Relationships of Stakeholder Perceptions of School Climate

Lisa Jessee Morse

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Findlay's College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

July 2016

Committee:

Natalie Abell, Ph.D.
Chair, Dissertation Committee

Melissa Cain, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Susan Johnson, Ph.D.
Committee Member

© 2016

Lisa Jessee Morse

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental quantitative study examined the relationships of stakeholder perceptions to school climate variables to first determine the climate of a school and then examine the variables to make further recommendations to improve climate within an elementary school. This school climate study used the five basic dimensions of the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) to measure school climate initiatives. The five dimensions include people, place, process, policy and programs. The dependent variables used in this study related to each of those five dimensions and strategic interventions that align to the dimensions were used to study impact on the independent variable of the stakeholder perceptions.

The sample for this study was solicited from an urban elementary school in Ohio, in the Northwestern part of the state. The elementary school consisting of sixty staff members including certified and classified staff, one hundred students in grades five and six, and school families took part in the study. The stakeholders completed the Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R) survey as part of the study in both paper and online formats. An additional question was added to the end of the ISS-R survey to gather anecdotal data to guide further research efforts.

As predicted, the results of this study indicated that stakeholder perceptions are related to the dimensions of school climate. Implications of these results indicate that these relationships exist and additional research is necessary to determine the extent of these relationships. This research will further address the needs to improve school climate in elementary schools.

Keywords: school climate, quantitative study, urban elementary school, stakeholder perceptions

DEDICATION

Larry, Mason, Maverick, Livah, Kylie, and Regan

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work and research study would not be possible without a number of people who supported me through this process. First, I am indebted to my wonderful partner in life, Larry for his unwavering support and incredible willingness to manage and care for our family during this time. He went to unending lengths to ensure that I was able to work uninterrupted and took care of all of us without question. He is the main reason that this work is finished in such a timely manner. My children deserve an honor for their understanding and love while I was away during some of their most important years of their lives. They knew the sacrifice on all of us and reassured me every step of the way through words of encouragement and compassion. Mason, Maverick, Livah, Kylie, and Regan- I seek to serve as a role model as you pursue your hopes and dreams. Next, I thank my parents-Terry and Jeanie Jessee. They consistently reminded me of their love and are always there when I need them. My gratitude and appreciation go to Dr. Natalie Abell, my dissertation chair. She served as a role model throughout this program, provided advice and most importantly sincere feedback to help me improve along the way. It was her guidance that enabled me to continue and complete the process. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Melissa Cain and Dr. Susan Johnson. Dr. Cain encouraged me and provided guidance as I completed each chapter and was willing to assist me to learn more about Invitational Education. Without Dr. Johnson taking a chance and hiring me for my first teaching position and continuing her support throughout my career, I would not be in this position today. The staff, students, and parents at Wernert Elementary School also deserve appreciation for their participation in the study. The University of Findlay and Doctoral Program was a constant and integral part of my life for three years. Special thanks to my professors for their support throughout this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Every school has an established school climate. Most individuals can learn what the school climate is in a school very quickly. This is accomplished by working and learning in the school, participating in school activities, or getting involved in school and community events. School climate can take years or a short amount of time to change, for better or worse. School climate consists of shared beliefs and attitudes about the school. Stakeholders reflect shared beliefs and attitudes each day in the school. School climate sets the stage for how the school as an institution operates. Hoy and Sabo share (1998) that "school climate is a critical component of effective schools" (p.41). Without a positive or healthy school climate, the organizational structure of the school is missing an important element. This element is critical to the success of a school.

Success within a school is reflective of stakeholder perceptions, student achievement, relationships, the school environment, school leadership, and many other attributes. School climates may also factor in norms, goals, interpersonal relationships, learning experiences, and organizational structures of the school (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). Each school is different in how climate is formed and reflective of the larger school community of stakeholders that it serves. School climate is a component of school effectiveness and the success of educational reform initiatives. School climate includes a variety of intra-school characteristics and distinguishes schools from each other along with influences the behaviors of the school stakeholders (Hoy et al., 1991). These related school attributes and characteristics are reflective of the overall school and can determine the degree of success experienced by the school.

Striving to promote a positive school climate involves all stakeholders of the school community. As researched by Mitchell and Bradshaw (2013) “school climate is recognized as a critical element of a successful and effective educational environment. School climate has been defined as the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, and teachers, and administrators" (p.599-600). Without these shared beliefs, values, and attitudes a school can develop a poor and unhealthy school climate over time. There have been a variety of researched issues, including decreased staff morale, environmental faults, inconsistent processes and lack of improvement programs leading to poor school climate. By being knowledgeable about potential barriers to a positive school climate, one can make informed changes to make improvements to school climate.

Researchers have also included other attributes to define school climate. Hoy and Clover (1986) share that school climate is based upon teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of measurable properties of the school environment. Measurable properties may include student achievement, school staff and student attendance data, school size and status, and student behaviors and reform efforts to decrease negative behaviors. Marshall’s research (2004) also summarizes that school climate is a multi-dimensional concept within an organization that impacts all stakeholders, school members such as administrators, teachers, students, parents and other staff and the educational and learning environments as well. This concept is developed and closely related to the social dynamics of the overall community.

There are organizational structures that are developed over time such as school processes and the physical building and more immediate impacts over climate such as the people and programs that may change from year to year. The time for these structures to have impact on the

school climate may vary. They are dependent upon the dynamics of those structures as they are personalized to the school and community.

Stakeholders relating to school climate include students, school personnel, such as teachers, administrators, and support staff, and parents. Stakeholder perceptions to school climate are important to the environment within a school, are limited in research, yet there is general interest in the study of climate within a school setting.

> Despite the interest in research and programming aimed at improving student and teacher perceptions of school climate, there has been limited research examining the congruence between student and teacher perceptions, or the extent to which student and staff perceptions vary as a function of individual and school characteristics. (Mitchell, Bradshaw and Leaf, 2010, p.271).

This research explains the limits in improving perceptions in schools. The limited congruence or agreement of the measurement of perceptions is difficult. Perceptions of school climate are difficult to account in the use of data. Using valid and reliable data collection tools are helpful in the process to account for perceptions.

Further evidence has emerged around the concept of the school climate perceptions from students and teachers. In a study by Mitchell, et al. (2010) the researchers used both school-level factors and classroom-level factors in their study. School-level factors were mainly gathered from teachers, and classroom-level factors were more associated with student perceptions. The researchers gathered data from surveys where teachers and students measured classroom management, student mobility and principal turnover. The results from the evidence in this study "emphasize the importance of assessing both student and teacher perceptions in future research

on school climate" (p.271). Thus, the purpose of delving into stakeholder perception research to further study the topic of school climate and culture is imperative to this study.

Furthermore, the relationship of stakeholder perceptions to school climate may be important to a practicing administrator in a school. Perception of school climate can be much different than the actual school climate. Once the actual school climate is positive, with high staff morale and effective, consistent procedures and processes, schools are more apt to conduct the institution with the students and their learning as the major focus. The research by Aypay, Tas, and Boyaci (2012) focuses on teacher perceptions on school climate and the framework around shared beliefs and values. They share "since human beings have different values, beliefs, and views, they create difficulties for individuals towards producing common responses" (p.227). This research confirms the need to find the difference between both the perceptions and their relationship in the school so researchers will better understand the problem and explore remaining school-related issues.

School climate and culture are differing concepts in relationship to this study. The climate is the overall attitude of the organization and is more easily changed with adjustments to the organizational structures of processes, programs, or policies. According to Gruenert (2008), school climate is influenced by the culture and is much easier to change (p.58). The school climate is the personality of the school using the morale to determine the short-term attitude of stakeholders. The culture is understood as "a set of beliefs that have been passed down by imperfect humans with personal preferences" (p.58). Climate determines the culture in a long-term view. Problems with the school climate must be examined first to make changes with culture. Although these concepts are inter-related, the overall goal of this study is to determine school climate.

Rationale & Significance of the Study

The problem of a poor or unhealthy school climate within elementary schools has not been widely studied to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders, school staff, students, and parents. The research that exists has limitations and further research is needed to find more information on underlying issues. A poor or unhealthy school climate affects the whole school community, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other school staff. This can impact these stakeholders with struggles in learning and achievement for students, parent engagement or involvement in the school and by giving a negative impression of the school to the overall community. This research has meaning for all of these individuals because school climate affects stakeholder satisfaction of the school environment, from parental involvement, student learning, staff morale, and general interest in the school from a community standpoint. According to Zullig (2011) "school climate has been associated with important school outcomes" (p.134). These outcomes encompass many areas such as student learning and achievement, relationships amongst staff and with families, the support from the school in serving the needs of the local community. These outcomes can have strong influences on the goal of helping students learn and progress and on the wider school community. Since school climate can be difficult to change, it is important for stakeholders to examine the components that are causing the school climate to be poor and make attempts to improve perceptions. This will make the school the center of the community where stakeholders feel welcome, students achieve, teachers and staff are positively impacted and there is sense of community.

This study was important to all individuals connected to the school. For students it can provide a welcoming, engaging environment to learn and excel; for teachers it can provide a positive working environment with collegiality among staff, relationships with administrators,

and support from others; for the school administrators it provided a positive school climate to aide in the development of achieving success throughout the school; for parents it provided and established relationships with the school as well as a sense of family and connectedness to the institution. When a school has a positive school climate, daily operations run more smoothly and the staff may be more open to new initiatives for school improvement. With a positive school climate administrators can focus time and energy on the ultimate goal of schools, student learning and progress. This ensures less time on fixing problems and finding solutions to please the entire school community.

Purpose of Study

This study addressed the relationship of stakeholder perceptions to school climate. This research employed an investigation that specifically focused on school staff, student, and parent perceptions around researched variables and explored solutions to address any misconceptions. By addressing perceptions of school climate with targeted improvement strategies in place the culture can be shaped to reflect these improvements and the overall belief system.

Measuring stakeholder perceptions is a first step in establishing this study. There are some issues with measuring teacher perceptions about reaching a positive school climate. As noted by Freiburg (1996) “no single factor determines a school’s climate” (p.22). There are many factors that determine a school’s climate. This study focused on multiple factors such as the physical school environment, school processes, programs the people involved and policies to explore their impact on creating a positive climate within a school. These factors are aligned to all of the components that may impact the school.

Some of those aforementioned factors may include the quality of relationships within the school building. As stated by Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009), "school climate

has been shown to be determined by the quality of relationships between individuals at a school, the teaching and learning that takes place, collaboration between the teachers and administrative staff, and the support present in a particular school" (p.183). These relationship factors all play a part in diagnosing a school's climate. The research in this study evaluated these factors, among others, to assist with determining the reasons that the relationships connect to school climate.

The information gathered on the perceptions of the climate determined the steps that will eventually need to take place to improve the culture. There are always improvements with any process to be made. With this data, practitioners in education, especially in schools, can take this new information and apply it to work on relationships, begin new programs, or build trust within the school while maintaining collegiality with others.

Schools strive to function effectively and efficiently with regards to daily operations. School personnel must work together on a daily basis to perform their greatest duty, which is to help students learn and progress. The purpose of this study was to examine the problem of poor and unhealthy school climate in an urban elementary school. Elementary school is the first formal schooling process for many families. The concept of a neighborhood elementary school serves as a gathering place for local communities where parents and those serving as parents get support and guidance. They often encompass many grade levels ranging from pre-school to the sixth grade and they are the first glimpse families experience with the public education system. All stakeholder perceptions are important elements to determine school climate in elementary schools. The perspectives from these individuals are keys to finding underlying issues with school climate and culture. This research and study sought to uncover issues with school climate from the both the school staff and parent perspectives at the building level and student perspectives at the building and classroom levels. School staff and parents were able to lead the

researcher to find underlying issues within a school building to understand inhibitors to a positive school climate. Upper elementary students were also effective subjects to add to the data. Their perspectives can also attempt to find critical components within the classroom that will add to determining a school's climate.

Studying school climate in an elementary school provided information and an examination of factors leading to a poor school climate. Valuable information can be gleaned from researching school climate that will aid in the elimination of the perception and actual poor school climate with a school. The information collected in this study added to the current knowledge on this school dilemma and fill in gaps left by prior research to help solve this problem. The research conducted through this study will assist the stakeholders in the school community to understand what contributes to a negative school climate and clarify with resources to help solve this problem. In the culmination of this study the purpose was fulfilled if underlying negative school climate issues are uncovered and effective, best practice strategies are put into place to provide the stakeholders with a positive school climate perspective.

The contributing factors leading to a diminished school climate are related to the International Alliance for Invitational Education's (2014) school climate five dimensions of people, place, policy, programs, or processes. Although all stakeholder perceptions have an influence on school climate, the impacts are limited due to the lack of viewing the climate from the big picture point of view. The students are limited due to their experiences being only from the classroom and school-level functions. Students are encouraged to participate in all facets of the school to truly experience the climate. Intermediate level students in grades five or six may have experiences with teachers and staff in the classrooms, specialized classes and the cafeteria. They may also have interactions with other staff as they increase involvement in school functions

and activities such as clubs or sports. This increases their opportunities to learn the climate and assist with its development during their time in the elementary school.

Teachers may only see what impacts their position and the influences of their own classrooms. Teachers and staff are more likely to experience additional components of the school climate with increased involvement in the school such as chaperoning a field trip, coordinating a school event, or monitoring a school club or coaching a sport. Interactions between staff often occur daily in the school, but efforts must be made by teachers and staff to truly experience the big picture and the multiple facets of an elementary school. Other ways staff may increase experiences to learn and impact the climate include participation in social and exercise events offered by the school and professional development opportunities to meet state regulations and improve in practices.

The school parents may only have perceptions based on what is witnessed at the school or may base perceptions on information from other stakeholders without experiencing it personally. Social media may also have an impact on school family perceptions of the climate and culture. Participating or just reading perceptions on social media outlets can be misinterpreted and taint the climate of the school. Without coming into the school and experiencing the components of being a school family, misinterpretations can exist. It is important and critical that school families come into the school, participate in school activities such as open house nights, parent teacher conferences, the parent-teacher association meetings and events, as well as other school activities. Parents that interact with online grading systems, communicate with teachers, and participate in school events are likely to have a better understanding of the school climate than parents that don't get involved. The school climate, as a whole, is difficult to predict due to these factors.

The results from the evidence in this study allowed the researcher to act as an informed change-agent to improve school climate at the elementary school level and "emphasize the importance of assessing both student and teacher perceptions in future research on school climate" (Mitchell et al., p.271). These stakeholder results from parents, students, and school staff informed the researcher in future work within the elementary school setting.

Theoretical Framework

This study took a quasi-experimental quantitative approach research design to gather as much information to further research on school climate. As supported by quasi-experimental design research by Campbell and Stanley (1963) "this design is still widely used in educational research" (p.7). This quantitative approach used the one-group pre-test-post-test design to include pre-surveys and post-surveys to collect data from the school staff, students, and parent participants. Based upon the theoretical framework of the International Alliance of Invitational Education (2014) the survey used was the Inviting Schools Survey-Revised (ISS-R). According to Smith (2005), face and content validity exists and internal consistency was good. The reliable survey included various questions involving people, places, school policy, programs, and process factors. The questions included in the data collection method also pertained to both school-level and classroom-level climate domains. The researcher sought to develop an understanding of these facets of these domains in relation to perceptions by the stakeholders.

School staff, student, and parent participants were convenience samples to form stakeholder groups. The sample size included approximately fifty school staff, one hundred students, and eighty parents from an urban elementary school. The participants were selected through invitation on behalf of the researcher. Invitations through consent forms were applied to all school staff members, certified and classified staff, fifth and sixth grade students, and random

school parents with students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. Although the participants remained anonymous, the samples were identified by stakeholder group for descriptive purposes. The expected time to complete the pre- and post-surveys was less than thirty minutes for any given participant.

The surveys took place at the beginning of the school year and near the end of the school year to ensure credibility. Once the initial pre-survey data was reviewed, the researcher examined the climate in the elementary school for each participant groups and in each of the International Alliance for Invitational Education (2014) dimensions. To analyze the data further, the researcher looked for patterns between the school-level and classroom-level climate domains to make a determination on strategic intervention implementation throughout the school year. By promoting utility and the usefulness of the information for others, other researchers may employ transferability of the research into other content areas and studies relating to school climate and culture problems. The data addressed inhibitors to a positive school climate and helped make the contributors to a negative school climate known. The data also attempted to solve the problem by improving climate in the notable areas.

Research Questions

School climate changes over time. Freiberg states (1998) "School climate is an ever-changing factor in the lives of people who work and learn in schools. School climate can be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning" (p.22). There are three key research questions that were pertinent to the research of the study and assisted in drawing valid conclusions to remediate a school climate problem. This study sets out to answer the following three research questions:

1. What are stakeholder priorities for improving school climate?

2. Did implemented strategies have an impact on school climate?
3. Which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perception among the three stakeholder groups?

These questions focus on the problem of the factor leading to a school climate problem. With a quantitative approach to this problem, the data collected was analyzed to answer these questions and reach the purpose of this study.

Definition of Terms

The definitions found below were derived from studies and the leading researchers in the area of school climate. Although varying definitions may exist, these definitions match the research conducted in this study. Inclusion of these selected definitions assist in understanding the purpose of the study.

[School Climate]. Norms, values, and expectations of a school with the perceptions of those stakeholders coming from varying perspectives and as the character and quality of life within a school that is shaped by its organizational structure, physical environment, instructional practices, interpersonal relationships, and overarching values, objectives, and customs (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Cohen et al., 2009).

[School Culture]. Set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the 'persona' of the school (Peterson, 2016).

[Stakeholder]. An individual or group with an interest in the success of an organization in fulfilling its mission—delivering intended results and maintaining the viability of its products, services and outcomes over time (Reading First Sustainability, 2016).

[Perception]. Recognition and interpretation of sensory information (Williams, 2016).

Delimitations

Delimitations of this study on school climate particularly in the elementary school setting were constricted by the boundaries of stakeholder perceptions reflected by the population of staff, students, and parents. The school staff may or may not have had experiences working at other school levels, such as middle or high school, so their perceptions may be reflective of elementary school settings based upon the items in the survey provided of the researcher.

The students were selected from the fifth and sixth grades only and this posed as a delimitation in the study. The students from these particular grade levels have been selected based on the readability level of the survey. Students of younger ages and lower grades may have difficulty interpreting the questions in the survey and this may cause the responses and summarized data to be skewed. This was a boundary intentionally set by the researcher to only include older students in fifth and sixth grades who will understand the questions and the intentions of their responses.

The parents selected to participate in this study were from one school neighborhood community in Northwestern Ohio. This research intentionally imposed these conditions to obtain specific information relating to the particular school on behalf of the stakeholders. These delimitations were boundaries set by choice and focus the scope of the collected data to make informed decisions based up on this specific population of stakeholders.

Limitations

Geography created one limitation as all stakeholders are from one area of the United States. Their perceptions were based on the limits of what they know and have experienced in one geographical area. Additional research conducted with participants from other geographical areas of the United States may have had an impact on the outcomes. Teachers and students from

other areas may have had different perspectives on climate based on such elements as varying state government initiatives or governance of schools.

