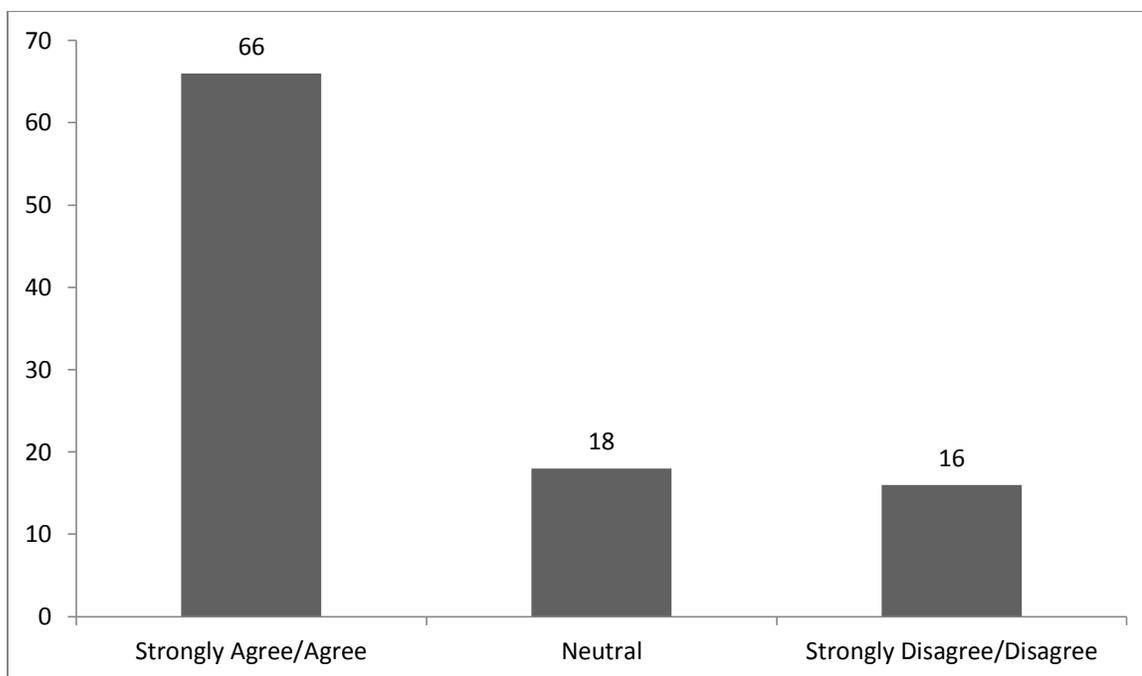


Figure D-14. Responses in percentages to Communication Adequacy item, I feel information and knowledge are shared openly at this school.

