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The Impact of a Positive Environment and Shared Leadership to Empower Collegial School Culture

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The Impact of a Positive Environment and Shared Leadership to
Empower Collegial School Culture

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Educational Leadership

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop an empowered collegial school culture to systemically improve the function of the academic institution through the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership. When compared to the other middle schools in the district, Eagle Middle School had the lowest math achievement growth index during the 2014-2015 school year. The discrepancy in math achievement is one element that has created a culture problem for the building. Additionally, the building has a reputation of poor customer service and not serving the community effectively. Because of the poor culture the staff had a lack of leadership and is cycling toward a continuous state of decline.

Culture is at the very essence of the change process. Making a systemic impact to improve the nature of an educational institution requires an understanding of the very nature of the culture. School climate is a driver for the overall culture of the building. Developing a positive climate and shared leadership process is conducive to producing a culture that is collaborative and empowered.

For the purpose of this research study mixed method measures were used to devise, collect, and analysis data. This study worked to develop an understanding of how to create a positive environment and shared leadership to empower the building culture. A pragmatic approach was used to understand the current state of the cultural environment to ascertain the accounts and develop an approach to empower staff through data analysis and implementation of the researched based practices. Quantitative and qualitative measures of surveys and interviews were used to determine the value and validity of a positive environment and the importance of shared leadership in developing an empowered building culture.

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Acknowledgments

Winston Churchill stated, “The price of greatness is responsibility.” To this end I want to thank my family, co-works, cohort, administrative team, and district office for all of their support to keep me on track and to motivate me to continue to strive to improve my education and skills as a scholar practitioner in the public education sector. My chair and co-chairs have been instrumental along with the staff at the University of Arkansas for the development of my skills and the work in this research. A special thank you to the staff of Eagle Middle School for their hard work and responsibility to make each day special for all of the students, staff, and community members that come through the door every day.

Dedication

This research project is dedicated to all of the hard working and dedicated educators throughout the nation who come to school every day to support the varied demands of our students and staff.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Introduction of Problem Statement

Educational leaders must be able to apply knowledge to their field and cultivate new ways of putting this knowledge into practice. This critical, yet tedious process culminates through the essence of the problem of practice. “Problems of practice in education are multifaceted analyses of real-world problems facing students, teachers, and/or schools” (Latta & Wunder, 2012, p. 130). The purpose of this study was to develop an empowered collegial school culture to systemically improve the function of the academic institution through the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership. As the researcher, this problem of practice allowed me to focus on the problematic situations and give me the expertise to solve problems of practice for future endeavors.

The researched middle school, described as Eagle Middle School, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data indicated that out of 693 students taking the fall 2014 math assessment only 31% of students met the target or grade level goal. An even bigger concern was that the growth index from the fall of 2013 to the fall of 2014 was -0.46 as reported by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) growth index. When compared to the other middle schools in the district, Eagle Middle School had the lowest math achievement growth index. The discrepancy in math achievement is one element that created a culture problem for the building. Additionally, the building had a reputation of poor customer service and not serving the community effectively. Because of the poor school culture and the lack of leadership the school was cycling toward a continuous state of decline. The building culture survey conducted in the spring of 2015 showed the following factors as major concerns in the middle school:

1. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is not used to plan, it is utilized as individual planning time, as opposed to planning as a collective team.
2. The school does not support and appreciate the sharing of new ideas by school members.
3. Teachers and staff are not involved in the decisions-making process with regard to materials, resources, or schedules.

These factors are just some of the concerns causing systemic issues for the culture in the building. Staff and administrative turnover has been prevalent with three new principals in three years. The problem of practice was the development of an empowered collegial building culture. This study focused on the development of a positive environment with shared leadership to promote an empowered collegial building culture. This was accomplished by utilizing the theories of change to create a more conducive culture for students, staff, and community members. According to Margolin (2015), “It’s about the fundamental daily instructional choices teachers make to challenge, engage, and empower their students” (p. 1). The goal of this study was to analyze and implement strategic interventions to systematically improve the culture at Eagle Middle School by developing a positive environment and shared leadership throughout the building. Developing a sustaining culture to cultivate productive educational practice is the first step in developing a model school. As Dr. Daggett (2015) stated in his address to the administrators at Eagle Middle School, “Culture trumps strategy.”