A second limitation derived from the tool used to collect the data. The survey instruments used with the participants may have caused misinterpretation on behalf of the stakeholders. The questions may have been worded in such a way to cause misinterpretation or the reading level of the students may have an impact of the understanding of the questions and the intended answers. To mitigate this limitation the pre- and post-surveys were administered to adult readers and students in the fifth and sixth grade. The researchers ensured all participants were readers. If there were participants that were not literate, the researcher ensured the participant had an opportunity to have the survey read to them. This mitigation ensured appropriate reading level and the use of vocabulary terms were appropriate. The researcher determined the reading level of the surveys, including the use of leveled vocabulary in terms to increase the validity of the outcomes based on the responses.

Researcher Bias

There may be some bias involved in this study. The researcher worked directly with the school staff and indirectly with the students and parents involved as stakeholders in the study. The implementation of intervention strategies were conducted by the researcher and the impact and implementation of these strategies were solely reflected upon the researcher and the school building leadership team, who are also included as school staff and family stakeholders. The researcher's own behaviors, attitudes, and personal experiences may have impacted the study due to the experiences within the school and with the school staff.

Overall, with past studies contributing to research on school climate and setting the stage for the necessary components of this study, the researcher was able to draw upon some

hypotheses. While school climate impacts a school's operation, it also has implications for school improvement. Drawing back to Hoy and Sabo's (1998) research that "school climate is a critical component of effective schools" (p.41) the perceptions of both teachers and students as stakeholders have an impact on the shared beliefs, values, and mission of a school. With this knowledge, school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community members can create learning environments within the school to lead to a positive school climate. This will have an influence on other potential stakeholders including parents and community members. The outcomes of this study were utilized to promote opportunities for growth leading to improved relationships in schools.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

School climate has long been studied and compared to different facets of educational reform. It is a well-recognized educational topic which determines the functions and successes within an organization. School climate research has been studied and measured in many different ways. Some researchers have examined school climate through the perception lens to fully understand the thoughts and feelings behind the scenes that determine school climate or culture. Other research has been centered on school improvement reform efforts. Researchers and educators have recognized the importance of K-12 school climate including how school climate is associated with promoting safety, healthy relationships, engaged learning and school improvement efforts (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends school climate reform as a scientifically sound strategy that promotes healthy relationships, school connectedness and dropout prevention (National School Climate Center, 2014). School climate reform involves different stakeholders that can affect school climate. Stakeholder involvement in school climate is explored along with their impacts on organizations. Contributions to the study of school climate and perspectives of the stakeholders have made improvements to the knowledge of the implementation of educational initiatives. Stakeholders have an opportunity to become aware of their own institution's climate to improve education and attempt to build a positive student centered community.

This literature review will examine the early and existing research on school climate, including pertinent studies that hold strong data points to make an impact on the topic. A variety of definitions and researched measurement tools utilized in previous studies will be examined and explored to provide a glimpse of the impact climate can have on an organization. In

addition, this literature review will provide descriptive details about how stakeholder perceptions can influence an organization's climate.

Early and Recent Research

Early school climate research dates back to the early to mid-1900s. The theoretical foundations of much of the research related to school climate can be traced back to Lewin's (1936) field theory in which the interaction of personal characteristics and the environment is a determinant of human behavior (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). A few years later, Lewin's work was used by Murray (1938) to create one of the first statistical models where personal needs can be supported or frustrated by the environment. These were some of the first attempts to recognize that personal interactions can determine the needs of an organization. These personal interactions can be related to emotional, behavioral, or psychological environments created within the organization (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013).

Later, Halpin and Croft (1963) were two of the first researchers to study stakeholder perceptions of school climate and develop survey tools to measure the climate of a school. They were pioneers in the conceptualization and measurement of organizational climate in schools. Halpin and Croft (1963) proposed that the organizational climate of a school can be construed as the organizational personality of a school. Personality is to the individual as climate is to the organization (Kenney, 1970). This analogy gives a clear picture of the early research on climate in schools and the impact climate can have on the success of an organization.

Hoy and Miskel (2005) report that school climate research occupies a popular position in current school improvement initiatives and programs aiming to yield positive outcomes for students and teachers. With the increase in school improvement initiatives over the past 25 years,

especially with more demands put on schools, impact can be made with school climate and the personality of the organization.

In the last decade the federal government has put a focus on the organization of education, especially in terms of funding and initiatives. Most recently, United States Department of Education mandates, led through No Child Left Behind initiatives, encompassed a wide range of school improvement demands on our nation's schools. With those initiatives Ohio's Race to the Top (RttT) Grant program was developed and has been linked to school climate. Race to the Top was a funding structure set forth by the United States Department of Education to provide funding to districts that were willing to participate in educational reform. Once the Ohio Department of Education was selected to participate, districts could receive additional funds upon willingness to also participate in the reform movement (Ohio Department of Education, 2014). According to the Ohio Department of Education (2014), Race to the Top districts help trail-blaze effective reforms and provide examples for States and local school districts throughout the country to follow as they too are hard at work on reforms that can transform our schools for decades to come. The goal of the Race to the Top program was to provide guidance and strategies that align to the Ohio Department of Education vision where all students will be college or career ready (Ohio Department of Education, 2014). Through implementation of this program, participating student stakeholders confidentially rated school climate variables to measure valid implementation and stakeholder perception of the initiatives. The variables included student engagement, teacher support, future orientation, relevance to everyday life, peer support, self-worth, and student voice. Some of the initiatives where students rated school improvement initiatives were through the Ohio Instructional Improvement System (IIS), the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), and the Ohio Principal Evaluation System

(OPES). These has been the latest school improvement initiatives involving data-based decision making and attempts to increase accountability in schools to hold organizations to work towards improvement.

Importance

School climate research determines and explains these impacts that have evolved over time. There have been many developed and researched instruments to study climate. One of the well-known and researched organizational climate measurement tools developed by Dr. Wayne Hoy includes the Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire, OCDQ (Hoy, 2014). There are original and revised versions of this tool for both elementary and middle schools. The OCDQ measures climates of elementary schools along a continuum from open to closed school climate (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). The OCDQ measures individual teacher stakeholder perceptions of the school principal and colleagues. The Revised OCDQ for elementary schools measures the dimensions of principal support and restrictiveness and the collegiality, social intimacy, and disengagement of the teacher (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). This tool shows the reliability scores for the scales are relatively high with the supportive rate at .94, directive rate at .88, collegial at .87, intimacy at .83, and disengagement at .78 (Hoy, 2014). The construct validity of each of these dimensions of openness is supported through correlations. The directive behaviors of the principal are measured through an examination of rigidity, control and monitoring of the principal, while the restrictive dimension examines behaviors that hinders teacher work. This is viewed as a teacher burden with additional responsibilities such as extra paper work, requirements, duties or other demands. The collegial aspects of the teacher are measured with items that support openness and professional interaction with colleagues. The intimacy of the teacher is measured as teachers provide social support to one another and gather

together to socialize with one another. Lastly, the disengagement dimension of the tool measures teacher behavior and their ability to focus on productive activities within the school (Hoy, 2014).

Another tool that measures school climate is The Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R) produced by the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE, 2014). This worldwide organization promotes positive climates for learning, leading, and living and provides schools with a positive, alternative to promote positive environments (International Alliance for Invitational Education [IAIE], 2014). This school climate measurement tool is an inventory designed to measure the degree to which schools are welcoming. This organization is dedicated to created, sustaining, and enhancing positive environments that help people reach their full potential (IAIE, 2014). The survey tool measures climate in five basic areas: People, Places, Policies, Programs and Processes (IAIE, 2014). The purpose of this survey is to learn how stakeholders perceive their schools. These stakeholders may include students, teachers, administrators, staff and parents, although it is encouraged to use a representative sample from each of these groups to ensure reliability. Administration of this tool allows for researchers to measure using pre- and post- procedures and assist and identify weaknesses and strengths within the climate of a school to create a positive school community (IAIE, 2014). The theory of invitational education is based upon basic assumptions of how people relate to and support others. Inviting people are those who intentionally demonstrate optimism, respect, trust, and care as they work towards a shared vision (IAIE, 2014). This theory and practice is a model that is designed to enhance the overall environment and helps people realize their full potential in all areas; intellectually, socially, physically, emotionally, and morally (IAIE, 2014; Smith, 2012). It supports all areas of human functioning and is relevant to improvement in the elementary school setting.

Another school climate measurement tool is the My Voice Ohio (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). It was administered through The Ohio Department of Education Race to the Top initiatives. The impact analysis of this tool provides Ohio educators and policy makers with a clear focus for statewide efforts to improve academic motivation for students (Corso, Rawlings, Reed, & Thompson, 2013). The My Voice Ohio (2016) utilized grounded work through the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations to help schools improve conditions that support students' aspirations. The tools sought to advance the future hopes and dreams of all Ohio students, while inspiring them in the present to reach those dreams. With this partnership, school staff and students works to improve schools so student may reach their potential academically, socially, and personally (Corso et al., 2014).

A last example of an organizational climate tool is the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) from National School Climate Center (2014). This validated tool also measures stakeholder perceptions along twelve dimensions of climate including areas such as, safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, and leadership and professional relationships (National School Climate Center, 2014). Measuring school climate is a data driven strategy and this tool provides a framework for capturing the data. Research shows that a positive school climate directly impacts the indicators for success such as achievement, dropout rates, and incidences of violence and teacher retention (National School Climate Center, 2014). This tool provides immediate feedback on the climate for learning and perceptions of school climate.

These four aforementioned tools are just a few of the many vetted tools that exist to measure an organization's climate. This research is important to school stakeholders, such as parents and students, to learn the essential functions and determine the needs to improve within

the organization. Students' and teachers' perceptions of climate are associated with a host of important student outcomes, including behavior problems and mental health (Schueler, 2014). These important outcomes have impact on students learning initiatives, developments, and improvements within an elementary school.

Definition of School Climate

School climate is a term that is commonly used but one without a commonly agreed upon definition (Johnson, 2006). School climate can be attributed as the personality of the school (Halpin and Croft, 1963). School climate is created through the combined culture of the adults and students within a school-both the culture they share as an organization and the diverse cultures they bring from home (Keiser & Schulte, 2009). Different schools have different climates based on the individuals that make up the school and what they bring with them. A school's climate has been referred to as a school's ethos, and although there is no consensus on the definition of school culture, it is generally agreed that it involves a group phenomenon based on the quality and character of school life and patterns of people's experiences (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). There are other competing interpretations such as the definition from the National School Climate Council (2014) which shares that school climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society.

For the purpose of this research school climate and culture will be used reflective of their definitions. Although they are originally from different disciplines, these terms will be used as

needed. For the purpose of this research, school climate will be defined as the norms, values, and expectations of a school with the perceptions of those stakeholders coming from varying perspectives and as the character and quality of life within a school that is shaped by its organizational structure, physical environment, instructional practices, interpersonal relationships, and overarching values, objectives, and customs (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Cohen et al., 2009). School culture is defined as a set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the 'persona' of the school (Peterson, 2016). School climate is often referred to as the attitude within a school and school culture as the personality in which the daily attitude has impact upon within a school setting. Climate is the leverage point to shape a new positive school culture (Gruenert, 2008). It is important to start with an assessment of the current climate and to make change prior to the issues becoming part of the larger culture of the school.

Relevant School Climate Programs

School climate studies involving program implementation have been researched over time. This current study on stakeholder perceptions of elementary school climate is modeled after The Expect Respect Project: Creating a positive elementary school climate (Merviglia, 2003). This project models development, implementation, and evaluation of a program aimed at improving elementary school climate and addressing bullying behaviors and sexual harassment student behaviors. It also promotes safety of students by altering the school environment. The Expect Respect Project used a developed violence prevention program to assess incidence of bullying and sexual harassment, reduce the incidences and create a positive school climate (Merviglia, 2003). The findings after implementation were successful. The study showed a significant increase in bullying awareness following the project interventions and an increase in

reported bullying in unstructured environments by participants. Through a collaborative effort, an educational intervention project such as this project can be implemented at the elementary level to teach students and staff how to respond appropriately to unacceptable behaviors (Merviglia, 2003). The implementation of such a project to alter the school environment through data themes can be effective in improving school climate.

Another study that includes program implementation is researched by Pedersen, Yager, and Yager (2012). In Student Leadership Distribution: Effects of a student-led leadership program on school climate and community, Pederson, Yager, and Yager (2012) focuses on student leadership roles and the impact of a positive school-wide climate, a positive impact on their own development, and a positive influence of their peers. This program, related to student roles in program implementation provides a framework for other school climate studies. Three themes emerged that contributed to the success of the program: school-wide collaboration and trust, adequate time for growth and development, and leadership support teams (Pedersen et al., 2012). Both of these researched studies will have an impact of the development, implementation and evaluation of the program of future studies on stakeholder perceptions of elementary school climate and improvements to school climate and culture.

Theoretical Considerations/School Climate Reform

Although school climate studies have been in existence for many years, the rise in need to understand organizational climate has been on the increase. This is due to the increase of reform efforts with literacy, assessment, and achievement in schools. Reform efforts are likely to fail if they are not meaningfully linked to a school's culture (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). Therefore, if new initiatives are developed into school expectations these initiatives must align with the climate and culture of the school. Otherwise, full acceptance of any new initiatives could be

unsuccessful. The school culture characteristics that are likely to support successful implementation include collaboration, connections among staff, a sense of family and the quality of relationships between students (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013).

At the federal level, the National School Climate Council has developed National School Climate Standards to assist with reform to lead a comprehensive school improvement approach to improve climate. The council (2007) outlines factors to influence the standards that show the importance of positive, sustainable school climate. These benchmarks are comprised of five standards further broken into indicators that are reasonable action steps for any school to work towards to enhance school efforts. The five National School Climate Standards use the school community to create a shared vision and plan for promoting it and sets policies for development of skills. The council also practices to identify, prioritize, and support the affective learning domain to create a welcoming physical environment and meaningful, civic practices (2007). These standards are useful for school administrators, personnel, and any school stakeholders to be accountable and set priorities for improving school climate.

In collaboration with the State Board of Education in Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education has also developed Ohio School Climate Guidelines to "create environments where students feel welcomed, respected, and motivated to learn" (Safer Schools Ohio, 2015). The guidelines were developed after reform efforts with No Child Left Behind were established. The guidelines stress four overarching themes: "accountability for results, doing what works based on scientific research, expanded parental options and involvement, and expanded local control and flexibility" (Safer Schools Ohio, 2015). Included in each guideline are measurable benchmarks with action steps for all school-community stakeholders. The benchmarks range

from elaborating on school-wide disciplinary practices to food services, transportation record-keeping and administration.

Theorists have widely studied school climate with recommendations for improvements in the formative years, school level and in life. Stephen Covey's work (2008) in *The Leader in Me* is a goal-oriented framework to guide schools to build a positive climate and transform schools to improve using his seven habits outlined for effective people. This more recent reform effort program includes a specifically designed curriculum and lessons to help students set goals, be responsible, and work together to improve their school. Sean Covey oversees this reform movement in schools and this approach to school climate reform emphasizes student leadership, personal responsibility, and goal-setting (Delisio, 2011). Another widespread school climate reform advocate is Ron Clark who runs a top rated private school in Atlanta, Georgia. With his books, *The Essential 55* and *The Excellent 11* he outlines the rules to discover the successful student in every child and eleven qualities that stakeholders working with students need to use to boost student achievement (Clark, 2003 & 2004).

Theoretical Considerations/School Climate and Achievement Relationships

Throughout history many studies have made attempts to find correlations between school climate and student achievement. An important early study of the relationships between school climate and student achievement was reported by Brookover (1978). Looking at school climate as a shared social system of both norms and expectations, the viewpoints of students, teachers, and administrators were all considered (Johnson, 2006). Most of these studies have used quantitative variables such as standardized tests along with socioeconomic status, gender, age, and GPA and dropout rates and correlated this data to school climate perceptions. Schools with better student perceptions of the teaching climate were associated with lower student dropout

rates by students' senior year (Barile et al., 2012). Positive student-teacher relationships can have an impact on student achievement. Researchers have found that schools that foster positive relationships between teachers and high school students have higher math achievement and higher graduation rates (Barile, 2012). An open and healthy school climate may well be a predictor of a school environment characterized by trust, commitment, and high level of student achievement (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). School climate is particularly useful for studying climate characteristics and their impact on student achievement (Hoy, 1990). Johnson and Stephens (2006) found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the teachers' perceptions of school climate and student achievement and also shared that those teachers who held a positive perception of school climate had students with higher levels of achievement. Further studies by researchers have determined that school climate had significant effects on mathematics achievement and the teachers' instructional strategies improved achievement which were reflections of stakeholder perceptions of school climate (Choi & Chang, 2011; Webster & Fisher, 2002).

Theoretical Considerations/School Climate and School Size/Status

Both school size and status have been linked as variables and correlated to school climate. Caglayan (2013) claims that one of the factors that are linked with a positive school climate is school size. Recent research on the effects of school size on school climate shows that smaller schools are more advantageous in terms of student achievement. The structure and quality of the school environment is believed to play an important role in providing opportunities for student and parental involvement (Caglayan, 2013; Goldkind & Farmer, 2013). In addition, the general belief is that in small schools, adolescents develop a sense of belonging, and when young people are part of a small, connected environment, they are less likely to drop out of

school and achieve at higher levels (Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000). Hattie (2009) with the meta-analyses of over 800 studies found that school size fell in the zone of desired effects on student achievement with an effect size of 0.43, which shows smaller schools have higher achievement and more positive climates. Newman et al. (2006) reported that teachers and students at smaller schools had more positive perceptions of their school climate. This research supports that smaller school and classroom sizes have positive impacts on the overall collaboration among teachers, student learning, and positive social and emotional interactions among students and staff.

While the sense of community resides in the culture and relationships within the school, associations from the surrounding neighborhood may also have an effect (Patterson, Hale, & Stressman, 2007). School status has an impact on the overall school community. Schools serving low-income students demonstrated a lower sense of classroom community than those in affluent neighborhoods, but remarkable exceptions exist (Keiser, 2009). Although, school status may play a role in school climate, the role that the surrounding culture plays in school climate continue to deserve attention (Keiser, 2009) in future studies.