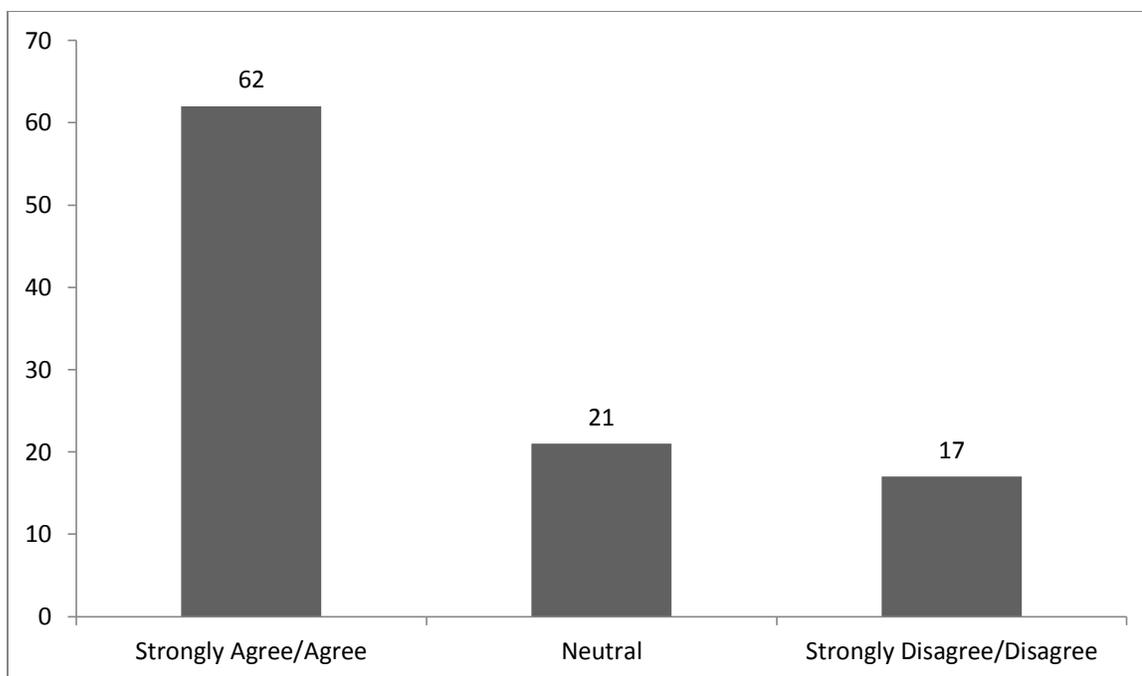


Figure D-15. Responses in percentages to Communication Adequacy item, I feel my ideas and opinions count at work.

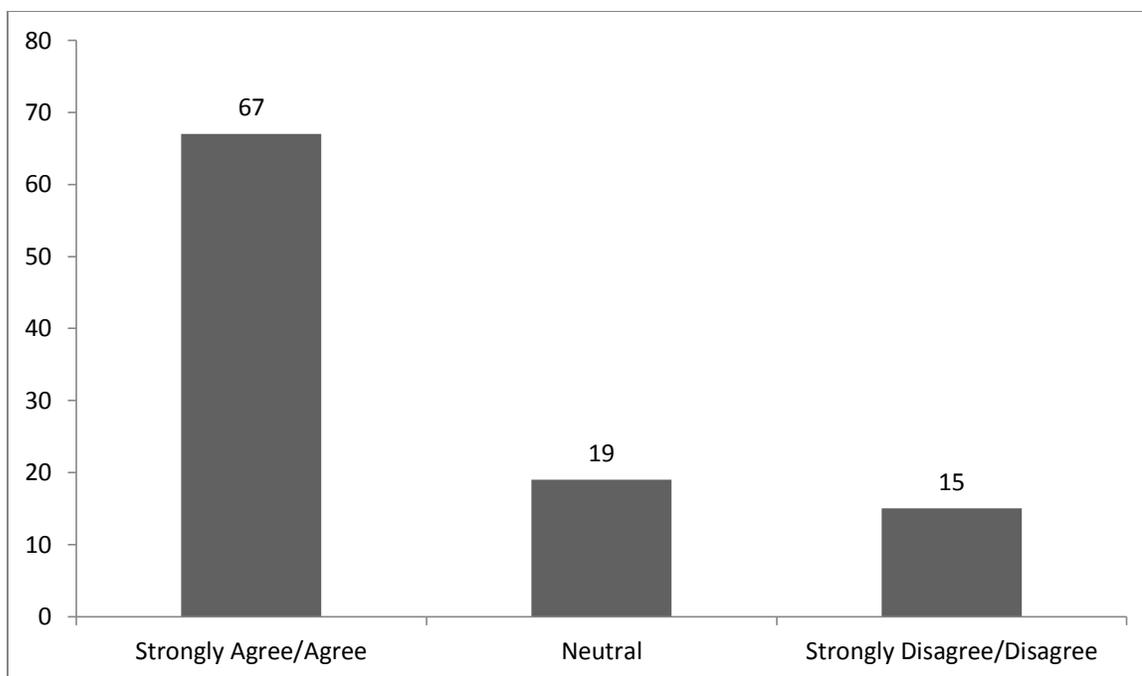


Figure D-16. Responses in percentages to Goal Focus item, *I feel recognized for good work.*