Focuses on Instructional and/or Systemic Issues

The systemic impact of culture is a crucial element that affects positive school change that delivers effective results. Through the research I was able to ascertain if culture was improved and what impact it had on instructional practices with a focus on shared leadership and

a positive environment throughout the building. The first step of the problem involved focusing on the specific deficiencies in the building culture and determining what constructs the building was struggling with while ascertaining how they are affecting the building culture.

The University of Arkansas's Educational Leadership (EDLE) research proposal template describes the first step in assessing instructional or systemic issues is to identify, "problems that involve the interactions of teachers, students, and content or the interactions of system leaders, schools, and communities that relate to school or system performance and/or community well-being" (University of Arkansas, 2015, p. 1). Through six constructs, the research delved into the systemic nature of the problem and determined how the culture could be influenced by the current structure of the building interventions and staff empowerment. Couple this with a plan to develop, and improve practices and models through a shared approach. Educators must be able to analyze and interpret multiple perspectives to see the multitude of influences that may or may not be impacting the specific issue of focus. DeWitt (2014) identified ten important elements in the process of looking at systemic issues in education, and identified issues with common core state standards, student learning, technology, social media, politics, high stakes testing, school leadership, pre-service teaching programs, school climate, and poverty. With the abundant concerns within the building culture the research identified those with the greatest leverage for change and the environments that can be influenced.

Is Directly Observable

As a new administrator to the building it was clear there was a poor culture of communication amongst staff to share and build initiatives. Students did not have set expectations and procedures in place throughout the day. Regular staff turnover and movement amongst administrators and teachers had been a factor in the culture of the building. The building

culture was the first thing students, educators, and community members noticed as they entered the building. The building was the lowest academic performing middle school in the district with high behavioral referral rates and suspensions.

Teitel (2009) explained that “the problem of practice is shared with the visitors at the start of the day and helps frame what is at the heart of any visit-observation of practice” (p. 1). Educational leaders must be able to develop common assessments that inform the building culture. Additionally, this assessment should delineate the different cultural impacts so precise interventions can be developed based on specific needs. These assessments also reveal what influences may be affecting cultural results through the development of a positive environment and shared leadership. Furthermore, this did provide the quantitative and qualitative data needed to continually observe the problem of practice and adjust to the varying needs of students, staff, and community. According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), “This process can be likened to getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony; this mental imagery of stepping back from the action and asking the questions of what is really going on in a situation will allow us to distinguish the actionable steps that need to take place next” (p. 59).

Is Actionable

A key to improving the problem of practice is the ever-changing nature that makes it actionable and evolving. Working through the six constructs I continued to analyze, implement, and refine practices to meet the needs of the building culture. Furthermore the skills of practitioners were utilized through shared leadership while working to analyze the effects of developing a positive environment. This included shared leadership through integration of cross-curricular bell work, developing more project based assignments, differentiating instruction,

incorporating flipped instruction and other quality instructional strategies (Marzano, 2009; Tomlinson, 2001; Schmoker, 2006).

Administrators have to be open to change and adjust their power of authority to elicit a shared leadership role for improved instructional strategies and measures of assessment to correctly evaluate and synthesize the problem to create actionable results. Beach (2006) stated, “If we cannot clearly define the tasks that will move the intended plan forward; it is time to rethink if this problem is actionable in its current state” (p. 4). It was imperative that this study was retrospective and analytical as to the process and initiatives of the building. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) stated that “the fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure all students learn at high levels, and the future success of students will depend on how effective educator are in achieving that fundamental purpose” (p. 18). The reason this fundamental cultural change is actionable and needed is to support a life-long source of continuous improvement.

Connects to Broader Strategy of Improvement

At the start of this research the building team designed new mission and vision statements with key objectives focusing on building a positive environment and shared leadership throughout the building. The building improvement plan continued this focus with a shared leadership approach to develop the positive environment in an effort to create a collegial culture amongst staff and the community. This broad strategy of improvement was a catalyst to develop the needed initiatives to drive the research. This holistic approach was necessary to the broader strategy of improvement to build a life-long culture of continuous improvement.