Theoretical Considerations/School Climate and Behavior

Studies have shown that school climate is linked to student behavior. In most educational settings and schools a common method is the use of reward and punishment systems for student behavior control (Hoffman, Hutchinson, & Reiss, 2009). The successes of such systems are measured through the accurate account of school discipline referral data. According to Kohn (1993) this impacts school climate through the use of reward systems. School climate is impacted by disrupting student/teacher relationships and ignores underlying issues with student behavior (Kohn, 1993). On the contrary, many years of research have shown strong relationships

between school climate defined as the quality and characters of school life (National School Climate Council, 2007) and positive student outcomes such as student behavior (Schneider & Duran, 2010). School climate can affect student behavior either positively or negatively. Researchers have attempted to link school climate and positive student behaviors with emotional intelligence and relationships between stakeholders. In a program developed by Bailey (1994, 2001) titled Conscious Discipline there is an integration of classroom management, emotional intelligence, and an overall school based character education program. The tenant of this program builds relationships among stakeholders and addresses those underlying issues with student behaviors. Material items and tokens for students are not used, but rather relationships develop to build long-term student expectations and the use of conflict resolution is widely used to solve problems (Hoffman, Hutchinson, & Reiss, 2009). With the connections between social-emotional skills in children and academic achievement increased support is necessary for the implementation of social-emotional interventions and programs in elementary schools (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). A number of additional studies suggest that a direct link exists between teachers' ability to manage classroom behavior and their students' learning (Ratcliff, Jones, Costner, Savage-Davis, & Hunt, 2010). In The Elephant in the Classroom: The impact of misbehavior on classroom climate the researchers conducted a one-year study at the elementary level to determine relationships between classroom management and student behavior. The teacher and student stakeholders were observed to collect quantitative data on instructional interactions in classrooms where teachers were rated strong or needs improvement. Results in this study indicated that the strong teachers built relationships and interacted with their students more and spent more time engaged in learning content. In the classrooms where the teacher was labeled as needs improvement the classrooms were characterized by student misbehavior, the

teacher spending time managing behavior, student persistence with misbehavior and an increase in additional student misbehaviors. The researchers implemented steps to provide education and professional development to those teachers that needed improvement to avoid a continued cycle of negative behaviors (Ratcliff et al., 2010). In a similar study researchers also found that studies, similar to the Ratcliff et al. (2010) study that focus on how the average student or average teacher functions on an isolated task indicate that the teacher misses the significance of their behavior. Therefore understanding how teachers and students interact in the learning environment determines how the internal relationships in a classroom impact both student and teacher behavior. In addition, it has been reported that teachers are less apt to have positive interactions with behaviorally challenging students and even avoid contact with these students as stress levels increase (Ratcliff et al. 2010). Depending on the social context, a positive academic climate helps to decrease behavior problems within the school and further increases student outcomes (Urick & Bowers, 2014).

School Staff Climate Perceptions

The improvement of student learning and achievement along with building an effective learning environment at school depend largely on the teachers' beliefs about students' academic achievement and their focus on academic tasks (Kilinc, 2013). Teachers' perceptions of school climate may have an impact on the functions of a school. Studies have shown that increased job satisfaction for school staff can be the result of a positive school climate (Caglayan, 2013). Teachers in a school with a positive climate experience less job-related stress and burnout and the school has a lower attrition rate (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). A positive school climate is also an important contributor to the development of teachers' beliefs that they can affect student learning positively (Guo & Higgins-D'Allessandro, 2011; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). In addition,

teachers' perceptions of principal support have been linked to teacher commitment, collegiality, and retention (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Multiple studies have looked at climate as a predictor of teacher commitment, but few have considered student relations as an aspect of school climate (Huang & Waxman, 2009). The impacts of student relationships and perceptions on school climate may also be considered as factors that contribute to the overall culture of an elementary school.

Student School Climate Perceptions

Students' perception of their safety is an important aspect of the school climate (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). This contributes to the overall school climate. Students who feel a sense of safety and security may have a more positive perception of their school. Past research has indicated that the school climate perceived by adolescents is a strong predictor of emotional and behavioral outcomes (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). Again, there is a link to student perceptions of school climate and student behaviors. Other factors may also be linked to student perceptions. Students' perceptions are influenced more by student-teacher relationships, and principal turnover (Caglayan, 2013). In a recent study measuring student perceptions of school climate Caglayan (2013) found that primary students have positive perceptions of school climate. They enjoy learning, actively participate in class activities and feel safe in their school (Caglayan, 2013). Also according to Caglayan's (2013) analysis, the climate perceptions of the students in smaller schools were more positive and there was greater satisfaction in students from these schools. These findings contribute to the overall correlations between student perceptions based on grade level and school size.

Parent/Guardian Perceptions

Parental involvement in schools is increasing and is becoming widely studied by researchers. An early study focused on parents' attitudes towards school and the ways parents' support children's education to determine the extent of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parental involvement can produce many positive outcomes for students including improvements in learning for students. One of the models to improve school climate and parent involvement is Invitational Education developed by Purkey, co-founder of The International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE, 2014). The concepts of Invitational Education regarding parents include creating a school environment conducive to learning and to infuse and involve parents and the overall community into the school. Parent and family perceptions of an elementary school feed into the determined school climate and dependent upon the level of involvement that exists. Parental involvement includes attending parent-teacher conferences, open house, classroom activities, and events, communication with teachers and staff about the student, volunteering, helping the students with homework and study skills (Akimoff, 1996). Although the role of parental involvement has shifted over the years, parent and family perceptions of schools is one of the factors used to determine a school's climate. It is critical to use parent and family stakeholders to accurately measure the factors that determine the personality of the school.

Teacher-Student Relationships

The teachers' relationships with the students are a pivotal aspect of any school environment and can have a powerful influence over a students' experience at school. Research has shown that students who perceive their teachers to be supportive, have greater confidence in tackling new problems and are more likely to persevere in completing challenging tasks (Loukas & Robinson, 1994). Positive teacher-student relationships may foster students' sense of

belongingness in school and promote a warm school climate (Barile, 2010). Additional research supports that schools that foster positive relationships between the teachers and students are more likely to have higher achieving students. Likely factors are both internal and external features of climate. School setting, home environment, and varied and engaging learning environments are contributing factors to a positive school climate (Barile, 2010). Based on this research study, there may be an impact on teacher interactions with students and relationships to school climate.

School Level Predictors/Classroom Level Predictors

There are many factors and reference points to consider when studying school climate. School, classroom, or individual level predictors may have an impact on school climate. One particular area of contention in examining students' perceptions of school climate has been the appropriate unit of analysis, that is, whether to analyze this construct at the school or individual level (Fan, 2011). On one hand, researchers have analyzed school climate as a property of the school at the school level by focusing on the means of raters within the school (Van Horn, 2003). There are also implications at the individual student level that may have an impact depending on individual student's frame of reference. Classroom level predictors of school climate are evident with students as the leading stakeholders. Research has indicated the student perceptions of school climate are not only associated with the features of school environment within which students are situated, but also are shaped by their individual characteristics and experiences (Fan, 2011). Research by Smith (2012) uses the five factors of invitational theory and practice from the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE, 2014) of people, place, policies, programs, and processes to address the school level and classroom level predictors. Purkey and Novak (2008) suggest that focusing on the five powerful P's that make up every school

educators can apply focus and energy to overcome the biggest challenges in the school. The people factor involves invoking trust, care inclusivity, respect, optimism, courtesy and intentionality. Place involves the function of the school, its cleanliness, efficiency, invitational nature, attractiveness and aesthetics. The policy factor involves attendance policy and initiatives, school admission and re-admission, grade promotion, discipline and grading. The program factor of invitational education involves parental involvement, community outreach, wellness, peer counseling initiatives, and enrichment opportunities. Lastly, the processes factors include collaboration, use of higher order thinking skills, networking, academic orientation, and interdisciplinary teaching opportunities (Purkey & Novak, 2008; Smith, 2012). This invitational education literature points to the importance of studying perceptions at the individual level using references pointing to school level themes.

Summary

A century of research has been devoted to understanding school climate. New initiatives towards school improvement can have an impact on school climate. There are different stakeholders who may hold a piece of the school climate puzzle. One of those stakeholders with limited research is the elementary school student. Student perceptions at the individual level can be a determining factor and have implications for school climate. Utilizing a research based measurement tool to determine themes, researchers can gauge the culture of a school and create a plan to improve the climate.

Limitations

There are some limitations to consider when studying school climate. Research has shown that stakeholder bias may exist. In this study student bias may contribute to differing results. Another potential limitation is researcher bias. By utilizing a researched measurement

tool with consistent methods to collect pre- and post- measurement data, little bias will impact this study. Another limitation of this study is the limits of school level and individual level results. The perspective of a single school-level analysis is its assumption that individual perceptions of school climate do not vary significantly across schools (Fan, 2011). However, the focus is on individual student perceptions and the relationship to the school.

Lastly, this study measures school climate at the elementary level at a school in Northwest Ohio. Study findings may only be generalized to school districts similar to the school district as described in the study (Shouppe & Pate, 2010).

Suggestions for Further Research

There are some suggestions for further research in this area of school climate. Suggestions to consider additional stakeholders such as specialized teachers, including physical education, music, art and teachers of behaviorally challenged students. Other stakeholders to consider are additional school support personnel such as occupational therapists, speech therapists, school social workers and school psychologists. It is also important to consider all parents, the overall school community, and administration to explore further options. For instance, parents' attitudes about their children's schools can have far-reaching effects, their perceptions may influence student attitudes about school, whether and how parents engage with the school, and even parents' decisions about which school their child will attend (Schueler, Capotosto, Bahena, McIntyre & Gehlbach, 2013). Also, researchers have yet to understand the extent to which the work of principals and teachers contributes to student perceptions (Urick & Bowers, 2014). The outcome may also differ with varied program implementation.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This research study used a quasi-experimental methodology to determine perceptions of school climate with three school groups in an urban elementary school setting. The method utilized a quantitative approach to the research. As supported by Creswell, the approach employs strategies of inquiry such as surveys and collects data to yield statistical data (2003). The samples in the study were administered a survey instrument as a pre-assessment to collect an initial set of data. The samples received a treatment of school initiatives involving school concepts of people, place, processes, policies, and programs throughout the school year. The sample was administered the same instrument as a post-survey to determine a change in perceptions of school climate.

Dissertation Objectives

The objective of this study was to gather information, implement a reform effort, and create a positive school climate. School reform efforts are likely to fail if they are not meaningfully linked to a school's culture (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). The efforts in this study were linked to improving a school's climate.

There are many researched survey tools in existence that have been used to measure school climate. This study utilized the Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R) (International Alliance for Invitational Education, 2014). The original Inviting School Survey (ISS) was a one-hundred item survey developed to assess invitational qualities (Smith, 2005). Later the instrument was revised to include five dimensions derived and based upon invitational theory and practice from The International Alliance for Invitational Education (Smith, 2005). The five dimensions are people, places, processes, policies, and programs. Once the instrument tool was revised to include the dimensions of Invitational Theory and Practice, Smith (2005) conducted a

study to reduce the total number of items to fifty items. The results of Smith's study (2005) confirmed that the shortened version was easier to administer, took less time for completion yet included the same reliability and internal consistency.

Hoy et al. (1993) claim that a healthy school climate defines a school environment which includes an orderly and serious workplace, a rewarding mechanism for student's academic achievement, coherent work units built upon trustworthy relationship among faculty members, and effective principals focusing essentially on student learning. The ISS-R survey instrument was selected to provide stakeholder feedback with both pre- and post- survey administration to draw conclusions about stakeholder perceptions about strategic intervention implementation. This tool closely aligns with the goals of the program, including development and instrumentation of strategic intervention in the school to address weak areas of the pre-survey feedback.

Research Design

The methodology of this research was a quasi-experimental design with a pre-and post-test instrument. The instrument to measure the school climate was the Inviting Schools Survey-Revised (ISS-R) adapted by Smith (2005). The purpose of utilizing a survey for this quantitative research was to provide numeric descriptions for school climate by studying a sample of the general population. Survey research using reliable and valid instruments includes structured questions for data collection with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (Fowler, 2014). This survey measured invitational qualities of schools based on the five basic dimensions of invitational theory supported the International Alliance for Invitational Education (2014). The original design of this instrument was the Inviting Schools Survey (ISS) developed by Purkey and his colleagues. There were numerous studies over the years to determine the

effectiveness of the instrument. In 2005, the one hundred-item survey utilizing a Likert scale measure was shortened by Smith and Bernard to fifty-items centered on the concepts of people, places, processes, policies and programs. This fifty-item, Likert scale survey was tested for concurrent and predictive validity and researchers found face and content validity exists (Smith, 2005). In this same study reliability of the ISS-R was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients and Guttman's split-half alpha coefficients and both tests revealed internal consistency was good (Smith, 2005).

It is important to conduct a research study of this caliber to uncover school climate perceptions within this urban elementary school for future research. The statistical data provided from this research quantified the information to assist this school and other elementary schools to improve the school climate.

The five basic dimensions of Invitational Education - people, places, processes, policies, and programs - were examined within the elementary school setting. These are often referred to as the 5 P's as developed through the International Alliance for Invitational Education and supported in studies by Purkey and Novak (2008). The initial measure of data collected through the administration of the ISS-R will be used to determine the focus areas of the study. According to Smith, "It is the quality of life reflected in the places they create and inhabit, by the policies and programs they establish and support, and through the processes employed to sustain their organization and environment" (2005). These five basic dimensions are the vital to the life of a school and are components that support existence of the organization on a whole.

The first "P", people, was important to signify how people can make a difference in the climate of a school. The attitudes and contributions the people bring with them to the place assist to determine the climate. "People are the most important part" (Smith, 2005). A variety of

school stakeholders can be included as part of the people portion of Invitational Theory and Practice. The staff, students, and overall school community create the climate and dictate the positive or negative aspects of it.

Place, the second "P" of the five dimensions, place, was examined around the environment of the school. The physical school building and how it serves the participants as an inviting place to work and learn is important to the school climate. The participants all have an impact on the physical environment, from how they respect and care for it to how it is maintained by the participants. The physical space includes the school building, inside the physical building and the grounds outside as well. Physical space includes seating, lighting, room sizes and uses, arrangement of furniture, working fixtures and drinking fountains, and traffic flow of vehicles and people as the drive through the school parking lot and as pedestrians walk through the school building. The physical space is often the first point of contact for a stakeholder to experience upon entering the school.

Process is a critical aspect of school climate. This is representative of how a school operates and the context of its operation. This is the structure of the organization, the leadership style of the administration, schedules, meeting structures, interactions between staff, students and parents. In the school included in the study there were current organizational processes that existed. The building leadership team comprised of grade level representatives, classified staff, and a parent is the governmental structure that makes decisions for the organization. This is an example of the site-based management school reform movement where all stakeholders have a goal of decentralizing the school and organizing the school with a focus on student learning, adult implementation of initiatives with fidelity and student achievement. Within this structure, there are sub-committees that do the work and focus the efforts of the school on specific areas of

reading, math, and school climate data, which includes school staff, students and parent representatives.

The fourth "P" of the basic dimensions is policies. With regard to policy in schools, this is how the rules, guidelines, and administrative directives are developed, maintained, communicated out to stakeholders, and how they are held accountable to school policy. This is related to the basic operation of the school. School policies include grading systems, scheduling, retention and promotion of students, and decisions made regarding discipline for students and staff.

The last basic dimension is programs and the invitational nature of school functions. Programs not only refer to school sponsored programs, but also programs and activities of the school sponsored by parent groups or in the community. School programs may include academic support programs such as the Response to Intervention (RtI) program (RTI Action Network, 2016) which collects benchmark data on students to make educational decisions based on student need and improve the core instruction in the classroom to student-initiated peer assistance programs such as a Peer to Peer student support program (START Project, 2016) to decrease bullying incidences and provide peer supports for students with special needs.

For the purposes of this study in the elementary school setting, the data was focused and collected in the five basic dimensions of people, place, processes, policies and programs. The International Alliance for Invitational Education (2014) holds basic assumptions of Invitational Theory and Practice in education. These assumptions hold that people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated that way (International Alliance for Invitational Education, 2014). Second, these assumptions hold that helping others is cooperative and a collaborative process and is just as important as the product (IAIE, 2014). The third assumption believes that

people possess untapped potential in all areas of human development, intellectually, socially, physically, emotionally, and morally (IAIE, 2014). The last assumption holds that humans have potential realized by places, policies, programs, and processes that allow the most important factor, people, to invite develop in both their personal and professional lives (IAIE, 2014). With considerations for these assumptions and the five basic dimensions, specific school-wide initiatives were implemented after the initial administration of the pre-survey. These initiatives were aligned to impact these five areas and assist to improve the elementary school climate.

With strategic interventions focused on people, the administration promoted trust, care, and respect with the stakeholders. With people within the organization being listed as the most important, the interventions were purposeful to increase transparency with communication for all stakeholders including school and staff emails, newsletters, and increase communication utilizing technology tools such as voice recorded messages to staff and families, and information via social media outlets. Staff was celebrated with opportunities for students to give positive feedback and thank their teachers and staff for the love and support that they show them each day as outlined in the school district mission statement. Staff had the opportunity participate in service to the community and local families in need. They were recognized for their efforts with appreciation luncheons and public recognition for their hard work. These are examples of the strategic interventions that focus on the efforts to provide a genuine sense of care and inclusiveness to all within the school and it was evident to the overall community.

With regard to place, there were various changes and improvements to the physical environment of the school building. The physical school building will be 100 years old in 2019. It carries many aging flaws and is in need of major structural updates, yet holds a unique character and prestigious stature like many aging school buildings. The school environment

underwent physical changes with updated landscaping, additions of flowers on the outside of the building, and the addition of new playground equipment funded by the school district. Air conditioning, which was not an expectation, was added to all classrooms. In addition, student art work was displayed in the school library for all to appreciate and view and large poster-size student photographs hung on the walls of the school entryway to improve the aesthetics of the school entrance and to create a sense of family within the school building.

School processes are representative of how a school operates including the style of the operation. Often times, this is descriptive of the leadership style of administration within the school and collaboration efforts among staff. Collaboration time was offered for teachers to co-plan lesson and activities, including educational field trips to provide real-world experiences and connections for students. Student and staff feedback is a component for school processes. By providing timely and consistent feedback to staff for improvement and reflection, opportunities for collaboration and cooperation are increased. One strategic intervention to focus on school process is the documentation of staff and student feedback to improve teaching and learning. Classroom walk-throughs allow for a sustainable feedback cycle. A classroom visitation process was developed to provide teachers with colleague supports and professional development. Opportunities for teachers to share newly learned professional development will be also included as part of the monthly staff meetings. Teachers shared strategies and activities that they learned in the professional development with all staff to adopt a train the trainer model of best practice implementation. Teachers and all school staff were also offered healthy meals several times throughout the school year to boost morale and increase staff appreciation efforts. By providing meals, snacks and a time of respite for teachers it shows them that they are appreciated for their efforts in the work place.

School policies were measured on the pre-survey followed by policy changes to include implementation of a positive behavior recognition program including a reward system for students. Students, teachers, staff and families were recognized for their hard work, team work, and involvement in the school. Promotion of daily school attendance and support to decrease tardy students was targeted along with the policies of promotion and retention for students. A designed attendance program was developed to promote attendance in school. The program included a school-wide contest daily announcements and calls home to reinforce the contest and attendance in school. The students in the winning class were rewarded for having the highest percentage of students in attendance for one month of time. Specific students and families with high numbers of tardy and absence referrals were also be targeted by teachers and staff through this attendance program. Teachers made personal contacts to each family reaching out to offer assistance in getting the students to school on time each day. Building these strong relationships with families supported the program and attempt to improve attendance overall for the school.