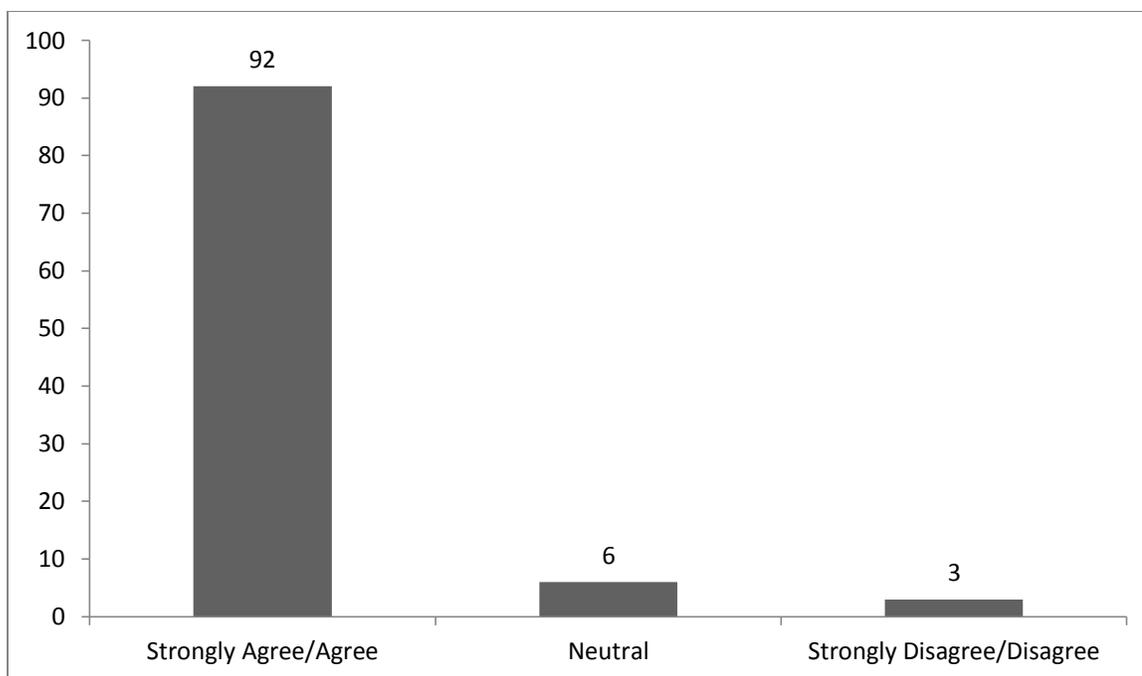


Figure D-17. Responses in percentages to Goal Focus item, I feel clear about what my job is at this school.