A key component of successful schools includes communication and the importance of the leader as a “mouthpiece” to spread the vision and direction among stakeholders (Bishop,

2011). Through this process the building staff developed a teaming approach to improve the varied lenses of the educational landscape and culture through empowerment. This culture of collaboration became the cornerstone of the improvement process for staff through shared leadership in a positive environment. Furthermore, working together through the learning process to analyze and promote rigorous standards and innovative instructional strategies was key to cultural shifts that culminate through a positive environment with administrative support. Perry (2013) stated that, “only with a full understanding of the end, can intentional and purposeful professional practice preparation emerge” (p. 116). The results of this research impacted the varying areas of growth and development in the building while engaging all stakeholders in the improvement process. To foster improvement in all areas, an empowered culture must be the first component to have a sustained improvement process. Culture is an integral component of a successful educational environment and for this to exist, the culture must be empowered through a positive environment and shared leadership.

Is High Leverage

Improving building culture and outcomes to promote an increase in academic growth can result in student and staff opportunities. An empowered culture created opportunities for the staff to develop an environment of continuous improvement where shared leadership leads to an environment conducive for all. Furthermore, the potential college and career readiness of graduates can grow. A productive climate and culture can allow for increased shared power, community support, and reflexivity providing more opportunities for students and staff.

Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) identified seven high levers for executing quality instruction and culture. Through this process of observation, analysis, and critical evaluation the building culture may be directly impacted. Developing a positive environment with shared leadership can

allow for interpersonal reflection and action. Through professional learning opportunities and culture awareness, staff and students can cultivate a higher sense of self-accomplishment and relevance. This high leverage approach can allow for continual improvement throughout all aspects of building instruction and culture.

Final Thoughts

Working through the problem of practice to develop a positive environment and shared leadership can create a life-long problem solving approach to tackle any cultural concerns encountered. In the development of the building culture this study focused on the development of a positive environment with shared leadership to develop an empowered building culture utilizing the theories of change to create a collegial culture for students, staff, and community members. This process can allow for increased academic optimism while developing a shared culture of progressive instruction and cultural support for one another. The problem of practice can help building leaders refine skills to affect the lives of individuals, families, and the community.

Beach (2006) explained that authentic leaders place the interest of their organizations above their own. Through this problem of practice I was able to continue to work as a servant leader and be a highly skilled scholar practitioner for the stewardship of the profession (CPED, 2009). This culminating project is just the beginning of the analytical process of continual reflection and implementation of data-driven practices to improve the daily educational landscape.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study and frame the work to be completed through the problem of practice:

1. How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?
2. What positive environment practices impact the building culture?
3. How does shared leadership influence school culture?
4. What shared leadership procedures impact the building culture?

Overview of Methodology

This study utilized a mixed method approach to collect and analyze the influence of a positive environment and shared leadership on building a collegial school culture. Saldana (2015) stated, “the qualitative data collected and analyzed are primarily (but not exclusively) nonquantitative in form, consisting of textual materials (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, documents) and visual materials...” (p. 3). For the purpose of this research study, surveys and interviews were utilized as the primary quantitative and qualitative data collection tool.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated:

Research participants are and should be seen as experts of their own experiences with much to teach us about their lives and experiences, and it is essential that you view their stories as contextualized and embedded in larger phenomena, experiences and realities. (p. 111)

Participants were a part of the building and were willing volunteers that signed a consent form prior to participating in interviews. The nature of the study was issued to each participant and after each interview the confidentiality was maintained throughout the research project. Each member of the interview process was informed of their right to withdraw their consent at any time during the research project. Building data were collected on students who made the honor roll, average daily breakfast service, daily attendance rates, tardiness, and positive behavior intervention supports rewards. Surveys were distributed to building staff that had signed consent in the spring of 2017. After collecting and analyzing the data from the survey an

interview protocol was utilized to ascertain the qualitative data needed to answer the research questions in the spring of 2017.

Positionality

My focus is to improve school culture by empowering staff on a systemic level through the strategic focus on creating a positive environment and shared leadership throughout the middle school building. As the building principal in the researched middle school I have a vested interest in the improvement of the building culture. This is my seventeenth year in education and eleventh as an administrator. During the previous five years I served as the middle school principal at a neighboring district and I entered my first year as the building principal at Eagle Middle School in the Fall of 2015. I have completed my undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate work at public post-secondary institutions in the state of Kansas and am working to receive a doctorate at the University of Arkansas. Within the research site, I serve in many capacities including the instructional leader and facilitator of professional learning.

Working with the leadership team, a shared leadership structure was implemented through the building in an effort to improve building culture and empowerment. I have researched data-driven practices to develop a positive environment and shared leadership as researched by DuFour et al. (1998, 2002, 2004, 2008) in an effort to improve building culture through collaborative conversations. All surveys and interviews were conducted in a manner to provide privacy to the individuals with all data collected through this study to protect the rights and privacy of students and staff.