One way to focus on the aforementioned positive behavior recognition with students is through positive office referrals where students demonstrate one of the district's core values of responsibility, honesty, gratitude, service, dedication, trust, courage, dignity, teamwork, loyalty, respect or excellence. Another way students were recognized with the positive office referrals is through recognition of pride, attitude, work habits, or self-control. Each of these ways a student can be recognized is important to the school and district. Students were also recognized through a newly implemented student of the month recognition. Each month one student is selected as the student of the month for demonstrating the district's core values. The student was publicly recognized and represented with a t-shirt to honor their efforts. The students had their photo

taken and it was displayed in school and on social media for all to view throughout the school year.

Teachers and staff were recognized within the positive behavior recognition program by working as a team and collaborating with other teachers and staff. Individuals in this group were awarded incentives for positive efforts within the school such as volunteering to coordinate and assist with special events, serving the school community, attending student home visits, or participation in school-wide programs. The rewards are nominal gift cards, jeans or shorts passes in which teachers and staff dressed relaxed for one day with a valid pass, provided release time to collaborate with other teachers and staff, or were publicly recognized by administration on the announcements or in the weekly staff newsletter and provided with a cold beverage and a snack to enjoy.

Families were also recognized for their involvement in the school in a variety of ways. Individual families or family members were publicly recognized as the family of the month, received a nominal gift card or gift as a reward for their involvement or listed in the monthly school newsletter mailed to each school family. Community volunteers were also recognized for their dedication to the students and overall operations of the school. Approximately 100 people volunteer at the school each month to help students learn to read, stock a clothing closet for needy families or a food pantry for less fortunate. These individuals were recognized for their dedication to the school through an all school assembly and celebration at the end of the school year.

Policies were also updated to reflect a new process for employee discipline procedures. To increase transparency with communication, all levels of staff were included as part of the revised employee discipline process. All representatives took an active role in decision making

throughout the process to improve upon board adopted policies and ensure discipline procedures are followed with integrity and fairness for all employees. This strategic intervention took several months to complete and included an educational process including school law, policies, and a code of employee expectations.

Programs are another component of Invitational Theory and Practice. Programs were added to the school's special events after the pre-survey administration. The school hosted a reading event where a local prominent author visited school, provided a high-energy motivational program with a personalized book provided to each student in attendance. There was an addition of a math/science event where dynamic presentations took place to include fun, energetic mathematical and scientific experiments to the students and families. Drawings with math and science books, games, and prizes were held for students at the event to boost attendance. A reading lock-in program where students participated in reading related activities overnight at the school to promote the fun in reading and general interest in school related activities was offered and one-hundred students participated in this event. School dances including all students was also be offered as a strategic intervention. The school has had limited after-school opportunities, so these events were added to increase programming efforts and boost stakeholder participation.

Participants

The participants selected for this research study were school staff, students, and parents/guardians in an urban area of Northwest Ohio. The survey was administered at two times throughout the 2015-2016 school year. The pre-survey was completed in September 2015 to gather information about perceptions of school climate at the beginning of the school year. The instrument will be administered as a post-survey measure in May 2016 to gather information

about school climate perceptions after implementation of school-wide initiatives. These strategic initiatives involved school concepts of Invitational Education of people, place, processes, policies, and programs.

The school in which this study involved comprised of approximately 73% below the poverty threshold set by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Seventy-three percent of these students received free or reduced breakfast and lunch at the school. The school staff included as part of the survey varied from one to thirty years of experience. The teachers were 90% female and 10% male. The school staff included those holding a valid license provided by The Ohio Department of Education. Staff also included teachers, school counselor, school psychologist, literacy coach, occupational therapist, and speech therapist. The school staff also included classified staff further divided into custodians, librarians, secretaries, classroom aides and safety aides.

The school staff members were provided time to complete the survey electronically through a survey link provided to them via email and on paper. They were provided time to complete the survey as part of a staff meeting for both survey administrations. They were also provided extended time as needed to answer all questions thoroughly.

The parent/guardian sample consisted of parents, legal guardians, or those in loco parentis. This sample ranged from parents who are regularly involved in school functions to all school parents. The parents/guardians were solicited from the school parent teacher organization or in other ways. The parents/guardians involved in the parent teacher organization often plan, engage, and fully participate in school activities throughout the school year. These parents/guardians volunteer for various events and have a vested interest in the school climate

and culture. The parents/guardians were provided extended time to complete the survey as needed.

Other parents/guardians from families were randomly sampled from kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms. These parents/guardians were provided a survey through postal mail with an option to complete the survey on paper and return to school anonymously to ensure confidentiality. The parents/guardians were also provided with an option to complete the survey online with a provided web link along with provided access to the school computer lab during school hours for those without computer access.

This study included sample groups of participants from an urban elementary school consisting of approximately three-hundred fifty students. The students were all of the current fifth and sixth graders who ranged from ten to twelve years-old. There were approximately one hundred students participating in the study. The students were administered a fifty question survey in an electronic format within a computer lab setting. The students were also be allotted extended time to compete the electronic survey in its entirety.

In addition to the fifty-question survey, Inviting Schools Survey-Revised (ISS-R), the researcher added an additional open-ended question to the post-survey to determine stakeholder priorities for improving the elementary school climate (International Alliance for Invitational Education, 2016). This question will be phrased as follows "One priority for improving school climate is…" This last question lead the researcher to explore future topics within the area of elementary school climate initiatives.

Instrumentation & Data Sources

The Inviting Schools Survey, ISS-R, instrument selected for this research study was valid and reliable (International Alliance for Invitational Education, 2014). There were multiple

existing data sets with this instrument. The survey included fifty items that are aligned with the five basic dimensions recognized by the International Alliance for Invitational Education.

The data for this quantitative study were gathered comparing pre- and post- test data collected electronically through the survey. Both paper copies and electronic data were entered into the computer electronically so all data could be analyzed more easily.

To analyze the first research question the three groups - staff, students, and parents/guardians - were compared from pre-survey to determine each stakeholder group's perceptions of school climate. The data sought to differences in perceptions from the pre-survey to determine the implemented strategies.

The first set of data sources came from the staff, fifth and sixth grade students, and parent/guardian stakeholders. Each of these groups provided their perceptions by taking the ISS-R addressing questions on people, places, processes, policies and programs. Next, the stakeholder groups were compared pre-survey to post-survey to determine mean changes. The last data sources were collected to find differences between the three groups of participants and which Invitational Education (2014) dimensions of people, place, programs, processes, and policies. Through the instrumentation and data collection, the three groups, staff, students, and parents/guardians were compared to determine the greatest change in perception from the pre-test and post-test time frame.

Data Collection Procedures

School staff completed the pre- and post-surveys as part of mandatory school staff meetings in September 2015 and in May 2016. All sixty staff members provided consent in participation through the reading of a verbal script on behalf of the researcher and completion of the surveys.

The student data collected was administered in a computer lab setting. The pre- and post-surveys were collected electronically in an online format. The student data was gathered using Survey Monkey (2016) as a service and means for collecting and organizing the results for data analysis. There were approximately one-hundred students included in the student stakeholder group. All participating students received parental consent prior to administration of the surveys as part of the study.

The school family data was gathered in two separate ways. The parents/guardians attending the first parent teacher organization meeting of the school year were provided with an opportunity to complete the pre-survey in early September 2015. Parents/guardians attending the monthly parent teacher organization also had an opportunity to complete the post-survey in May 2016. Aside from those involved parents, additional school parents/guardians from school families were randomly selected to participate in the pre-and post-surveys survey provided a paper survey and a web address for electronic completion. It is upon the discretion of the parents/guardians to decide the mode of completion appropriate to their needs.

Research Questions

1. What are stakeholder priorities for improving school climate?
2. Do implemented strategies have an impact on school climate?
3. Which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perception among the three stakeholder groups?

Data Analysis

The collected data was screened and analyzed through the use of statistical testing. Descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations were used to organize the data in its entirety.

The pre- and post-surveys were tested separately for reliability utilizing the Cronbach alpha as a measure. The researcher used the raw data from both survey administrations to determine if the survey is statistically reliable and has internal consistency. The alpha was an aid to assist the researcher in making decisions about strategic interventions. The researcher utilized the alpha data from both surveys to expect correlation of the two measures since they are of the same construct.

The first research question asks – what are stakeholder priorities for improving school climate? In order to answer the first research question, the researcher used data from all three stakeholder groups, students, school staff, and parents/guardians from the pre-survey to determine the priorities for improving school climate. Strategic interventions were designed and implemented based on this pre-survey data. These interventions were implemented over the course of the 2015-16 school year.

The second research question asks - Do implemented strategies have an impact on school climate? Using statistical testing, t-tests were conducted to determine the comparisons between the groups. To address the second research question, the dependent variables of implemented strategies were studied to determine school climate initiative impact on the independent variables of school staff members on school-wide initiatives from pre-test to post-test. The first t-test assisted the researcher to determine if the school staff stakeholder group was impacted by school-wide initiatives. The t-test was used to examine the data with $p < 0.05$.

A second t-test was conducted to analyze the second set of data from the student stakeholders. The fifth and sixth grade students as the independent variables were compared from pre-test to post-test with the implementation of dependent variable of school-wide initiatives. The students were compared as one group of students and not as two separate groups

since they had both received the same amount of implemented strategies and descriptively, they were close to the same as homogeneous groups. The t-test was used to examine the data with $p < 0.05$.

The last t-test was conducted to examine the dependent variables of implemented strategies and was analyzed to determine school climate initiative impact on the independent variables of school parents/guardians. The t-test will was used to examine the data with $p < 0.05$. The parent/guardian sample was representative of the school family population.

In order to get statistically significant results when conducting the three t-tests, a Bonferroni correction was applied to ensure validity. This model set the p-value to 0.017 when computing the three t-tests to get accurate results for the study.

To address the last research question - Which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perception among the three stakeholder groups? An ANOVA test was conducted to organize a third data set by comparing all surveyed groups from pre-test to post-test using survey data. This data was split into staff, students, and parents/guardians. Comparisons were made to determine differences between the three groups to quantify which group had the greatest change in perceptions with the newly implemented strategic interventions. To ensure greater flexibility to determine the greatest change in perception, the ANOVA had the p-value set at $p<0.10$. The mean change was used from pre-test to post-test in the ANOVA to determine statistical significance between the three stakeholder groups.

The researcher sought to inform further research efforts on school climate at the elementary school level. Using the one additional question added by the researcher to the post-survey, information was anecdotally collected to guide further research. The question asked

stakeholders to share at least one priority for improving school climate. The researcher used this information to determine future strategic interventions and school-wide initiatives.

Assumptions

In implementing this study, the researcher had made certain assumptions. One assumption was that the participants took the time to read each survey question thoroughly and answered them in completeness, including the open-ended question at the end of the post-survey. The survey was estimated to take each participant 20 minutes to complete.

Another assumption was that the participants were honest in their responses to the survey items on both the pre-test and post-test. The process of administering the surveys guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and contributed to the likelihood that participants were honest in their responses. Participants were volunteers and had the opportunity to withdraw their participation in the study at any time. With the assumption that participants were honest, the researcher used the quantitative data from the statistical tests effectively to guide further research efforts.

The researcher may not have accounted for all of the variables that could affect the data. For example, using only two grade levels may have skewed the data. The researcher assumed that this sample is representative of the building's populations of students and parents/guardians.

A last assumption was that the implementation of strategic interventions and school initiatives to impact school climate were important to the stakeholders of this school. The assumption was that the stakeholders sought change and improvements through this school improvement intervention process and study.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this quasi-experimental quantitative study was to examine stakeholder perceptions of school climate within an elementary school. The stakeholders included students, school staff, and school parents/guardians. The study included the Inviting Schools Survey-Revised (ISS-R) from the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE, 2014) pre-survey administered with the three stakeholder groups at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year. Administration of the ISS-R pre-survey was intended to reveal areas of poor climate to lead the researcher to focus on improvements. To guide this improvement process the researcher developed strategic interventions within an urban elementary school consisting of kindergarten through grade six. The strategic interventions were a direct result of the pre-survey information. After the initial administration of the pre-survey the researcher used a portion of the school year to develop and integrate the strategic interventions to make significant improvements in the overall elementary school climate. At the end of the school year the same ISS-R post-survey was administered with the same sample group of stakeholders to measure and determine improvements. The post-survey included an additional question item for stakeholders to provide input. It asked stakeholders about one additional priority for improving the school climate. The purpose with using this additional item was to help the researcher focus on implementation of possible future strategic interventions.

This study is important research for the elementary school setting. School climate research in an integral part of studying school climate and the effects it has on the culture of a school. The results are intended to assist with improvement efforts at the school level.

Characteristics of the Sample

The first research question in this school climate study asks upon which implemented strategies in the school have an impact on school climate. Using the data gathered on the pre-survey in September 2015 the researcher used the information as a baseline to make decisions upon which implemented strategies to target with the stakeholder groups.

The aforementioned sample of stakeholders for the pre-survey included one hundred three students in fifth and sixth grades (45%), seventy-nine parents/guardians representing school families (35%), and forty-five staff members (20%). The staff members included both certified and classified staff employed by the school district. There were a total of two hundred twenty-seven participants in the pre-survey. The sample of stakeholders for the post-survey included ninety-seven students in fifth and sixth grades (49%), fifty-one parents/guardians representing school families (26%), and forty-eight staff members (25%). There were a total of one hundred ninety-six participants in the post-survey. Although the numbers of student, parents/guardians and staff stakeholders were not exact for each group, the groups were similarly represented for both survey administrations.

Table 1

Pre- and Post-Survey Stakeholders

	Parents/Guardians	Students	Staff Members
Pre-Survey September 2015	79 (35%)	103 (45%)	45 (20%)
Post-Survey May 2016	51 (26%)	97 (49%)	48 (25%)

The pre-survey, Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R), instrument included fifty-one items. Fifty of those items were direct statements that stakeholders rated using a Likert scale with ratings of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree and N/A, not applicable. The last item was a demographic question to allow the researcher to gather information about the stakeholder groups. The item was mandatory and asked the stakeholders

to choose the group, parents/guardian, student, or staff member that they identify with in relationship to the elementary school. The post-survey, Inviting Schools Survey-Revised (ISS-R), included fifty-two items. The first fifty items were those statements using the Likert scale with the same ratings of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree and N/A, not applicable. The last item on the post-survey included the same demographic question as the pre-survey. The post-survey included an additional item differing from the pre-survey for stakeholders to provide input on improving priorities. The item was phrased as follows "One priority for improving school climate is…" This last item leads the researcher to explore future topics within the area of elementary school climate initiatives. This item allows the researcher to gather information about the stakeholder groups and make recommendations for further school climate research.

The ISS-R survey is centered on the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) five basic dimensions of people, place, processes, policies, and programs. The fifty items are evenly distributed across the ISS-R survey. With research showing that people being one of the most critical aspects of school climate, "people are the most important part", there are more items under that dimension to gather specific data round the people aspects of school climate (Smith, 2005). Table 2 shows the number of items under each subscale. There are sixteen people items in the ISS-R survey. Place contains twelve items which is the dimension that has the second highest number of items. Process has eight items. The policies and program dimensions both contains an equal number with seven items each.

Table 2

Dimensions and Distribution of ISS-R Survey Items

Dimension	Items

People	3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42, 45, 48
Place	4, 8, 13, 16, 20, 25, 28, 32, 37, 40, 44, 49
Processes	1, 7, 14, 22, 29, 35, 43, 50
Policies	5, 11, 19, 26, 34, 41, 47
Programs	2, 10, 17, 23, 31, 38, 46

Instrument Validity and Reliability

In order to determine the reliability of the ISS-R, the researcher conducted a Cronbach Alpha for both survey administrations. In order to calculate the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, the researcher used the continuous data from this Likert scale survey to find correlations between the items on the administrations. Overall the pre-survey had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.98 indicating high reliability. In Table 3, the researcher presents the pre-survey Cronbach Alpha reliability data by subscale dimension. Below this representation of the pre-survey data is Table 4 depicting the post-survey Cronbach Alpha coefficient data by subscale of people, place, processes, policies, and programs. Overall the post-survey had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.96 indicating high reliability. Based upon both survey administrations, the subscales of people and place rated with higher reliability. In the pre-survey the subscales of policies and programs fell below 0.80 alpha. In the post-survey the policies subscale rated with the lowest reliability of .66. Besides this subscale, all other subscales in both administrations were above 0.70 suggesting an index of high reliability among the ISS-R instrument.

Table 3

Pre-Survey Cronbach Alpha

Dimension	Pre-Survey Cronbach Alpha
People	0.91
Place	0.86

Processes	0.83
Policies	0.75
Programs	0.75

Table 4

Post-Survey Cronbach Alpha

Dimension	Post-Survey Cronbach Alpha
People	0.88
Place	0.86
Processes	0.83
Policies	0.66
Programs	0.72

Research Questions

In order to answer the first research question, stated below, the researcher used data from the pre-survey to target strategic intervention strategies.

Research Question 1: What are stakeholder priorities for improving school climate?

First the researcher calculated the overall mean of the pre-survey administration for all stakeholders. Then the researcher calculated the means for each stakeholder group of parent/guardian, students, and staff. Table 5 below displays the overall means for each subgroup of stakeholders from the pre-survey. It also shows the means for all three samples of stakeholders.

Table 5

Pre-Survey Overall Means by Stakeholder Groups and All Stakeholders

	Pre-Survey Mean
Parent/Guardian	3.99

Students	3.91
Staff	4.02
All Stakeholders	3.97

Note: Participants = Parent/Guardian (35%), Students (45%), and Staff Members (20%)

Each dimension subscale of the ISS-R can be further examined descriptively. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation for each subscale from data collected on the pre-survey in September, 2015. The mean responses for the dimensions of people and process from all stakeholders were rated the highest of all subscales at 4.01 for both dimensions. The place and programs dimensions were both rated the lowest by stakeholders with a mean of 3.88. The policies dimension received the largest median range of responses for standard deviation at 0.37 with less outlying responses compared to the other dimensions.

Table 6

Pre-Survey Stakeholder Descriptive Statistics
Mean and Standard Deviation

Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.01	0.26
Place	3.88	0.20
Processes	4.01	0.29
Policies	3.92	0.37
Programs	3.88	0.25

The information for the stakeholder groups of parents/guardians, students, and staff can be further broken down to find the subscale mean and standard deviation for each individual group. Table 7 depicts the mean and standard deviation for the parents/guardians stakeholder group for the ISS-R pre-survey. The people dimension had the highest mean at 4.06 for the

parents/guardians stakeholder group of all subscales. This indicates that the people items were highly rated overall by the parents and had an impact on the results of the pre-survey.

Table 7

Pre-Survey Parents/Guardians Stakeholder Descriptive Statistics – Mean and Standard Deviation

Parents/Guardians Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.06	0.21
Place	3.98	0.2
Processes	4.04	0.21
Policies	3.97	0.33
Programs	3.86	0.27

The ISS-R pre-survey also provided information about student perceptions of school climate. Table 8 below displays the student stakeholder descriptive statistics for each subscale dimension of people, place, processes, policies, and programs. The mean for student stakeholders ranged from 4.00 to 3.76. The people dimension had the highest mean at 4.00 of all five subscale dimensions. This depicts that students rated the people items relatively high compared to the other subscales. The lowest student stakeholder mean was the program subscale at 3.86. This indicates that students rated the school programming lower than the other dimension areas.