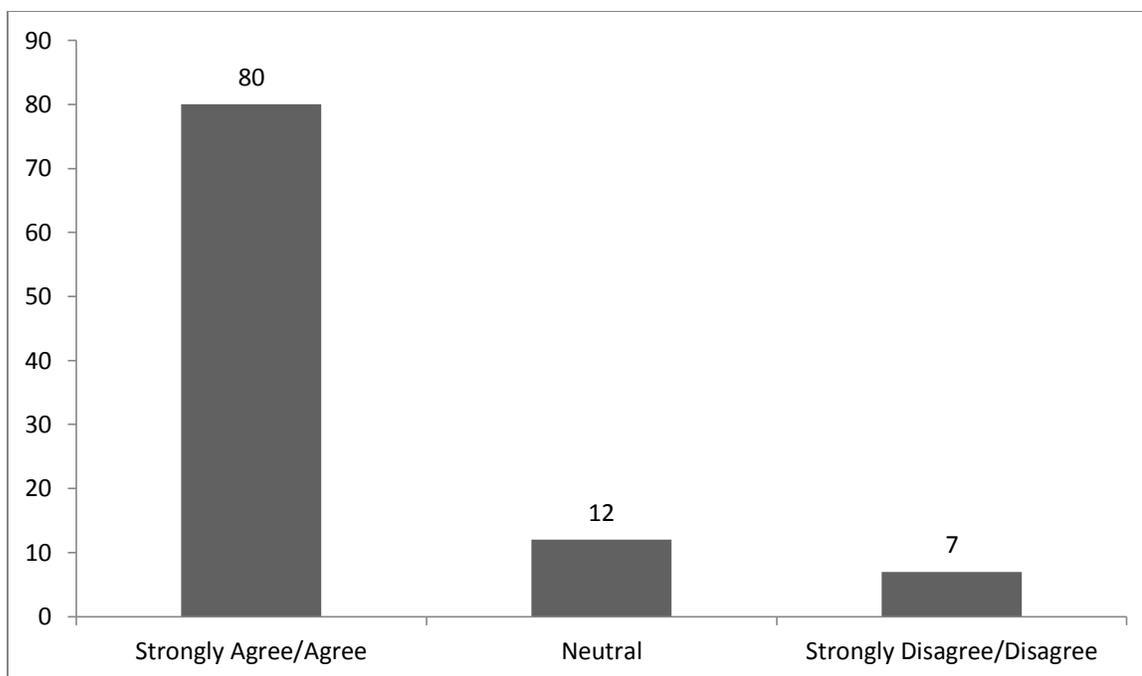


Figure D-18. Responses in percentages to Goal Focus item, I feel that others are clear about what my job is at this school.

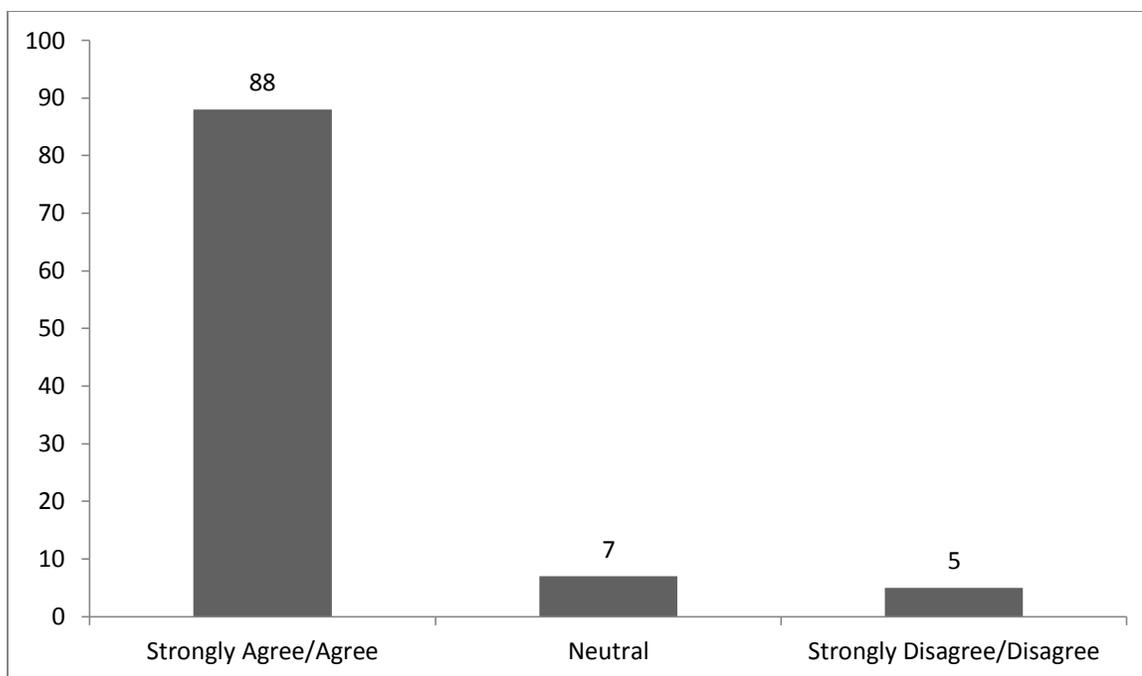


Figure D-19. Responses in percentages to Goal Focus item, I feel that quality work is expected of all students at this school.