I am a Caucasian male with a blended Cherokee background. I have three daughters and live in a middle class suburb of Kansas City, Kansas. Growing up on a dairy farm promoted my

family values of work and dedication to family and the community. I am a moderate in the political arena and work to promote the community values of a servant leader with a Christian faith. I grew up in a rural area supporting traditional values that support the work and dedication of the public education system. My professional experiences have provided me the opportunity to teach and serve as a teacher and administrator in four districts, including a rural area and an urban area. My primary administrative experience has been in an urban setting working within a population that contained a majority of students whom would be classified as at-risk with the majority of the students qualifying for free or reduced meals. As an educational leader I believe in the value of the theory of change and the impact of creating a caring and supportive environment for the community in which I live and serve.

Researcher's Role

As the researcher and building principal, I analyzed surveys and interviews to ascertain if there is a change in school culture and what initiatives provided the biggest impact. Through this study I developed a process of improved practice to integrate “relevance and relationships” (ICLE, 2012), and a positive climate throughout the school environment. I was immersed into the building community and drive a strategic focus on the data-analysis and research-based practices of cultural initiatives throughout the building community.

The staff worked to develop focus under the foundations of Dufour and Eaker (1998) and Hoy (2012) to model an effective positive environment and shared leadership practices. I guided the staff with a shared vision to implement a progressive approach to reflective practices. The staff had a shared approach in analyzing and gathering data through the problem of practice to develop a positive environment with shared leadership. The district provided professional learning opportunities for staff that included assessment measures, reflective processing, and

team empowerment. As the building principal, I directly and indirectly implement practices and application of initiatives to students and staff, and also serve as the facilitator of practices to help drive the cultural empowerment process. I worked to ensure staff members are processing collaboratively to meet the needs of the building culture. The team analyzed student, staff, and community data and stakeholder feedback throughout the study.

Assumptions

As the building principal I am close to the nature and scope of the problem. I facilitated research in developing key practices for implementation of positive school environment and shared leadership based on the work of DuFour et al. (1998, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2008), the International Center for Educational Excellence (2012), Hoy (1997, 2012) and other peer-reviewed research based strategies. As the building leader I have a vested interest in the growth of the building climate and culture. I have researched the professional learning community process, developed positive support initiatives, broadened reflective practices, and worked with other school systems to develop a stronger understanding of the cultural empowerment process. One of the responsibilities as the building principal is to evaluate and supervise. As a scholar-practitioner I supervise students while being employed in the community in which I serve. The buildings leadership team and I drive the focus of the building improvement process by developing the mission and vision of the subject building.

I am an advocate of public education and have a commitment to researched-based practices to drive student achievement. At the time of this study the political environment in the state of Kansas is of an ultra-conservative nature with a concentrated effort to decrease public school funding and increase support for the privatization of schools. I am vested in working to promote the values of public education with a vision for a community atmosphere to engage all

stakeholders in the development of a positive school system that meets the needs of all learners regardless of socio-economic or ethnic background.

Definition of Key Terms

For use in this study the following terms are defined:

Academic Optimism: “The shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor” (Wu, 2013, p. 420).

Behavior Intervention Support Teams (BIST): “The BIST model utilizes four steps so educators, parents, and mentors have the ability to know when and how to intervene. This structured support enables youth to gain new skills and participate more fully in their homes, schools and communities. These steps create a consistent, supervised, safe environment in order to teach and protect all students” (Ozanam, 2016).

Culture: “The assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations and habits that constitute the norm for the organization” (Dufour, 2008, p. 90).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC): “A professional learning community is defined as a group of educators that meet regularly, share expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and academic performance of students” (Hidden curriculum, 2014).

Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS): “Positive behavior support is an application of a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the fit or link between research-validated practices and environments in which teaching and learning occurs” (PBIS, 2016).

Student Improvement Team (SIT): “Collaborative team comprised of teachers and support staff responsible for analyzing data regarding students to implement multi-tiered levels of interventions to support all students” (KSDE, 2008).