Table 8

Pre-Survey Student Stakeholder Descriptive Statistics – Mean and Standard Deviation

Student Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.00	0.34
Place	3.76	0.31
Processes	3.99	0.46
Policies	3.86	0.57
Programs	3.99	0.23

The ISS-R pre-survey also provided information about staff perceptions of school climate. Table 9 below displays the staff stakeholder descriptive statistics for each subscale dimension. The mean for staff stakeholders ranged from 4.12 to 3.90. The people dimension had the highest mean at 4.12 of all five subscale dimensions. This depicts that school staff rated the people items relatively high compared to the other subscales. The lowest staff stakeholder mean was the program subscale at 3.90. Both the place and policies subscale means were closely rated to the policies subscale at 3.99 and 3.94, respectively.

Table 9

Pre-Survey Staff Stakeholder Descriptive Statistics – Mean and Standard Deviation

Staff Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.12	0.22
Place	3.99	0.3
Processes	4.06	0.18
Policies	3.94	0.23
Programs	3.90	0.46

To determine the stakeholder's priorities, the researcher used the reported subscale means and focused on the lowest means as an initial start for strategic intervention implementation. The overall lowest means for all stakeholders were the dimensions of place and programs. The students and staff stakeholders also rated place and programs the lowest dimension subscales. The parent/guardian stakeholder group rated the policy dimension the lowest. This stakeholder priority information provided the researcher with a focus to begin implementation of the strategic interventions. Although the researcher used these dimensions as stakeholder priorities for improving the school climate there were also efforts in the other dimension subscales to continue improvement efforts in all areas of school climate. Table 10 outlines the strategic interventions

implemented over the course of the 2015-16 school year with a focus on stakeholder priorities. The school Building Leadership Team developed the strategic interventions based upon the results of the pre-survey and building goals.

Table 10

Strategic Interventions

Subscale					
	People	Place	Processes	Policies	Programs
Strategic Intervention	Lunch Groups	Updated Landscaping	Classroom Visitations	Attendance Policy	Student Rewards
	Staff Share-out at meetings	Air Conditioning Building-wide		Building Leadership Team	Family Recognition
	Staff Recognition	New Clocks		Teacher Based Teams	Volunteer Appreciation
		New Drinking Fountains		Employee Discipline	Motivational Assemblies
		New Playground Equipment			Author Visit
		Library Make-over			Reading Night
		Student Photographs			Home Visits
					Ronald McDonald Programs
					Poverty Staff Development
					School Dances

Stakeholder Perceptions with Strategic Interventions

Research Question 2: Do implemented strategies have an impact on school climate?

In order to answer the second research question stated above, the researcher needed to gather information using the post-survey. Once the post-survey was completed, information was derived from stakeholder perceptions after intervention implementation. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation for each subscale from data collected on the post-survey in May 2016. Table 11 shows the mean responses for the people dimension from all stakeholders were rated the highest of all subscales at 4.07. The policies and processes dimensions were rated second and third highest at 4.01 and 4.00, respectively. The programs and place dimensions were both rated the lowest by stakeholders with means of 3.97 and 3.93, respectively. The processes dimension received the largest median range of responses for standard deviation at 0.30 with less outlying responses compared to the other dimensions.

Table 11

Post-Survey Stakeholder Descriptive Statistics – Mean and Standard Deviation

Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.07	0.23
Place	3.93	0.18
Processes	4.00	0.30
Policies	4.01	0.26
Programs	3.97	0.21

The data from the ISS-R post-survey for the stakeholder groups of parents/guardians, students, and staff was further broken down to find the subscale mean and standard deviation for each individual group. Table 12 depicts the mean and standard deviation for the parents/guardians stakeholder group for the ISS-R post-survey. The people dimension had the highest mean at 4.12 for the parents/guardians stakeholder group of all subscales. This indicates

that the people items were highly rated overall by the parents on the post-survey and were similarly rated on the pre-survey.

Table 12

Post-Survey Parents/Guardians Subscale Mean and Standard Deviation

Parents/Guardians Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.12	0.20
Place	4.07	0.13
Processes	4.09	0.26
Policies	3.99	0.24
Programs	3.95	0.12

The ISS-R post-survey also provided information about student perceptions of school climate. Table 13 below displays the student stakeholder descriptive statistics for each subscale dimension of people, place, processes, policies, and programs on the post-survey. The mean for student stakeholders ranged from 4.03 to 3.72. The policies dimension had the highest mean at 4.03 of all five subscale dimensions. This depicts that students rated the policies items relatively high compared to the other subscales. The lowest student stakeholder mean was the place subscale at 3.72. This indicates that students rated the school's physical space and the functions of the building lower than the other dimension areas.

Table 13

Post-Survey Student Subscale Mean and Standard Deviation

Student Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.00	0.36
Place	3.72	0.35
Processes	3.95	0.49
Policies	4.03	0.35
Programs	3.98	0.16

The ISS-R post-survey administered in May 2016 also provided information about staff perceptions of school climate. Table 14 below displays the staff stakeholder descriptive statistics for each subscale dimension. The mean for staff stakeholders ranged from 4.10 to 3.97. The people dimension had the highest mean at 4.10 of all five subscale dimensions. This depicts that school staff rated the people items relatively high compared to the other subscales. The lowest staff stakeholder mean was the process dimension subscale at 3.97 closely followed up with a low staff stakeholder mean on 3.98 in the programs subscale. Both the place and policies subscale means were closely rated to the policies subscale at 4.02 and 4.01, respectively.

Table 14

Post-Survey Staff Subscale Mean and Standard Deviation

Staff Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
People	4.10	0.27
Place	4.02	0.22
Processes	3.97	0.23
Policies	4.01	0.21
Programs	3.98	0.45

In the ISS-R (Inviting Schools Survey-Revised) is an answer option titled N/A, not applicable. For the purpose of this school climate research the N/A option has been omitted from the presentation of the data. The N/A option allowed stakeholders to continue with completion of the survey while providing the stakeholders an option to submit an answer choice. In some cases an item may not apply to the stakeholder and their experiences in the school. For example, item # 41 states, School buses rarely leave without waiting for the students. This item may not pertain to a parents/guardians stakeholder if the family provides their own transportation to and from school each day. The school bus item may not also apply to school staff members.

The researcher focused on multiple strategic interventions using the pre-survey data in the subscale dimensions of programs and policies. The researcher also targeted the subscale areas of people, place, and processes. Using pre-survey existing data the programs and place subscale dimensions had the lowest means of all the subscales with the same means of 3.88. The researcher implemented targeted strategic school program-related interventions in both of those areas. New invitational programs were added to the events and activities throughout the school year. The staff implemented a Peer to Peer program matching typical students up with students with special needs to participate in activities and building relationships to create awareness and decrease bullying incidences. Families were recognized for their service with books, resources or gift cards as a reward for their involvement in the school community. School dances were added to the calendar for the 2015-16 school year. The school hosted students and parents/guardians for two school dances in the spring of 2016. A home visit program was developed to get staff into the student's homes to build school-family relationships. A new volunteer appreciation program was developed to allow students to show gratitude to the consistent volunteers throughout the school year. An author and science expert visit was added to list of programs offered to students. A new Ronald McDonald program was added with two separate presentations on book time with Ronald and an anti-bullying message to all students. Students had an opportunity to participate in a reading lock-in overnighter where reading activities were offered and books were provided to all students. Staff was provided the opportunity to participate in professional development on poverty and its impact on schools. Lastly, students were recognized at all-school assemblies for positive behaviors and for demonstrating the district's core values. This student reward system was improved with

additional rewards for students and a quarterly motivational assembly for the entire student body to be applauded and recognized for their efforts in academics and behaviors.

To focus on the next low subscale of 3.88, place, the researcher targeted this dimension. This includes the physical space of the school building inside and outside. The physical environment was improved with updated landscaping in the front of the school. The classrooms were equipped with air conditioning. All school clocks were replaced and drinking fountains were updated. New playground equipment was installed to ensure safety of all students. The school library went through a make-over process with murals painted on the wall and the addition of popular novels for all students. Poster size student photographs were hung throughout the building to add character. These are some of the targeted strategic interventions implemented through the school year.

The policy dimension was also rated low by stakeholders on the pre-survey with a mean of 3.92. There were several improvements implemented in school policies over the course of the school year. One targeted intervention to impact school policy was a school-wide attendance program. This program supported attendance policies in the school. Home visits were also a target of the attendance policy changes. Teachers and administration made attempts to visit the homes of students with attendance issues. Two survey items relating to attendance on the ISS-R pre-survey, #41, (School buses wait for late students.) rated with the lowest mean of all items with a mean of 3.16. Another item, #22, (Everyone arrives on time for school.) rated with the second lowest mean of 3.35. With this designed attendance program to support school policies the goal was to decrease tardy and absent students on a daily basis. The school Building Leadership Team and Teacher Based Teams were developed to focus the efforts of improvements for the school. These are decision making teams that address instruction using

strategies based on student subgroup data such as the economically disadvantaged student data and special needs of students to impact the state report card. An employee discipline policy was also developed during the 2015-16 school year. It provided guidelines within a district designed scale to assist administration in determining the consequences of violations of school board policies. The goal of this program was to implement a process by which staff changes their behaviors to decrease the consequences and clearly define major and minor offenses. Although this program was recently developed it continues to be adapted to fit the needs of the school district.

The subscale dimension of people was targeted with lunch groups with small groups of students with the counselor and principal. Staff members also shared professional development concepts such as classroom management techniques, high-yield instructional strategies and technology tips at monthly staff meetings. A staff recognition program was developed to publicly reward staff for positive efforts within the school. Staff was provided with incentives, such as food, jean passes, or gift cards for their extra work.

The subscale dimension of processes was also targeted with a new classroom visitation process. Through this process, teachers were offered the opportunity to visit peer classrooms in the building as well as in other buildings throughout the school district to see peers in the field teaching and gain ideas for improvements in their teaching.

In order to answer the second research question, stated above, the researcher used data from each stakeholder group, parents/guardians, fifth and sixth grade students, and school staff to calculate the average subscale mean from each dimension using inferential statistical testing with three separate t-tests.

To address the research question #2, the researcher first determined mean change within the stakeholder groups then used t-tests to determine if the implemented strategies had an impact on school climate. Table 15 below depicts the mean change difference between the pre-survey to post-survey to determine the greatest change in perception among the three stakeholder groups. With all three stakeholder groups there were slightly positive mean change differences, yet the student and staff stakeholder groups were statistically insignificant. The greatest mean change difference was among the parent/guardian stakeholder group with a statistically significant 0.07 positive mean change difference. The students and staff stakeholder groups had slightly positive statistically insignificant change differences with a positive 0.02 and 0.01mean changes, respectively. This determines that the parent/guardian stakeholders may have had more positive perceptions about the school improvements efforts than the other two stakeholder groups.

Table 15

Pre-Survey to Post-Survey Overall Mean Change by Stakeholder Groups and All Stakeholders

	Pre-Survey Mean	Post-Survey Mean
Parent/Guardian	3.99	4.06
Students	3.91	3.93
Staff	4.02	4.03
All Stakeholders	3.97	4.01

Next the researcher conducted a t-test to determine the statistical significance of the pre-survey to post-survey mean changes. Table 16 displays the t-test data conducted by the researcher. The t-tests were computed with alpha set as $p<0.05$. The researcher compared the means using a two-tailed t-test with two samples in the calculation assuming equal variance in the populations with each stakeholder group. Based upon the results, the null hypothesis is retained for the students and staff stakeholder groups, indicating that there is no difference

between the groups from pre-survey to post-survey administrations. The results also indicated that the data within the parent/guardian stakeholder group rejected the null hypothesis indicating that there was a statistical significance between the survey parent/guardian samples from both administrations for this stakeholder group.

Table 16

Two Sample t-test to Determine the Greatest Change among Stakeholder Groups

t-test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances	p-value
Parents/Guardians	0.039
Students	0.837
Staff	0.885

Stakeholder Priorities for Improving School Climate

The last research question, stated below, represents all stakeholder priorities for improving school climate to determine the greatest change in perceptions.

Research Question 3: Which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perceptions among the three stakeholder groups?

The researcher also conducted an additional statistical equation computing the analysis of variance statistical test, ANOVA. All three stakeholder groups were compared from pre-survey to post-survey. Using the mean change from each stakeholder group, pre-survey to post-survey the researcher computed the ANOVA. The researcher used the ANOVA to test the hypothesis that all three groups of stakeholders are exactly the same from pre-survey to post-survey. In order to ensure appropriate overall alpha levels when conducting the three t-tests, a Bonferroni correction was applied to ensure validity. This model set the p-value to 0.017 and computed the three t-tests to get accurate results for the study.

Upon comparing the pre- and post-survey mean differences for each stakeholder group, the researcher found relationships between survey administrations. Table 17 displays the analysis of variance for the three stakeholder groups.

Table 17

ANOVA SUMMARY

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
Parent/Guardian	50	4.47	0.0894	0.09087
Students	50	0.77	0.0154	0.25016
Staff	50	0.4	0.008	0.16929

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	0.20261	2	0.10131	0.59554	0.5525877	4.1896
Within Groups	25.0057	147	0.17011			
Total	25.2083	149				

Since the F value is lower than the *F Critical* value, the researcher accepts the null hypothesis accepting that all of the stakeholder groups are the same and have the same pre-post change between the means for the study.

Using these statistical tests, the researcher was able to address the third research question to determine which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in improving school climate. In consideration of the all stakeholder groups the post-survey means were higher than the pre-survey. The parents/guardians showed the greatest statistically significant positive results among the samples with 0.07 change, followed by the students with 0.02 statistically insignificant positive change, then staff with 0.01 statistically insignificant positive change.

As displayed in Table 18 the mean change differences were positive in all subscales with the exception of processes, at -0.01. This subscale had the least amount of implemented strategic

interventions. It was also determined by the researcher that when there were additional strategic interventions, there was more positive changes, however these positive changes were considered statistically insignificant. Both policies and programs subscales had the highest positive mean change difference at 0.09. Consequently, they had high numbers of strategic interventions in both subscales. The people subscale also had a high positive mean change difference at 0.06 and had three strategic interventions through the school year. To answer research question 3, the attendance policy instituted teacher-based teams, new employee discipline program were most effective and caused the greatest change in perception among stakeholder groups. Similarly, the peer to peer program, student rewards, family recognition, volunteer appreciation, motivational assemblies, author visit, reading night, poverty staff development and school dances were the most effective and caused the greatest change in perception among stakeholder groups.

Table 18

Mean Change Differences
Pre-Survey to Post-Survey

Subscale	Mean Difference
People	0.06
Place	0.05
Processes	-0.01
Policies	0.09
Programs	0.09

The researcher used the last question item on the post-survey to anecdotally collect opinions of the participants for further research purposes. This survey item allowed the researcher to draw conclusions from the statistical data and make recommendations for future school climate strategic implementation initiatives. By reviewing these stakeholder priorities, the researcher set goals for future growth of the school climate at the elementary school level. These priorities range from parent/guardian responses, staff responses and student responses. The details of

these stakeholder priorities are further developed and shared in the conclusion, recommendations, and to advance future research opportunities.

Summary

The overall results of this chapter provided useful information in this study about school climate at the elementary school level. This study found strong evidence that the implemented strategies for each stakeholder group were different from one another. The findings represented and the researcher determined that the strategic interventions did indeed impact stakeholder perceptions of school climate. The data determined that the strategies were successful in changing student perceptions of school climate. These findings will assist the researcher as future studies are conducted on the topic of school climate in the elementary school.

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this study was to examine the relationships of stakeholder perceptions to school climate variables to determine the climate of a school and then examine the variables to make recommendations to improve climate within an elementary school. This school climate study used the five basic dimensions of the International Alliance for Invitational Education to measure school climate initiatives. The five dimensions include people, place, process, policy and programs.

The sample for this study was solicited from an urban elementary school in Ohio. Stakeholders included students, staff, and parents/guardians. The stakeholders completed the ISS-R survey in both paper and online formats. An additional question was added to the survey to gather anecdotal data and guide further research efforts.

Implications of these results indicate that these relationships exist and additional research is necessary to determine the extent of these relationships. This research will further address the needs to improve school climate in elementary schools.

All schools seek to maintain a positive school culture and climate. Although school climate studies have been in existence for many years, the rise in need to understand organizational climate has been on the increase. The school community of stakeholders makes the biggest impact on determining the climate. School climate has been studies as far back in time as the early 1900s beginning with Lewin's field theory (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). Once statistical models were produced, scholars began a deep interest in attempting to measure school environments. This includes personal interactions among stakeholders and the physical environment of the school. The personal interactions are related to the emotional, behavioral, or psychological environments created within the organization (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013).

In the mid-20th century measurement tools to garner stakeholder perceptions of school climate began to emerge within research. Theorists have widely studied school climate with recommendations for improvements in the formative years, school years, and in life. With increasing federal demands on schools and the educational reform movement, school climate became an increasing area of interest. To examine the impact of these reform initiatives on schools, stakeholders perceptions has become increasingly important to the overall school community. The objective of this study was to gather information, implement a reform effort, and create a positive school climate. School reform efforts are likely to fail if they are not meaningfully linked to a school's culture (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). The efforts in this study were linked to improving a school's climate.

Review of the Study

This research study used a quasi-experimental, quantitative methodology and approach to determine perceptions of school climate with three school groups in an urban elementary school setting. The samples in the study were administered a survey instrument as a pre-assessment to collect an initial set of data. The samples received a treatment of school initiatives involving school concepts of people, place, processes, policies, and programs throughout the school year. The sample was administered the same instrument as a post-survey to determine a change in perceptions of school climate.

The methodology of this research design utilized a pre-and post-test instrument. The instrument to measure the school climate is the Inviting Schools Survey-Revised (ISS-R) adapted by Smith (2005). The purpose of utilizing a survey for this quantitative research is to provide numeric descriptions for school climate by studying a sample of the general population.

At the elementary school level, school staff completed the pre- and post-surveys as part of mandatory school staff meetings in September 2015 and in May 2016. All staff members provided consent in participation for both the pre- and post-surveys through the reading of a verbal script on behalf of the researcher.

The student data for both pre- and post-survey collected were collected electronically in an online format using Survey Monkey (2016) as a service and means for collecting and completing an item and data analysis. There were approximately one-hundred students included in the student stakeholder group for both survey administrations. All participating students received parental consent prior to administration of the surveys as part of the study.

The school family data was gathered in two separate ways. The parents/guardians attending the first parent teacher organization meeting of the school year were provided with an opportunity to complete the pre-survey in early September 2015. Parents/guardians attending the monthly parent teacher organization also had an opportunity to complete the post-survey in May 2016, both utilized Survey Monkey (2016) to collect the parent/guardian data. Aside from those involved parents, additional school parents/guardians from school families were randomly selected to participate in the pre-and post-surveys survey provided a paper survey and a web address for electronic completion. It is upon the discretion of the parents/guardians to decide the mode of completion appropriate to their needs.