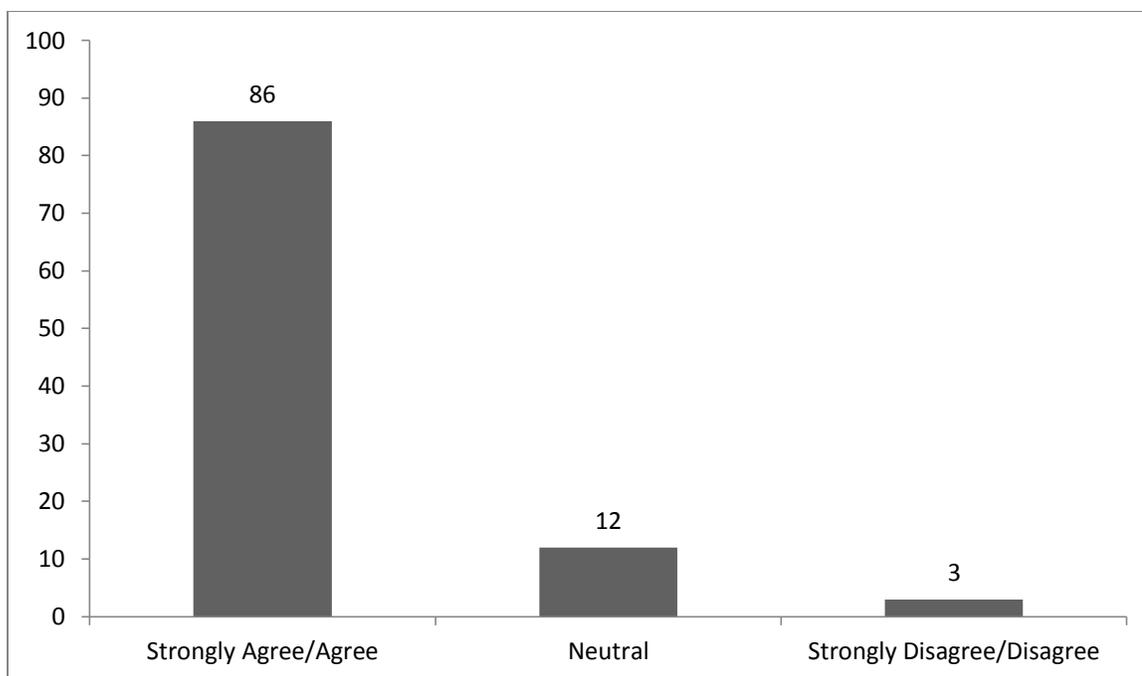


Figure D-20. Responses in percentages to Goal Focus item, I feel that decisions made for this campus are data driven.