Organization of the Dissertation

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter two consists of an introduction, review of the literature, conceptual frameworks, and chapter summary. Chapter three covers the inquiry methods and contains the introduction, rationale, problem setting, research sample and data sources, data collection methods, data analysis methods, trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and summary. Chapter four covers the presentation of the data and chapter five explains the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study focused on the development of a positive environment with shared leadership to develop an empowered building culture utilizing the theories of change to create a collegial culture for students, staff, and community members. The latest literature related to the problem of practice was researched by looking through the university library for studies and text related to improving building culture and climate. I also elicited the support of fellow doctorate educators in the district, librarians, professors, and doctoral students to develop the focused approach to comb the current literature. Books, journals, articles, dissertations, conversations, and personal experience informed the research. The literature was searched using the following terms: theory of change, academic optimism, self-efficacy, empowerment, building relationships, positive school environments, school climate and culture, shared power, reflective practices, building community support, external factors in educational settings and professional learning communities. The work of Dr. Wayne K. Hoy, Dr. Robert DuFour and Dr. Willard Daggett was catalyst to the development and focus of the research for the literature review. These authors helped develop a clear focus to gather peer-reviewed literature utilizing the Ebscohost database through the University of Arkansas library.

Review of the Literature

Culture is at the very essence of the change process. Making a systemic impact to improve the nature of an educational institution requires an understanding of the very nature of the culture. School climate is a driver for the overall culture of the building. Developing a positive climate and shared leadership process is conducive to producing a culture that is collaborative and empowered. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) stated that collective efficacy of

staff may be a better predictor of the building culture than a building's socioeconomic status.

The development of appositive collective efficacy among staff can drive a change in the overall building culture.

DuFour (2008) described culture as, "the assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations and habits that constitute the norm for the organization" (p. 90). He continued by noting Roland Barth's (2001) description:

The school's culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, "the way we do things around here." Ultimately, a school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have... The culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act. (pp. 7-8)

Dufour (2008) indicated that the most effective changes within an academic institution stems from within the organization. His strategies encompass the idea that each stakeholder must feel a part of the process and work together to develop the change momentum to continually adjust to the changing nature of society and the needs of learners. Saldana (2015) stated, "Culture is a slippery concept. Literally hundreds of definitions of and descriptions for the term exist, and there seems to be no real consensus, even among anthropologist, on a universally accepted meaning" (p. 100). To define the culture one must engross into the society to define the beliefs and values that the culture holds. "Local sites are more likely subcultures, microcultures, or even countercultures of larger cultural bodies, but that depends on how you perceive the field site and its participants" (Saldana, 2015, p. 101). A researcher must encompass the local culture and the larger culture in which the building serves to identify how the cultures work together to define the individual subcultures of the district. Saldana (2015) explained, "Cultures are never static entities, and they continuously evolve through time" (p. 102).

Morel (2014) described the importance of culture using research results of the MetLife Foundation Survey of the American Teacher:

In 2012, the survey indicated that teachers' job satisfaction had dropped to the lowest level in 25 years. Only 39% of the 1000 public school teachers surveyed reported job satisfaction—a drop of 23% since 2008, when 62% of teachers reported being satisfied with their jobs. Compared to the most-satisfied teachers, the least-satisfied teachers in the 2012 survey were more likely to work in schools that, during the previous 12 months, had experienced cuts in professional development and decreases in time for professional collaboration. Satisfied teachers tended to work in places with adequate professional development and time for collaboration with peers. (p. 37)

Morel (2014) goes on to state the value of shared power and a positive environment in collaboration:

... greater teacher satisfaction exists when teachers are free to reflect, collaborate, and create their own professional growth. In a time when attracting and retaining excellent teachers is becoming more and more difficult, providing collaborative professional learning can go far to increase teacher satisfaction. (p. 37)

Dufour (2006) described collaboration as “A systematic process in which educators work together interdependently to analyze and to impact their professional practice in order to achieve better results for their students, their team and their school” (p. 98). Developing a collaborative culture to promote positive teamwork and collegial growth were the focus for continuous improvement. As Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) stated, “Great staff cultures don't come from irreplaceable charisma; they come from careful development of habits that build a strong staff community” (p. 191).