Discussion

Upon completion of the surveys the researcher conducted an initial analysis of the data for the entire set of pre-survey data and again with the post-survey data to gain initial information about the findings. The researcher tested both surveys with their results using Cronbach Alpha as a measure of reliability. Both survey administrations revealed high reliability

data for each of the subscales. Although some subscales had higher levels of reliability, the surveys suggested high reliability among the ISS-R instrument.

Research Question 1: What are stakeholder priorities for improving school climate?

To answer the first research question the researcher calculated the mean on the initial set of pre-survey data including all stakeholders as one group, each stakeholder group separately, and calculated means within each subscale dimension. The pre-survey data revealed that the school staff rated all five subscale dimensions of people, place, processes, policies, and programs higher than the other two stakeholder groups. The parent/guardian group was the next highest stakeholder group followed by students. The school staff comprised of both certified and classified individuals and 20% of the three stakeholder groups was the smallest represented group. Although the staff stakeholder was the least represented, it can be concluded that these individuals spend the most time of the three stakeholder groups in the school setting, so therefore they have more positive and accurate perceptions of the school climate. However, the students representing the largest of the three stakeholder groups with 45% on the pre-survey rated each of the five dimensions lower than the parent/guardian and school staff stakeholder groups. Since the students spend an equal amount of time in the school as staff members, the researcher concluded that student perceptions in each of the subscale dimensions should be a focus of the study. The implemented strategic interventions impacted all stakeholder groups, but student activities and events to improve student perceptions was a focus of the implementation.

Using the pre-survey data the researcher determined that both people and processes were equally rated high and both place and programs were rated equally the lowest among the results of all stakeholders with policies rating the middle of the subscales. Specifically, parents rated the people subscale the highest of all dimensions. Parents/guardians do not always physically

come to the school or experience the programs or policies of the school in person, but this stakeholder group is likely to encounter the people of the school multiple times a year through telephone calls, email communication, or in person meetings with teachers, other staff, administration or the office staff. This information can be used to show that parent/guardian contact with the school is perceived as positive. Students and staff also rated the people dimension with the highest pre-survey mean of all subscales. The process dimension was also consistently rated high among all three stakeholder groups with the second highest mean overall all subscales. This consistent information served as a guide of purpose and stakeholder perceptions. The process dimension wasn't considered a priority based on the pre-survey data for the stakeholders needing improvements. Focusing on the consistency of the lowest subscales of policies, programs and place the researcher used the pre-survey data to make the most efforts to improve perceptions. The pre-survey information gave the researcher positive information and lead the research to the lowest subscales as a focus.

Upon delving into the results deeper, the researcher began to determine the descriptive statistics for each stakeholder group to determine the focus of the strategic interventions. Parents and staff both rated programs the lowest subscale, while students rated place the lowest subscale. Overall it was the perceptions of the parent/guardian and staff that programming could be improved overall. The researcher used this information to offer additional programs throughout the year that would directly impact the parents and increase their participation with the school. While some of the programming also affected students and required their participation along with the parent stakeholder group the researcher concluded that this would shed positive results leading into the post-survey. Programs that were offered included the addition of student rewards and incentives.

Using existing data from the program subscale dimension with the lowest mean of all the subscales with a 3.88, the researcher co-planned with school staff and hosted several special programs between survey administrations. One main strategic intervention was the promotion of a positive discipline program titled, PAWS. This is an acronym for Pride, Attitude, Work Habits, and Self-Control. The Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) committee, consisting of school staff and students created a matrix of guidelines for students to follow with accompanying videos to promote the positive behaviors. Student incentives and recognition were built into the programs to reward students for making positive choices in regards to their behavior. Students were recognized at motivational all school assemblies with music, dancing, special guests, and prizes. Students were also recognized by demonstrating the monthly district core values. Two students from each grade level were recognized for each of the 12 monthly core values. The district's core values are responsibility, honesty, gratitude, service, dedication, trust, courage, dignity, teamwork, loyalty, respect and excellence.

Next, the school hosted an author visit where the author presented his works and presented one book title during a story time to the students. Each student also received an autographed book from the author. After the author visit, the school hosted a math/science event with a dynamic presentation from local scientists conducting fun educational experiments for the students and parents. All students were included random drawing for math and science books and games. Two school dances were planned for all students to attend on two separate weekend evenings in the spring. Students had opportunities to participate in a photo booth and random drawings were held to reward students in attendance. Students were able to participate in dance activities and enjoy refreshments. Lastly, a reading lock-in night was co-planned to host students in third through sixth grades to participate in reading activities and spend the night at school. It

was a weekend event hosted by school staff including guest author visits, educational games, and giveaways. One hundred students participated in the overnight event, consisting of 29% of the student population.

The next targeted subscale dimension was the policy. There were several improvements in school policies over the course of the school year. Employee discipline was the first of one of the updated policies. Prior to this intervention implementation, employees were open to discipline by the administration with a variable range disciplinary actions and consequences. Through a specifically designed framework, employees and administration created focus groups to model an appropriate range of disciplinary causes and effects. It increased transparency with communication and ensured disciplinary procedures were followed with integrity and fairness for all employees. The overall goal of such a policy change was to modify employee behavior with the hope of improvements. This modeled program was agreed upon by all parties including the unions and was integrated and utilized by the administration as a pilot program through the course of the school year.

An attendance program was implemented to impact the school attendance program since the two survey items relating to the topic had the lowest means of all items. The program included a monthly school-wide contest with daily announcements and calls home to reinforce the contest and attendance in school. The students in the winning class were rewarded for having the highest percentage of students in attendance for one month of time. Specific students and families with high numbers of tardy and absence referrals were targeted by teachers and staff through this attendance program. Teachers made personal contacts to each family reaching out to offer assistance in getting the students to school on time each day. Home visits were conducted by school staff to those families having attendance issues. Building these strong

relationships with families continued to support the program and attempted to improve attendance overall for the school.

The place dimension was another priority to improve overall stakeholder perceptions. The students rated place the lowest of all stakeholders on the pre-survey. Based on the anecdotal responses from the students on the additional post-survey item, place was a high priority for continuing strategic implementations in the future. Through the course of the study several improvement to place were designed to impact all stakeholder groups, but specifically focus on the students. The physical environment was improved with updated landscaping in the front of the school. The classrooms were equipped with air conditioning, which impacted both students and school staff. All school clocks were replaced and drinking fountains were updated. New playground equipment was installed to ensure safety of all students. The school library went through a make-over process with murals painted on the wall and the addition of popular novels for all students. Poster size student photographs were hung throughout the building to add character and build the sense of family throughout the school building.

With this new information the researcher focused these aforementioned multiple strategic interventions using the pre-survey data in the subscale dimensions of programs, policy, and place to improve stakeholder perceptions. The researcher also targeted the subscale areas of people and processes minimally to improve the school climate in those subscale areas as well.

Research Question 2: Do implemented strategies have an impact on school climate?

After strategic intervention implementation, the researcher conducted statistical testing to determine the effectiveness of the interventions in each subscale on the school stakeholder perceptions of the school climate. Although there were small statistical insignificant mean change differences for the student and staff stakeholder groups, the parent/guardian stakeholder

group had statistical significance, yet not substantially meaningful results. These results lead the researcher with interest to further studies on school climate.

Using the data presented on the statistically insignificant mean change differences from pre-survey to post-survey within the student and staff stakeholder groups, the researcher determined that there were no differences between these stakeholder groups in this study. There are multiple variables that may have affected the outcomes in this study.

First, the sample size utilized in the study was taken from a small population of urban elementary stakeholders of school staff, fifth and sixth grade students, and parents/guardians. The stakeholder sample may have been too small to gain statistically significant results. According to the research from Newman et al. (2006) that teachers and students at smaller schools have more positive perceptions of their school climate. This research supports that smaller schools and classroom sizes have positive impacts on the overall collaboration among teachers, student learning, and positive social and emotional interactions among students and staff. Also according to Caglayan's (2013) analysis, the climate perceptions of the students in smaller schools were more positive and there was greater satisfaction in students from these schools. These findings contribute to the overall correlations between student perceptions based on grade level and school size. Although this research study showed statistically insignificant results with the students, the sample size may have not been the only indicator of the results.

Another possible indicator is the length of the school climate program. The amount of time provided by the researcher for implementation of the strategic interventions was approximately eight months during the 2015-16 school year. The time frame and length of the program provided may have been too short to provide statistically significant mean change differences. By increasing the time frame and length of the program to allow the strategic

interventions continue and improve school-wide goals and initiatives, the researcher may improve results on behalf of school climate studies.

Along with the theoretical considerations of school climate and strategic interventions, it is important to ensure that the selected interventions align to the overall culture of the school to create positive improvements. For instance, if new initiatives are developed into school expectations these initiatives must align with the climate and culture of the school. Otherwise, full acceptance of any new initiatives could be unsuccessful. Based upon theoretical considerations and the philosophy of Invitational Education from International Alliance for Invitational Education, schools should be welcoming and hold basic assumptions (IAIE, 2014). One reason why there may not have been statistically significant mean differences within the student and staff stakeholder groups from pre-survey to post-survey may be due to selection of strategic interventions and their alignment with the school's goals. The school culture characteristics that are likely to support successful implementation include collaboration, connections among staff, a sense of family and the quality of relationships between students (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). In this study the selection of the initiatives by the researcher may need to evaluate and align with school district and stakeholder priorities through the continued collection of perception data. The selection of future strategic interventions could be based upon The National School Climate Standards (2007). With these standards researcher can use the school community to create a shared vision and plan for promoting it, sets policies for development of skills, practices to identify, prioritize, and support the affective learning domain, create a welcoming physical environment and meaningful, civic practices (2007). These standards are useful for school administrators, personnel, and any school stakeholders to be accountable and set priorities for improving school climate.

Research Question 3: Which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perceptions among the three stakeholder groups?

After examining the pre-survey to post-survey mean change differences for all five subscales the researcher was able to draw some conclusions with the data. Although the study revealed statistical insignificance with regard to the subscales, there were relationships evident. Programs and policies subscales showed the greatest positive differences, along with the people and place subscales. In each of these subscales there were greater amount of strategic interventions employed during the school year. The only mean change difference, which was also statistically insignificant, was the processes subscale. Consequently, this scale has the least amount of strategic interventions.

With this research study there were slight positive changes within the subscale that had greater strategic interventions employed throughout the school year. With an increased amount of time for improvements and additional interventions, the school could have increased positive change over time. By increasing the sample size as it is related to the literature, increasing the time for the length of programming, and additional interventions employed, the implications on the school may have greater effects on the climate and overall culture.

The post-survey included an additional item differing from the pre-survey for stakeholders to provide input on improving priorities. The item was phrased as follows, "One priority for improving school climate is…" This last survey item lead the researcher to explore future topics within the area of elementary school climate initiatives. The anecdotal responses were aligned by the researcher into the five dimensional subscale outlined by the International Alliance for Invitational Education (2014), people, place, policy, programs, and processes. Out of a total of 20 parent/guardian responses, seven were identified as people items mostly relating

to students being respectful and getting along with others and requests for additional parental involvement opportunities within the school community. Seven additional responses were related to programming priorities at the school. There were requests for additional student events, food options in the cafeteria at lunch, rewards for students, and specialized classes for students. There were five process responses with priorities aligning with discipline programming and greater accountability for students.

To determine stakeholder priorities for the student stakeholder group, the responses were also coded for reliability purposes to align with IAIE and the five dimensions. Out of a total of 81 responses, the majority with 34 were aligned to programming priorities. Students were requesting more options at recess, additional lunch choices, field trip options, and specialized class options. Eighteen responses were aligned to place with requests for more cool air in the fall and spring and warmer air in the winter. Students also requested more comfortable furniture, and improved water fountains. Eleven anecdotal responses were collected regarding the people dimension. Students requested mutual respect from adults, opportunities for students to show pride, leadership, kindness, and offer to help one another. There was also a request to warmly welcome guests and visitors to the school in multiple ways.

Staff stakeholders also provided anecdotal responses to determine their priorities for improving school climate. Out of 11 responses, both the people and processes dimensions had five responses and place had one response. In regards to people, the staff shared that they want to be offered help and expect others to be nice to one another, including mutual respect, and the request that staff is shown appreciation for the hard work and efforts they put forth every day. In regard to processes, the staff shared that they prefer standards for discipline procedures with a clear structure for both rewards and consequences for various types of behavior, and requests to

improve staff knowledge on the processes for dealing with students with special and unique needs.

Conclusion

The overall results of this study provided useful information in this study about school climate at the elementary school level. This study found strong evidence that the implemented strategies for each stakeholder group were different from one another. The findings represented and the researcher determined that the strategic interventions did indeed impact stakeholder perceptions of school climate. The data determined that the strategies were successful in changing student perceptions of school climate. These findings will assist the researcher as future studies are conducted on the topic of school climate in the elementary school.

Teachers in the field may find this study useful as they may attempt to improve their school climate or culture. The strategies in this study may be replicated for future uses in any school. Educators may use the strategic interventions as a model for improving their working conditions, increasing student or parent/guardian involvement in the school community, or improve student behaviors with these strategies. These findings may also serve as a model for future studies in the educational community.

Recommendations

The first recommendation based upon this research study is that the strategic interventions should continue to be implemented, supported, and improved upon in future school years. The model of conducting an annual pre-survey followed by a post-survey should continue and be based upon stakeholder priorities to continue school climate improvement efforts at the elementary school level. The model will also support the stakeholders in developing school-

wide annual goals for improvement. The stakeholders included in these continued model programs should be increased to represent additional representative samples and increase the validity of the programming.

Replication of school climate programs, components, and initiatives are recommendation after completion of this study. Using a program developed and implemented by Pedersen, Yager, and Yager (2012) is an example. In Student Leadership Distribution: Effects of a student-led leadership program on school climate and community, Pederson, Yager, and Yager (2012) focused on student leadership roles and the impact of a positive school-wide climate, a positive impact on their own development, and a positive influence of their peers. This program, related to student roles in program implementation provided a framework for other school climate studies. Three themes emerged that contributed to the success of the program: school-wide collaboration and trust, adequate time for growth and development, and leadership support teams (Pedersen et al., 2012). This researched study had an impact of the development, implementation and evaluation of the program of future studies on stakeholder perceptions of elementary school climate and improvements to school climate and culture.

Future Research Opportunities

The opportunity for future research in regards to this study is to continue the efforts of surveying stakeholders to determine and define priorities for school improvement at the elementary level. Although the results in this study culminated with mostly statistically insignificant differences between both the stakeholders and the subscale dimensions, there were some findings with the results to continue research in this school. Further research benefits the stakeholders of staff, students and parents/guardians and strives to improve working and learning conditions and impressions of the school upon the overall community. The opportunity to use

valid and reliable surveys with featured stakeholders to make decisions in the best interest of the students and their learning impacts the community and society where individual provide input, monitor strategic interventions, evaluate change, and continue school improvement efforts.

REFERENCES

Akimoff, K. (1996). *Parent involvement: An essential ingredient for a successful school* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?q=akimoff&ft=on&id=ED400930

Aldridge, J. & Ala'l, K. (2013). Assessing students' views of school climate: Developing and validating the what's happening in the school questionnaire. *Improving Schools 16(1),* 47-66.

Aypay, A., Tas, A, & Boyaci, A. (2012). Teacher perceptions of school climate in elementary schools. *The New Educational Review, 29*(3), 227-238.

Bailey, B.A. (1994). *There's got to be a better way: Discipline that works.* Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance.

Bailey, B.A. (2001). *Conscious discipline: 7 basic skills for brain smart classroom management*. Oviedo, FL.: Loving Guidance.

Barile, J.P., Donohue, D.K., Anthony, E.R., Baker, A.M., Weaver, S.R., & Henrich, C.C. (2012). Teacher-student relationship climate and school outcomes: Implications for educational policy initiatives. *Juvenile Youth Adolescence, 41*, 256-267.

Brookover, W. (1978). Elementary school social climate and school achievement. *American Educational Research Journal,* 15, 301-318.

Caglayan, E. (2013). The relationship between school climate perceptions and school size and status. *E-International Journal of Educational Research, 4(4),* 100-116.

Campbell, D. & Stanley, J. (1963). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago, IL: Rand-McNally.

Choi, N., & Chang, M. (2011). Interplay among school climate, gender, attitude toward mathematics, and mathematics performance of middle school students. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, *6*(1), 15-28.

Clark, R. (2003). The Essential 55. NY: Hyperion.

Clark, R. (2004). The Excellent 11. NY: Hyperion.

Cohen, J., McCabe, E., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, *111*(1), 180-213. Retrieved from http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15220

Collie, R.J., Shapka, J.D. & Perry, N.E. (2012). School climate and socio-emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104(4),* 1189-1204.

Corso, M.J., Rawlings, S., Reed, S. & Thompson, M. (2013). My Voice Ohio: Year Two Report. Retrieved from http://rtttnews.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/myvoiceohio_year2_final.pdf

Covey, S. R. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. NY: Free Press

Covey, S. R. (2008). *The leader in me: How schools and parents around the world are inspiring greatness, one child at a time* (1st Free Press hardcover ed.). NY: Free Press.

Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Delisio, E. (2011, January 10). *Education World*. Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/aadmin/admin/admin618.shtml

Fan, W., Williams, C.M. & Corkin, D.M. (2011). A multilevel analysis of student perceptions of school climate: The effect of social and academic risk factors. *Psychology in the Schools, 48(6),* 632-647.

Freiberg, H. (1998). Measuring school climate: Let me count the ways. *Educational Leadership, 56*(1), 22-26.

Fowler, F. (2014). *Survey research methods.* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gardner, P. W., Ritblatt, S. N., & Beatty, J. R. (2000). Academic achievement and parental school involvement as a function of high school size. *The High School Journal, 83*(2), 21–27.

Goldkind, L. & Farmer, G.L. (2013). The enduring influence of school size and school climate on parents' engagement in the school community. *School Community Journal, 23(1),* 223-244.

Gruenert, S. (2008). School Climate. *Principal*. Retrieved from https://www.naesp.org/resources/2/Principal/2008/M-Ap56.pdf

Guo, P. and Higgins-D'Allesandro, A. (2011). The place of teachers' views of teaching and promoting positive school culture and student prosocial and academic outcomes. Paper

presented at the Association for Moral Education Annual Conference, October 10, 2011, Nanjiing, China.

Halpin, A.W., & Croft, D. B. (1963). The organizational climate of schools. Chicago: Midwest Administration Center of the University of Chicago.

Hattie, J. (2009). Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. NY: Routledge.

Hoffman, L., Hutchinson, C., & Reiss, E. (2009). On improving school climate: Reducing reliance on rewards and punishment. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 5*(1), 13-24.

Hoover-Demsey, K. & Sandler, H. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research, 67*, 3-42.

Hoy, W.K. and Sabo, D.J. (1998). Quality middle schools: Open and healthy. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Hoy, W. K. (1990). Organizational climate and culture: A conceptual analysis of the school workplace. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 1*(2), 149-168.

Hoy, W.K. (2014, November 12). The organizational climate description for elementary schools (OCDQ-RE). Retrieved from http://www.waynekhoy.com/ocdq-re.html

Hoy, W.K. & Clover, S.I.R. (1986). Elementary School climate: A revision of the OCDQ. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 22*(1), 93-110.