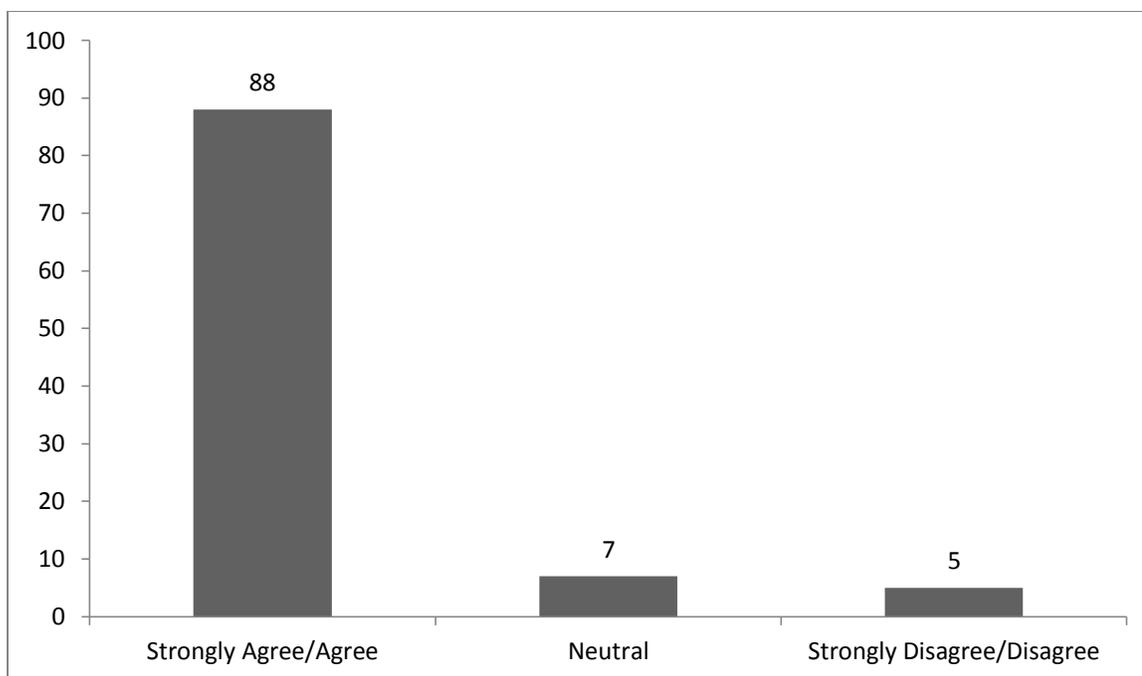


Figure D-21. Responses in percentages to Principal Leadership item, *My principal treats me with respect.*

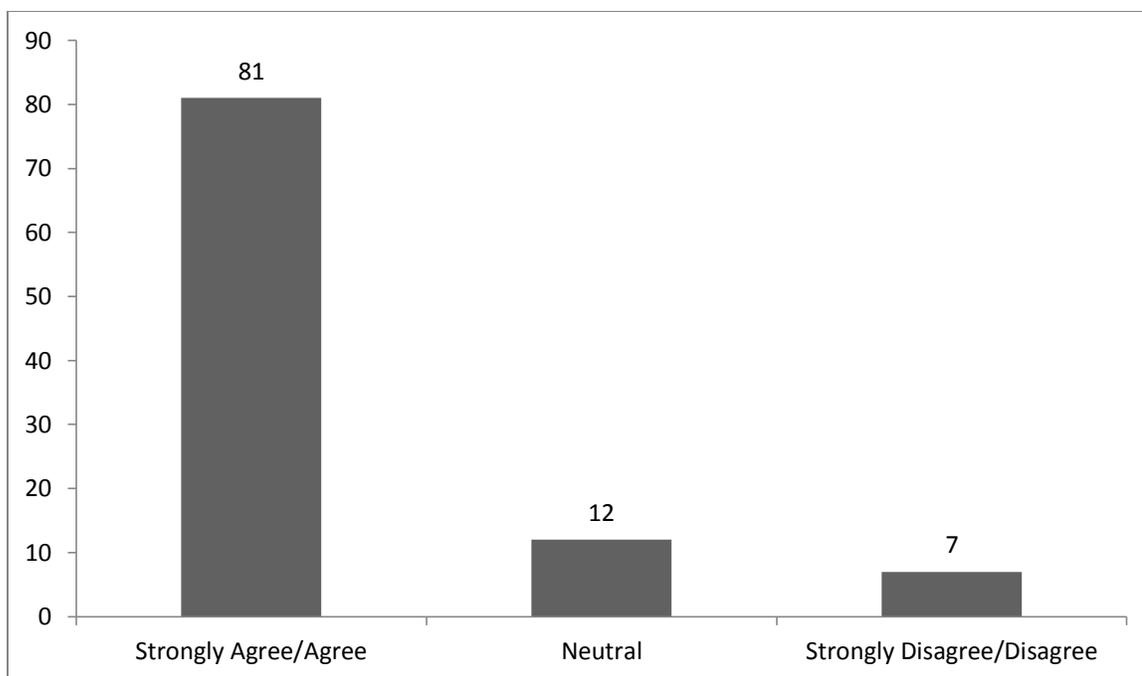


Figure D-22. Responses in percentages to Principal Leadership item, My principal is an effective instructional leader.