Hoy and Hannum (1997) described six dimensions to develop well-being of interpersonal relationships in the middle school, these include:

Two aspects of teacher and student behaviors-teacher affiliation and academic emphasis-map important aspects of teacher and student behavior at the technical level; three aspects of principal behavior-collegial leadership, resource support, and principal influence-tap important administrative functions at the managerial

level; and one aspect of the school-environment relationship, institutional integrity, is examined at the institutional level . (p. 293)

Change

In Eagle Middle School the essence of change was to develop an empowered collegial culture through a systematic shift in the current landscape and practices within the community. DuFour and Eaker (1998) commented that “both research and practice offer one inescapable, insightful conclusion to those considering an improvement initiative: change is difficult” (p. 23). A cultural change is embedded in the influence of positive environment and shared leadership to create leverage to promote an empowered collegial school culture. A change agent must ascertain the current culture and create a system to change the current practices already in place. Furthermore, DuFour et al. (1998) explained that “change is a complex and formidable task that is certain to be accompanied by pain and conflict” (p. 50).

The Center for Theory of Change (2013) explained:

Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or “filling in” what has been described as the “missing middle” between what a program or change initiative does and how these lead to desired goals being achieved.

To envelop a change initiative careful skill and consideration must be at the forefront of the process. To have a sustained change, the parameters of the problem have to be mapped out to understand all of the variables that are part of the process. “Those who seek to initiate substantive change must recognize that an existing system with well-entrenched structure and culture is already in place” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 49). These barriers are critical to the change process. The emphasis on conflict is an essential element to develop a change in any school setting (Fullan 1993). This critical element must be met with positive and reflective

practices to work to ensure prolonged change. DuFour and Fullan (2013) stated, “Two things are true about cultural change: It is absolutely doable, but it is also undeniably difficult” (p. 2)

In Deutshman’s (2007) book, the focus was on the question of change and how individuals can effectively get people to change under varying circumstances. The text utilizes various examples of the change process from serious personal medical conditions to Fortune 500 companies. His general premise is relate, repeat, and reframe. He worked to assess the human nature of change and how it can influence change in all aspects of industry and the person. As a building leader I must know my staff to build relationships to focus on the positive benefits of cultural change.

The change process presented by Kotter (1996) is an eight-stage process to create major change. This process involves: establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture. Taking calculated risks and building support through short-term wins are key components to the process that I had to consider through the research project.

Fullan (2008) outlined six secrets to change: love your employees, connect peers with purpose, capacity building prevails, learning is the work, transparency rules, and systems learn. This process focused on employee relationships and strives to empower constituents without overpowering them. The process focuses on the importance of utilizing the six secrets in harmony. Fullan (2008) stressed the importance of being transparent with clear and continuous data from the strategies enacted. I worked to promote continuous reflection and improvement by

empowering employees to understand, accept and be reflective of their change initiatives.

Williams (2012) explained:

In 1969, Chin and Benne investigated different strategies to impact teacher change and concluded that the normative-reeducative model was most effective with influencing change in teachers' classroom practices. With the normative-reeducative model, teachers viewed change as a natural process because they were directly involved in decision-making. Chin and Benne reported that, through collaboration over a period of time, teachers were empowered with problem-solving techniques. (p. 32)

Williams (2012) continues to focus on the value of change, “After completing a correlational study involving 46 secondary teachers, Guskey (1985, 1986) proposed the following alternative professional development model: (a) change is gradual and challenging; (b) teachers need regular feedback on student achievement; and (c) teachers require ongoing support and follow-up after the first training” (p. 33).

The process of change management illustrated the importance of your “people” in the company and how to effectively lead through the change process. Hiatt and Creasey (2003) presented the ADKAR model for change: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. These seven key principles are critical for development and understanding of the why and how for the change management system. This approach focuses on the manager’s point of view to develop their employees’ skills with the philosophy that change is “business as usual.”

Whitaker (2012) focused on the value of protecting your good people in place while not allowing poorer performing employees to continue their behaviors. This specific change model for administrators focused on their roles as a leader in the organization to make decisions based on the best people. Moreover, the leader must protect good people and “shift the monkey” back to the employee who should have the task. I had to praise our good people and treat everyone equally to make change happen and to ensure that everyone is carrying their fair share.

The theories of change can be grounded in the concept of academic optimism for educators. Wu (2013) stated academic optimism is, “the shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor” (p. 420). Academic optimism is at the forefront of developing a culture mindset. Through this “growth mindset,” as coined by Dr. Daggett and the ICLE (2012), staff can develop the effective efficacy to move forward and drive a positive environment striving for empowerment in the school culture. Through the theories of change the following researched constructs focused on the development of academic optimism in developing an empowered collegial school culture. “Building the capacity of educators to meet the challenges they face requires a servant-leader mindset. A sink-or-swim philosophy does not build capacity; too many people drown” (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 51).