Hoy, W. K. & Miskel, C. G. (2005). Educational administration: Theory research and practice (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hoy, W.K., Tarter, C.J. & Kottkamp, R.B. (1991). Open schools/healthy schools: Measuring organizational climate, Newbury Park: Sage.

Hoy, W.K. and Woolfolk, A.E. (1993). Teachers' sense of efficacy and the organizational health of schools. Elementary School Journal, 93: 355-372.

Huang, S. L., & Waxman, H. C. (2009). The association of school environment to student teachers' satisfaction and teaching commitment. Teaching and Teacher Education, 25, 235 – 243. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2008.07.015

International Alliance for Invitational Education (2014, November 20). International Alliance For Invitational Education: Promoting Positive Climates For Learning, Leading, and Living. Retrieved from http://www.invitationaleducation.net/

Johnson, B. & Stevens, J. (2006). Student achievement and elementary teachers' perceptions of school climate. *Learning Environments Research, 9(2),* 111-122.

Jones, S., & Bouffard, S. (2012). Social and emotional learning in schools: From programs to strategies. Social Policy report. 26 (4), *Society for Research in Child Development.*

Karakose, T. (2008). The perceptions of primary school teachers on principal cultural leadership behaviors. *Educational Sciences: Theory and practice, 8(2),* 569-579.

Keiser, K.A. & Schulte, L.E. (2009). Seeking the sense of community: A comparison of two elementary schools' ethical climates. *The School Community Journal, 19(2),* 45-58.

Kenney, J.B. & Rentz, R.R. (1970). The organizational climate of school in five urban areas. *The Elementary School Journal, 71(2),* 61-69.

Kilinc Cagatay, A. (2013). The relationship between individual teacher academic optimism and school climate. *International Journal of Educational Sciences, 5(3),* 621-634.

Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise and other bribes.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Lewin, K. (1936). *Principles of topological psychology.* New York: McGraw.

Loukas, A. and Robinson, S. (2004). Examining the moderating role of perceived school climate in early adolescent adjustment. Journal of research on Adolescence, 14, 209-233.

Marshall, M. L. (2004). *Examining School Climate: Defining Factors and Educational Influences* [white paper, electronic version]. Retrieved (January 18, 2016) from Georgia State University Center for School Safety, School Climate and Classroom Management website: http://education.gsu.edu/schoolsafety/

Meravigila, M.G., Becker, H., Rosenbluth, B., Sanchez, E. & Robertson, T. (2003). The expect respect project: Creating a positive elementary school climate. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 18(11),* 1347-1360.

Mitchell, M. & Bradshaw, C. (2013). Examining classroom influences on student perceptions of school climate: The role of classroom management and exclusionary discipline strategies. Journal of School Psychology, 51, 599-610. doi: 10.1111/j.1746-1561.2010.00501.x.

Mitchell, M. Bradshaw, C. & Leaf, P. (2010). Student and teacher perceptions of school climate: A multilevel exploration of patterns of discrepancy. *Journal of School Health, 80*(6), 271-279.

Murray, H.A. (1938). *Explorations in personality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

National School Climate Council (2014 November 5). School Climate Improvement Process. Retrieved from http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/process.php

Newman, M., Garrett, Z., Elbourne, D., Bradley, S., Noden, P., Taylor, J., et al. (2006). Does secondary school size make a difference? A systematic review. *Educational Research Review, 1*(1), 41-60.

Ohio Department of Education. (2016, February 6). *Student Voice (My Voice).* Retrieved from http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Data-Tools-Portal/About-Data-Tools/My-Voice

Ohio Department of Education. (2014, November 25). *Teacher Evaluations.* Retrieved from http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Ohio-s-Teacher-Evaluation-System

Patterson, J. A., Hale, D., & Stessman, M. (2007). Culture contradictions and school leaving: A case study of an urban high school. *High School Journal, 91*(2), 1-15.

Pedersen, J., Yager, S. & Yager, R. (2012). Student leadership distribution: Effects of a student-led leadership program on school climate and community. *Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 7(2)*, 1-9.

Pepper, K. and Thomas, L.H. (2002). Making a change: The effects of the leadership role on school climate. Learning Environment Research, 5: 155-166.

Purkey, W., & Novak, J. (1996). Inviting school success: A self-concept approach to teaching and learning (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Purkey, W., & Novak, J. (2008). Fundamentals of invitational education. Kennesaw, GA: International Alliance for Invitational Education.

Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations (2015, July 20). *Quaglia School Voice Surveys.* Retrieved from http://qisa.org/services/studentvoice.jsp

Ratcliff, N.J., Jones, C.R., Costner, R.H., Savage-Davis, E., & Hunt, G.H. (2010). The elephant in the classroom: The impact of misbehavior on classroom climate. *Education, 131 (2),* 306-314.

Rhodes, J.E. Camic, P.M., Milburn, M., & Lowe, S.R. (2009). Improving middle school climate through teacher-centered change. *Journal of Community Psychology, 37(6),* 711-724.

RTI Action Network (2016). A program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities. Retrieved from http://www.rtinetwork.org/

Safer Schools Ohio. (2015, June 5). *Ohio School Climate Guidelines.* Retrieved from https://saferschools.ohio.gov/content/ohio_school_climate_guidelines

Schneider, S.H. & Duran, L. (2010). School climate in middle schools. A cultural perspective. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 8(2),* 25-37.

Schueler, B. E., Capotosto, L., Bahena, S., McIntyre, J., & Gehlbach, H. (2014). Measuring parent perceptions of school climate. *Psychological Assessment 26(1),* 314-320.

Shouppe, G. & Pate, J. (2010). Teachers' perceptions of school climate, principal leadership style and teacher behaviors on student academic achievement. *National Teacher Education Journal, 3(2),* 87-98.

Singh, K., & Billingsley, B.S. (1998). Professional support and its effects on teachers' commitment. Journal of Educational Research, 91, 229–239.

Smith, K. (2005). *The Inviting School Survey-Revised (ISS-R).* A survey for measuring invitational qualities (I.Q.) of the total school climate. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice, 11,* 35-53.

Smith, K. (2012). The history and development of the inviting school survey: 1995-2012. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice, 18,* 57-67.

Smith, K. & Bernard, J. (2004). The psychometric properties of the inviting school survey (ISS): An Australian Study. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice, 10,* 7-25.

START Project. (2016). Peer to peer support for students with ASD. Retrieved from https://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/peer-to-peer-support-for-students-with-asd-93.htm

Survey Monkey (2016). Free online survey software and questionnaires. Retrieved from https://www.surveymonkey.com/

Urick, A., & Bowers, A. (2014). The impact of principal perception on student academic climate and achievement in high school: How does it measure up? *Journal of School Leadership, 24,* 386-414.

U.S. Department of Health. (2015). 2015 poverty guidelines: U.S. federal poverty guidelines used to determine financial eligibility for certain federal programs. Retrieved from http://aspe.hhs.gov/POVERTY/15poverty.cfm

Van Horn, M.L. (2003). Assessing the unit of measurement for school climate through psychometric and outcome analyses of the school climate survey. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 63, 1002-1019.

Webster, B., & Fisher, D. (2003). School-level environment and student outcomes in Mathematics. *Learning Environments Research*, *6*(2), 309-326.

Wessa P. (2014) Cronbach alpha (v1.0.3) in free statistics software (v1.1.23-r7). Office for Research Development and Education. Retrieved from http://www.wessa.net/rwasp_cronbach.wasp/

Williams, Y. (2016). What is perception in psychology? – Definition and Theory. Retrieved from http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-perception-in-psychology-definition-theory-quiz.html

Zullig, K. (2010). Relationships among school climate domains and school satisfaction. *Psychology in the Schools*, *48*(2), 133-145.

APPENDIX A

FINDLAY
THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY
Institutional Review Board

Date: **August 28, 2015**

To: Dr. Natalie Abell

CC: Lisa Morse

RE: Relationships of Stakeholder Perceptions of School Climate

Project Expiration date: August 28, 2016

The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board (IRB) has completed its review of your project utilizing human subjects and has granted authorization. This study has been approved for a period of one year only. The project has been assigned the number **938**.

In order to comply with UF policy and federal regulations, human subject research must be reviewed by the IRB on at least a yearly basis. If you have not completed your research within the year, it is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that the **Progress Report** is completed and sent to the IRB in a timely fashion. The IRB needs to process the re-approval before the expiration date, which is printed above.

Understand that any proposed changes may not be implemented before IRB approval, in which case you must complete an **Amendment/Modification Report**.

Following the completion of the use of human subjects, the primary investigator must complete a **Certificate of Compliance form** indicating when and how many subjects were recruited for the study.

Please refer to the IRB guidelines for additional information. This packet can be obtained within blackboard under community section. Please note that if any changes are made to the present study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please include that number on any other documentation or correspondence regarding the study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (419) 434-5442 or email irb@findlay.edu.

Sincerely,

Susan W. Stevens EdD, AT

Susan W. Stevens, EdD., AT
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Cc: IRB Office

APPENDIX B

FINDLAY
THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY

Office Use Only
Project # _____
_____ Exempt Review
_____ Expedited Review
_____ Full Review

Institutional Review Board

Investigator's Summary Description of Research Involving the Use of Human Subjects

PROJECT TITLE: RELATIONSHIPS OF STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE	
SUBMISSION DATE: 6/8/2015	**PROPOSED START-UP DATE: 9/1/2015**
COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION	
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A	
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI): DR. NATALIE ABELL	
PI CONTACT (PHONE, E-MAIL, ADDRESS): 419-434-4867, ABELL@FINDLAY.EDU, THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY, 1000 NORTH MAIN STREET, FINDLAY, OHIO 45840	
STUDENT/SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR(S) (SI): LISA MORSE	
STUDENT/SI CONTACT (PHONE, E-MAIL, ADDRESS): 419-693-4903, LMORSE@FINDLAY.EDU, 524 GEORGETOWN DR. OREGON, OHIO 43616	
TYPES OF DATA (*Choose All That Apply*)	**REASON FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED**
__✓__ Primary Data ____ Secondary Data	____ Faculty Research ____ Undergraduate Course Number: _____ ____ Graduate Course Number: _____ __✓__ Master Project/Thesis/Dissertation*: _____ ____ Other:_____ **Note: Before applying for human subjects review, masters project, thesis or dissertation proposal must be formally approved by the project advisor or thesis committee, and a copy of the informed consent must accompany this form to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).*
TYPE OF RESEARCH *(Choose One)*	
__✓__ Quantitative ____ Qualitative ____ Mixed-Methods	
RESEARCH DESIGN *(Choose One)*	**RESEARCH INVOLVES EXTERNAL ORGANIZATION**
____ Experimental _✓_ Quasi Experimental ____ Non-Experimental	____ No __✓__ Yes: _Washington Local Schools_____ (Approval Documentation Must be Provided)

I hereby certify that upon approval of this proposal by the IRB, no changes will be made without approval of the IRB, and that any problems, adverse reaction, or unforeseen conditions encountered in the use of human subjects will be immediately reported to the Chair of the IRB. I further agree to supply the IRB with all requested reports and a Certificate of Compliance upon completion of the project.

_____ _____
Principal Investigator's Signature Date

_____ _____
Student Researcher's Signature Date

_____ _____
Program Director's Signature Date

_____ _____
IRB Chair's Signature Date

The IRB approval of the research project is for a period of one year.

University of Findlay IRB Proposal

Consent/assent forms, instruments, recruitment material and other requested documentation to be attached as appendixes to this proposal

1. Project Introduction/Overview

Please provide your statement of purpose, significance of study, and relevant supporting literature

The problem of school climate within elementary schools has not been widely studied to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders, school staff, students, and families. The research that exists has limitations and further research is needed to find more information on underlying issues. This research has meaning for all of these individuals because school climate affects stakeholder satisfaction of the school environment, from parental involvement, student learning, staff morale, and general interest in the school from a community standpoint. According to Zullig (2011) "school climate has been associated with important school outcomes" (p.134). These outcomes of people, place, processes, program, and policy can have strong influences on the goal of helping students learn and progress and on the wider school community.

Measuring stakeholder perceptions is a first step in establishing this study. There are some issues with measuring teacher perceptions on reaching a positive school climate. As noted by Freiburg (1996) "no single factor determines a school's climate" (p.22). There are many factors that determine a school's climate, such as the people, place, programs, policies, and processes. This study will focus on these multiple factors that could have an impact on creating a positive climate within a school.

These factors may include the quality of relationships with the school building. As stated by Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009), "school climate has been shown to be determined by the quality of relationships between individuals at a school, the teaching and learning that takes place, collaboration between the teachers and administrative staff, and the support present in a particular school" (p.183). These factors all play a part in diagnosing a school's climate. The research in this study will evaluate these perception factors, among others, to assist with determining the reasons that the relationships connect to school climate.

The information gathered on the perceptions of the climate will determine the steps that will eventually need to take place to improve the culture. There are always improvements with any process to be made. With this data, practitioners in education, especially in schools, can take this new information and apply it to work on relationships, begin new programs, or build trust with in the school while maintaining collegiality with others. This study addresses the relationship of stakeholder perceptions to school climate. This research employs an investigation that will specifically focus on school staff, students, and family perceptions and will explore solutions to address any misconceptions. This research will be conducted in a timely manner over the course of the 2015-16 school year including pre-survey, strategic intervention implementation, post-survey, data analysis, and recommendations for further research.

2. Research Question and/or Research Hypothesis

Please provide concise answers

- What are stakeholder's priorities for improving school climate?
- Do implemented strategies have an impact on school climate?
- Which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perception among the three stakeholder groups?

3. Setting ☑*Is the study conducted in, or recruited from the following categories?*

__✓__Private/Public P-12 ____Hospital ____ College ____ General Public ____Other

Please describe setting used:

Pretest, strategic intervention implementation, and posttest will be conducted within a K-6 elementary school building, unless an alternative setting is mutually agreed upon between the researcher and subjects.

4. Subjects

a. Characteristics of Subject Group ☑*Are any of the subjects in the following categories?*

____ Pregnant ____ Fetus __✓_ Children ____ Mentally Impaired ____ Legally Restricted _✓_Other

Please describe subjects used:

The adults in this study are not in any of these categories unless the female is pregnant and that is not known. The children are 5th and 6th grade students will provide parental consent to participate in the study.

b. Health of Subject Group ☑*Check the physical and mental health of the subjects for inclusion in this study.*

Physical Health: ____ Poor ____ Good ____ Excellent __✓__ Unknown

Mental Health: ____ Poor ____ Good ____ Excellent __✓__ Unknown

Please state the necessity of using these particular groups:

There are no known or anticipated risks to the subjects.

c. Subject Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:

Please describe the population and provide concise and complete answers for inclusion and/or exclusion criteria:

Practicing teachers and staff in a K-6 public elementary school, 5th and 6th grade students, families of public elementary school students

d. Recruitment of Subjects: ☑ *Check which one applies to the recruitment of your subjects.*

____ Recruitment of UF class, students, or personnel __✓__ Outside agencies, schools, organizations, or data base ____ Open call for particpants (general public)

Please describe how you will recruit participants and attach copies or script (if recruiting orally) of the recruitment material (e.g. flyers, advertisements, letters, etc.):

School staff of Wernert Elementary School will be invited to participate in the study through an informed consent invitation (attached). The school staff currently works with the secondary investigator (L. Morse). Fifth and sixth grade students of Wernert Elementary School will be invited to participate orally by the secondary investigator (L. Morse) after collection of approved parental consent forms (attached). Families including parents and/or guardians, of Wernert Elementary School will be invited to participate in the study through an informed consent letter invitation (attached).

e. Sampling Plan: ☑ *Check which one applies.*

____ Random Sampling ____ Stratified Sampling __✓__ Convenience Sampling ____ Other

Please provide a rationale for your sampling plan:

Participants will be chosen locally from Wernert Elementary School in Toledo, Ohio based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

f. Sample Size

Please provide the total number of expected participants and rationale.

The study will include approximately 100 5th and 6th Grade students, 25 school families, and 60 staff members.

5. Instruments (Attach all instruments to be used)

Please briefly describe all means used to collect data and attach the instruments to be used (e.g. interview questions, surveys, assessments, etc.):

The same pre- and post- measures using a survey (survey is attached) will be administered to all participants. The students and staff will be provided opportunities to complete the surveys on paper or electronically. The families will have the option of completing the surveys via paper or electronic means depending on computer accessibility. A computer lab at the school will be provided as a means to complete the surveys electronically for all participants.

6. Procedures

Please briefly describe the procedures used to collect data based on identified instruments and total time investment of the participant:

The pre- and post-surveys using the ISS-R (attached) will be conducted with an electronic device or via paper in September, 2015 and as a follow up in April, 2016. Each survey will be completed in less than 20 minutes per administration.

The interventions that will be administered will be based on the pre-survey data results. The strategic interventions are based upon the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) five dimensions; People, Place, Programs, Policies, and Processes. Strategic interventions that will be implemented are:

People- Students will be recognized through positive office referrals aligned with the district core values, student of the month recognition, school staff and family of the month recognition program, bus drivers will have the ability to recognize positive behaviors with reward certificates

Place- Redesign of exterior school landscaping, student and staff poster-size pictures will be displayed in the entry way of the school, student artwork will be framed and displayed in the school library, parking lot traffic flow lines will be painted to ensure safety and clear guidelines for all subjects, new playground equipment will be installed, and flowers will be planted at school entrances.

Programs- reading/math night, author visits, family and community outreach with clothing and food distribution, holiday adopt-a-family program, staff volunteer and community service events, and after-school intramural activities will be offered to students.

Policies- positive behavior expectations will be taught and modeled for hallway, cafeteria, and recess expectations. Teachers will have access to utilize a common behavior management classroom software program. Parents will be offered an evening to meet teachers and receive an overview of policies and student expectations. The monthly school newsletter will outline school policies and provide opportunities to communicate concerns about policy with school administration.

Processes- building meeting processes established following meeting mechanics guidelines, grade level meetings, building leadership team meetings, and school climate, reading and math committees. A suggestion box will be added to allow staff and families to give input on school processes.

7. Analysis

Please briefly describe how you will analyze the data collected:

Data analysis will be conducted utilizing quantitative measures. Individual *T-tests* will be conducted from pre-survey to post-survey with the following groups: families, students and staff. Comparisons will be measured from pre-survey to post-survey to determine the impact of strategic interventions on school climate with a $p<0.05$. An ANOVA will be conducted comparing three groups (families, students, and staff) from pre-survey to post-survey to determine which strategic interventions caused the greatest change in perception among the three stakeholder groups with a $p<0.10$ to allow for greater flexibility. The anecdotal data collected from the third research question will be used to guide further research efforts.

8. Risk to the subjects ☑ *Identify the following risk categories and your perception of the level of risk involved*

Please note that Health & Human Services (HHS) states that there is always risk to the subject and have defined the categories of risk as follows.

__ Physical ___ Psychological __✓__ Social ____ Legal ____ Economic

Please describe the risk in detail:
Although minimal, subjects such as students, staff, and families may experience social risk. School staff may experience peer pressure with negative attitudes towards strategic interventions. With almost no social risk, professional peer pressure may occur among staff with attitudes towards participation with strategic interventions. Students may experience a slight risk in peer pressure to complete the survey. [See section 9a for actions to address possible coercion.