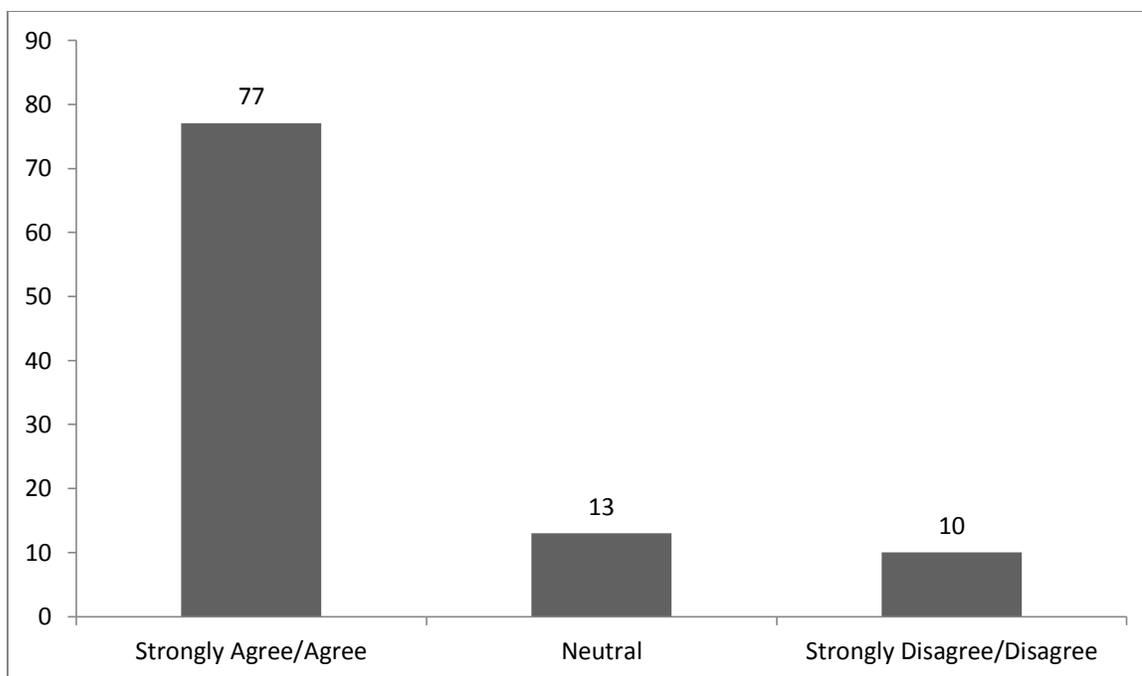


Figure D-23. Responses in percentages to Principal Leadership item, My principal facilitates communication effectively.

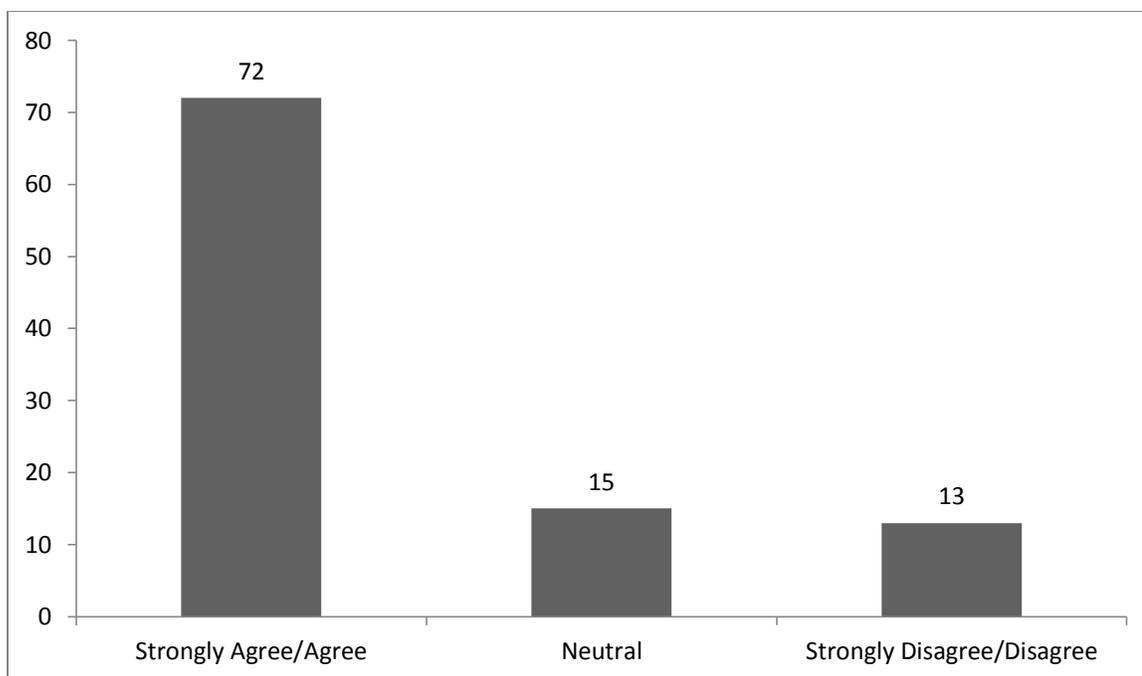


Figure D-24. Responses in percentages to Principal Leadership item, My principal supports shared decision making.

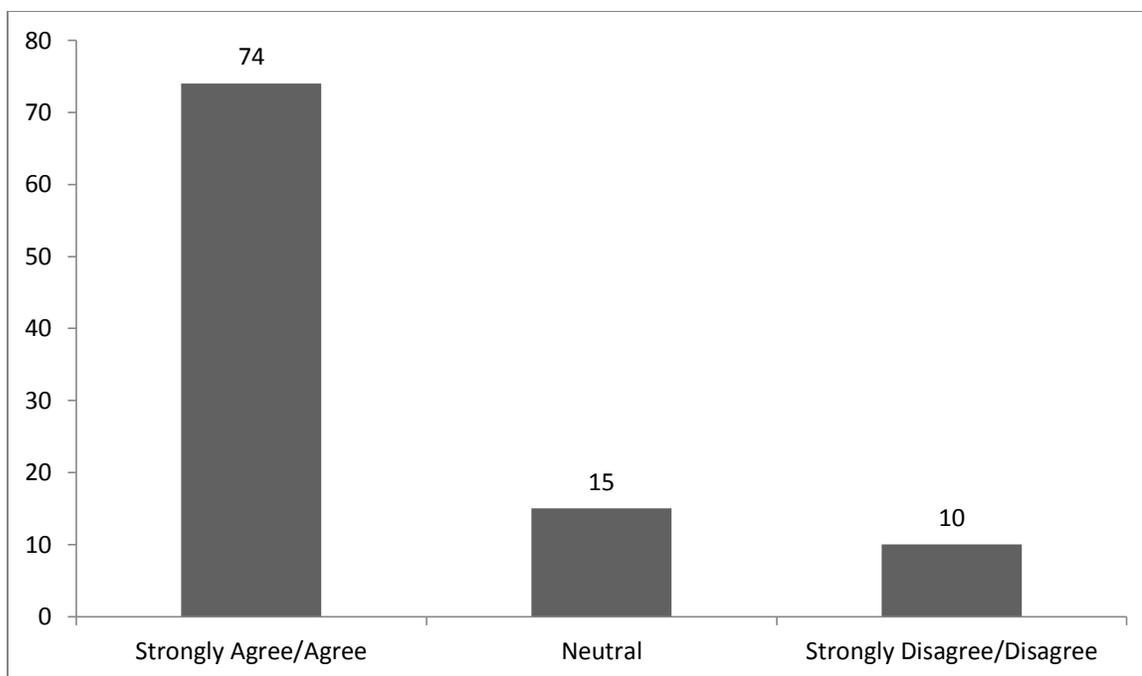


Figure D-25. Responses in percentages to Principal Leadership item, My principal values the contributions I make.