Perceived level of risk ___✓__ Less than minimal ____ Minimal _____ Greater than Minimal

9. Mitigation of Risk to the Subject

a. Researcher Mitigation

Please describe how the researcher will try to mitigate the risk:
All efforts will be made to ensure pre- and post- survey results are kept confidential and anonymous. Participant responses will not be shared with other individuals outside of the study.
To mitigate any source of social risk, the SI will not be physically present during administration of the pre- and post-surveys with the subjects. With the use of the head teacher of the building leadership team, Mr. Craig Aman, who has no direct line of employee supervision, authority, or discretion on merit pay or influence will be present for survey administration for staff, students, and families conducted on school grounds. Mr. Craig Aman will be listed as on survey consent letters and will not participate in the collection of survey data.

b. Research Gain

Please describe the importance of the information gained in relationship to the risk:
The use of the pre- and post-survey tool will provide the secondary researcher with information to assess and improve school climate with the current work setting.

c. Equity and Equality

Please describe how the researcher will ensure equity and equality for the participants:
All of the participants will be provided the same pre- and post-survey with extended time as needed to complete each administration.

10. Compensations and Benefits

a. Are you offering any compensations to individuals for participating in your study? ____ Yes* _✓_ No

If yes, please describe:

b. Benefits to individual

Outside of any compensation offered what are the benefits for the individual for participating?
Aggregate results of the quantitative measures will be distributed to participants to be transparent in the outcome of the surveys to provide all stakeholders with information about the current state of school climate in the setting.

c. Benefits to society

How will participating in this study benefit society?
The survey results will reveal areas of excellence and areas that need continued improvement. This information will benefit the stakeholders by allowing them to address the various areas of need with strategic interventions.

11. Consent Procedures

Federal regulations require precautionary measures to be taken to insure the protection of human subjects on physical, psychological, social, economical and other issues. This includes the use of "informed consent" procedures.

a. Type of Consent ☑*Which one(s) applies to your study?*

__Oral Consent
(Script must be provied with short consent form)

___✓__ Written Consent
(Long Consent forms must be provided)
Parent Permission

__✓_ Waiver
*Implied Consent
(Consent description must be provided) ***Staff and families***

__✓_(students)_ Assent
(In conjunction with parental consent for children 8-17)
_____ Oral
___✓__ Written

** If requesting a waiver please give rationale for waver request.*
We are asking for a waiver of informed consent because this is an anonymous survey. Therefore, any informed consent will link the participant to their data. Having a waiver of informed consent is safer for the participant. Passive implied consent will be given by the participant when they submit the survey.

b. Are your subject(s) minors or mentally impaired? __✓__ Yes* ____ No

*If yes, Please describe how and by whom permission will be granted. *Subject Assent form must accompany legal guardian's consent form.*
Consent/Assent forms will be provided to the parent/guardians of minors included in the study prior to participation.

c. Do subject(s) have a cognitive limitation/impairment and/or a language/literacy barrier? ____ Yes __✓__ No

Please describe the limitation/impairments and/or barrier and how you plan to ensure participants understanding for informed consent.

d. Will subject(s) be provided copies of all consent documentation including implied consent description? __✓__ Yes ____ No
If consent/assent documentation is not provided to participants please justify why.

12. Disclosure ☑ *Check which one applies.*
Federal regulations require precautionary measures to be taken to insure the protection of human subjects on physical, psychological, social, economical and other issues. This includes the use of "informed consent" procedures.

__✓__ Full-disclosure ____ Less than Full Disclosure ____ Necessary Deception

Please describe how you will disclose the study to the participants. If less than full disclosure or necessary deception is chosen, please justify the need for such action. All studies using less than full disclosure or necessary deception must provide a debriefing script or handout explaining to the participants the true purpose of the study and need for deception.

13. Data Confidentiality

a. Does this data fall within: _____ Public Domain __✓__ Confidential Domain

b. Data Access

Please describe all parties who will have access to the data.
Only the primary investigator and secondary investigator will have access to the raw data collected in the survey tools.
Please provide (in an attachment) evidence of human subject training/confidentiality agreement for those who have access.

c. Subjects' anonymity/confidentiality

How do you plan to protect the individual subjects' anonymity/confidentiality?
Demographic data will only be used to reflect the position of the participant (student, parent, teacher, other). No other data will be collected to compromise the subjects' anonymity.

d. Data Storage

How, where and for how long will the data be stored? (Please not that for IRB purposes all data must be stored for a minimal of three years.)
Digital data will be stored and password protected on a secure server and computer for three years. All paper documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the office of Lisa Morse for three years.

e. Data Deletion

How will the data be destroyed? (Please address all data sources, e.g. video, audio-visual, interview, questionnaires, consent forms, electronic data, etc.)
All paper forms will be shredded and all digital data stored electronically will be deleted.

14. HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act)

If you answer "Yes" to any of the following questions, your project is subject to HIPAA and you must complete the HIPAA Supplement (available Research and Grants Office and IRB CD) and attach it to the application.

____ Yes	_✓_ No	Will health information be obtained from a covered entity (a health plan, health care clearing house, or a health care provider who bills health insurers (e.g. hospitals, doctor's offices, dentists, the UF Student Health Center, UF Counseling Services, etc.)?
____Yes	_✓_ No	Will the study involve the provision of health care in a covered entity?
____ Yes	_✓_ No	If the study involves the provision of health care, will a health insurer or billing agency be contacted for billing or eligibility?

APPENDIX C

FINDLAY
THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY

Family Consent letter
June 5, 2015
Dear Wernert Families,

On behalf of the Wernert Building Leadership Team, you are invited to participate in a study of the relationships of stakeholder perceptions of school climate. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because study based on your personal and/or professional familiarity with the principal investigator and/or the student/secondary investigator of this study. If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey or you may go online to www.schoolclimatesurveywernert.com. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to study the relationships of your perceptions of school climate at two separate points of the 2015-16 school year, in September, 2015 and April, 2016. It will take about 20 minutes to complete the survey. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to implement strategic interventions and improve school climate at Wernert Elementary School.

Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

Any data collected and measured in this study will be destroyed 3 years after publication. If you are interested in project results please email us for information on retrieving the data. Please keep a copy of this correspondence for your records.

This project is being completed as part of graduation requirements for our doctoral program. If you have any questions about our project you may contact us, Lisa Morse at Morsel@findlay.edu or 419-693-4903 or my research adviser, Dr. Natalie Abell at Abell@findlay.edu or 419-434-4867.

This survey and consent waiver have been approved by The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board, which guarantees that research involving human subjects follows federal regulations. The IRB chair is Sue Stevens; and she can be reached at irb@findlay.edu. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

Thank you for your time,
Wernert Elementary Building Leadership Team

APPENDIX D

PARENT Permission Long Form

Project Title: Relationships of Stakeholder Perceptions of School Climate

Project Director: Dr. Natalie Abell/Lisa Morse

Participant's Name: Wernert 5th or 6th Grade Student

What is the study about?
On behalf of the Wernert building Leadership team your child is invited to participate in a study of the relationships of stakeholder perceptions of school climate.

Why are you asking my child?
He/She was selected as a possible participant in this study based on his/her personal and/or professional familiarity with the principal investigator and/or the student/secondary investigator of this study. All 5th and 6th grade students are being asked as possible participants in the study.

What will you ask my child to do if I agree to let him or her be in the study?
If you decide your child may participate, please complete the enclosed permission and consent form. The survey is designed to study the relationships of your perceptions of school climate at two separate points of the 2015-16 school year, in September, 2015 and April, 2016. It will take about 20 minutes to complete the survey.

What are the dangers to my child?
There are minimal social risks to the students with peer pressure participating in this study. All risks will be mitigated

If you have any concerns about your child's rights, how they are being treated or if you have questions about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Lisa Morse at Morsel@findlay.edu or 419-693-4903 or the research adviser, Dr. Natalie Abell at Abell@findlay.edu or 419-434-4867.

Are there any benefits to my child as a result of participation in this research study?
No benefits accrue to your child for answering the surveys.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of my child taking part in this research?
Your child's responses will be used to implement strategic interventions and improve school climate at Wernert Elementary School.

Will my child get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything for my kid to be in this study?
There are no costs to you or payments to you or your child as a result of participation in this study.

How will my child's information be kept confidential?
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed, unless required by law. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay or Wernert Elementary School. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. You will be made aware of any information that varies

from what has been provided to your child and/or might affect his/her willingness to continue to participate in the project.

What if my child wants to leave the study or I want him/her to leave the study?
You have the right to refuse to allow your child to participate or to withdraw him or her at any time, without penalty. If your child does withdraw, it will not affect you or your child in any way. If you or your child chooses to withdraw, you may request that any data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?
If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness allow your child to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:
By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that you have read it or it has been read to you, you fully understand the contents of this document and consent to your child taking part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are the legal parent or guardian of the child who wishes to participate in this study described to you by the Wernert Building Leadership Team.

_____ Date: _____
Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature

_____ Date: _____
Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature

APPENDIX E

Staff Consent Letter
Invitation to participate in a study on elementary school climate
June 5, 2015
Dear Wernert Staff,

On behalf of the Wernert Building Leadership Team, you are invited to participate in a study of the relationships of stakeholder perceptions of school climate. You were selected as a possible participant in this study based on your personal and/or professional familiarity with the principal investigator and/or the student/secondary investigator of this study. If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey or you may go online to www.schoolclimatesurveywernert.com. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to study the relationships of your perceptions of school climate at two separate points of the 2015-16 school year, in September, 2015 and April, 2016. It will take about 20 minutes to complete the survey. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to implement strategic interventions and improve school climate at Wernert Elementary School.

Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

Any data collected and measured in this study will be destroyed 3 years after publication. If you are interested in project results please email us for information on retrieving the data. Please keep a copy of this correspondence for your records.

This project is being completed as part of graduation requirements for our doctoral program. If you have any questions about our project you may contact us, Lisa Morse at Morsel@findlay.edu or 419-693-4903 or my research advisor, Dr. Natalie Abell at Abell@findlay.edu or 419-434-4867.

This survey and consent waiver have been approved by The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board, which guarantees that research involving human subjects follows federal regulations. The IRB chair is Sue Stevens; and she can be reached at irb@findlay.edu. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

Thank you for your time,
Wernert Elementary Building Leadership Team

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH ASSENT FORM

Project Title: Relationships of Stakeholder Perceptions of School Climate

IRB #: 938

Principal Investigator: Dr. Natalie Abell

Date: September, 2015

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. A research study is a way to learn information about something. We would like to find out more about school climate. You are being asked to join the study because you are a 5th or 6th grade student at Wernert Elementary School.

If you agree to join this study, you will be asked to complete a survey in September, 2015 and again in April, 2016

There is a slight risk in participating in this study. Please don't feel pressured to participate in the survey. You can say no at any time.

We do not know if you will be helped by being in this study. We may learn something that will help other children with at Wernert Elementary School some day.

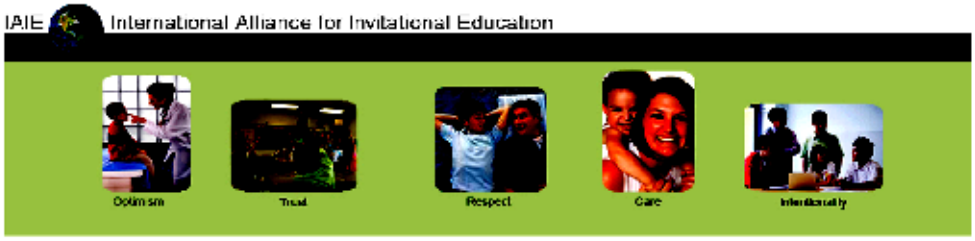
You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say okay now, and you can change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us. No one will be mad at you if you change your mind.

Before you say yes **to being in this study, we will answer any questions you have.**

If you want to be in this study, please sign your name. You will get a copy of this form to keep for yourself.

(Sign your name here) (Date)

APPENDIX G



INVITING SCHOOL SURVEY – REVISED (ISS-R)

Thank you for your participation in this activity. It is very much appreciated!

We are interested in your opinions on a range of issues regarding your school.

Individual responses will be strictly confidential as aggregated data is only being analyzed.

1. Name of your school: _____

2. Are you: _____Male _____Female

3. Are you a: ____Student ____Teacher ____Administrator ____Parent ____Counselor ____Other

4. If you are a student how old are you: _____

DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this survey is to determine what you think about your school. Following are a series of 50 statements concerning your school. Please use the five-point response scale and select how much you agree or disagree for each item. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete

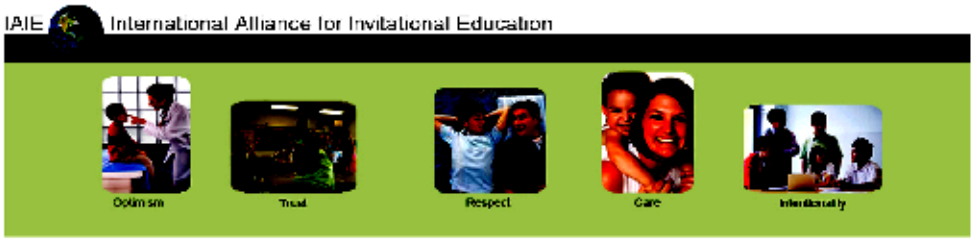
SA=*Strongly Agree* A=*Agree* U=*Undecided* D=*Disagree* SD=*Strongly Disagree*

Select 'N/A' only if the question does not apply to your school

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	N/A
1. Student discipline is approached from a positive standpoint.						
2. Everyone is encouraged to participate in athletic (sports) programs.						
3. The principal involves everyone in the decision-making process.						
4. Furniture is pleasant and comfortable.						
5. Teachers are willing to help students who have special problems.						
6. Teachers in this school show respect for students.						
7. Grades are assigned by means of fair and comprehensive assessment of work and effort.						
8. The air smells fresh in this school.						
9. Teachers are easy to talk with.						
10. There is a wellness (health) program in this school.						
11. Students have the opportunity to talk to one another during class activities.						
12. Teachers take the time to talk with students about students' out-of-class activities.						
13. The school grounds are clean and well maintained.						
14. All telephone calls to this school are answered promptly and politely.						
15. Teachers are generally prepared for class.						
16. The restrooms in this school are clean and properly maintained.						
17. School programs involve out of school experience.						
18. Teachers exhibit a sense of humor						
19. School policy encourages freedom of expression by everyone						
20. The Principal's office is attractive.						
21. People in this school are polite to one another.						
22. Everyone arrives on time for school.						
23. Good health practices are encouraged in this school.						
24. Teachers work to encourage students' self-confidence.						
25. Bulletin boards are attractive and up-to-date.						

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	N/A
26. The messages and notes sent home are positive.						
27. The Principal treats people as though they are responsible.						
28. Space is available for student independent study.						
29. People often feel welcome when they enter the school.						
30. Students work cooperatively with each other.						
31. Interruptions to classroom academic activities are kept to a minimum.						
32. Fire alarm instructions are well posted and seem reasonable.						
33. People in this school want to be here.						
34. A high percentage of students pass in this school.						
35. Many people in this school are involved in making decisions.						
36. People in this school try to stop vandalism when they see it happening.						
37. Classrooms offer a variety of furniture arrangements.						
38. The school sponsors extracurricular activities apart from sports.						
39. Teachers appear to enjoy life.						
40. Clocks and water fountains are in good repair.						
41. School buses wait for late students.						
42. School pride is evident among students.						
43. Daily attendance by students and staff is high.						
44. There are comfortable chairs for visitors.						
45. Teachers share out-of-class experiences with students.						
46. Mini courses are available to students.						
47. The grading practices in this school are fair.						
48. Teachers spend time after school with those who need extra help.						
49. The lighting in this school is more than adequate.						
50. Classes get started quickly.						

APPENDIX H



INVITING SCHOOL SURVEY – REVISED (ISS-R)

Thank you for your participation in this activity. It is very much appreciated!

We are interested in your opinions on a range of issues regarding your school.

Individual responses will be <u>strictly</u> confidential as aggregated data is only being analyzed.

1. Name of your school: _____

2. Are you: _____Male _____Female

3. Are you a: ____Student ____Teacher ____Administrator ____Parent ____Counselor ____Other

4. If you are a student how old are you: _____

DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this survey is to determine what you think about your school. Following are a series of 50 statements concerning your school. Please use the five-point response scale and select how much you agree or disagree for each item. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete

SA=*Strongly Agree* A=*Agree* U=*Undecided* D=*Disagree* SD=*Strongly Disagree*

Select 'N/A' only if the question does not apply to your school

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	N/A
1. Student discipline is approached from a positive standpoint.						
2. Everyone is encouraged to participate in athletic (sports) programs.						
3. The principal involves everyone in the decision-making process.						
4. Furniture is pleasant and comfortable.						
5. Teachers are willing to help students who have special problems.						
6. Teachers in this school show respect for students.						
7. Grades are assigned by means of fair and comprehensive assessment of work and effort.						
8. The air smells fresh in this school.						
9. Teachers are easy to talk with.						
10. There is a wellness (health) program in this school.						
11. Students have the opportunity to talk to one another during class activities.						
12. Teachers take the time to talk with students about students' out-of-class activities.						
13. The school grounds are clean and well maintained.						
14. All telephone calls to this school are answered promptly and politely.						
15. Teachers are generally prepared for class.						
16. The restrooms in this school are clean and properly maintained.						
17. School programs involve out of school experience.						
18. Teachers exhibit a sense of humor						
19. School policy encourages freedom of expression by everyone						
20. The Principal's office is attractive.						
21. People in this school are polite to one another.						
22. Everyone arrives on time for school.						
23. Good health practices are encouraged in this school.						
24. Teachers work to encourage students' self-confidence.						
25. Bulletin boards are attractive and up-to-date.						

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	N/A
26. The messages and notes sent home are positive.						
27. The Principal treats people as though they are responsible.						
28. Space is available for student independent study.						
29. People often feel welcome when they enter the school.						
30. Students work cooperatively with each other.						
31. Interruptions to classroom academic activities are kept to a minimum.						
32. Fire alarm instructions are well posted and seem reasonable.						
33. People in this school want to be here.						
34. A high percentage of students pass in this school.						
35. Many people in this school are involved in making decisions.						
36. People in this school try to stop vandalism when they see it happening.						
37. Classrooms offer a variety of furniture arrangements.						
38. The school sponsors extracurricular activities apart from sports.						
39. Teachers appear to enjoy life.						
40. Clocks and water fountains are in good repair.						
41. School buses wait for late students.						
42. School pride is evident among students.						
43. Daily attendance by students and staff is high.						
44. There are comfortable chairs for visitors.						
45. Teachers share out-of-class experiences with students.						
46. Mini courses are available to students.						
47. The grading practices in this school are fair.						
48. Teachers spend time after school with those who need extra help.						
49. The lighting in this school is more than adequate.						
50. Classes get started quickly.						

51. One priority for improving school climate is…