Positive Environment

The literature research revealed that a positive environment is the first step in creating an empowered collegial school culture. Using the research the following interventions were implemented Behavior Intervention Support Teams (BIST), Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), eagle hour morning triage, soaring truths, soaring shout outs, and visibility of staff members in the hall and school events played on building a positive environment. The middle school utilized BIST to promote a positive environment through processing with students and behavior interventions. PBIS was also used for VIP Fridays to reward students for Safe, On-task, Active learning and Responsible behavior (SOAR) and to promote positive rewards for students through our token economy, SOAR tickets, along with quarterly celebrations. Eagle hour morning triage was used to provide a safe place for students to meet in small groups in the

morning with a staff member in alignment with BIST procedures. Soaring truths are personal positive notes written by staff to students and staff members while soaring shout outs provide public recognition of staff that is shared with all team members in the building. These initiatives are based on the culmination of the researched findings and were measured to ascertain how focusing on a positive environment may influence the building culture and which of these positive environment practices had an impact on the building culture.

“Principals must allocate resources and coordinate the work effort; they must find ways to develop teacher loyalty, trust, commitment, and motivation” (Hoy & Hannum, 1997, p. 293). Creating a positive environment through recognition is crucial for the development of a strong culture through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Schmoker (1996) reported, “One of the most effective means to cultivate a goal-oriented culture is to regularly reinforce and recognize improvement efforts, both privately and publicly” (p. 103). Developing a framework to continuously promote and publicize the work of school community is vital for continuous improvement and development of morale. Schmoker explained, “Schools improve when purpose and effort unite” (p. 103). I praised and celebrated the work of the school community regularly. Through this recognition, stakeholders are empowered to support one another and work for the collective good of the organization. According to Schmoker (1996) to develop a system of continual support the following examples are utilized:

- Leaving notes in boxes or on a desk, complimenting effective practices.
- Giving branded items for individual or group achievements.
- Offering a trinket or gift.
- Frequently praising, celebrating, and recognizing efforts at meetings.

- Featuring graphs and charts when employees can regularly view their progress and school leaders can easily refer to goal-oriented progress.
- Providing opportunities for successful teams to share their accomplishments in brief presentations.
- Providing opportunities for individuals to share a goal-oriented success with other groups or school faculties.
- Ensuring that every issue of the school or district newsletter highlights team and individual accomplishments. (p. 106)

Utilizing these as a basis for creating a positive environment can cultivate an empowered culture to drive the focus of a positive climate.

Mitchell and Sackney (2000) noted, “People are engaged in a search for place...companionship.... Identity and belonging” (p. 3). Developing a systematic recognition and rewards system to promote the achievements of staff, students and the community drive the positive aspirations of Eagle Middle School culture. Morel (2014) concluded, “Working with others can enhance creativity, improve reflection, increase respect for others, promote team celebration, and enhance self-efficacy” (p. 47). Morel (2014) went on to identify the following skills to promote a positive collaborative environment:

- read the emotional climate of a situation and improve emotional safety for others;
- apologize;
- focus on the project and not on individual personalities;
- listen;
- express and advocate for one’s own point of view;
- take the other person's perspective; and

- define mutual goals. (p. 38)

Developing a positive environment utilizing these skills was crucial for the development of the building culture. “Principals must work to create a climate of respect and trust. This does not happen overnight, and it starts with a positive example set by the leadership” (Morel, 2014, p. 38). I had to be cognizant that change takes time and cannot be forced upon staff.

Daggett, through the work of ICLE (2012), described four relationship dimensions in creating a positive environment; “learning relationships, staff relationships, professional relationships and community relationships” (p. 112). The focus on creating these relationships was critical to promoting a systemic positive school culture. In his relationship framework, Daggett believed schools should focus to develop a mutually beneficial relationship, “Positive relationships are everywhere and commonplace among the way that students, teachers, and parents interact and support students as learners” (ICLE, 2012, p. 116). There needs to be a focus on positive learning relationships supported with the current focus on classroom management. Staff should be empowered to develop a strong community in their classroom to promote growth toward academic, social and emotional goals. “Perhaps one of the changes that schools should make is to abandon the term classroom management and replace it with relationship building” (ICLE, 2012, p. 118). To do this, educators need to be trained in a specific philosophy such as Behavior Intervention Support Teams (BIST) that support the growth mindset and creates a sense of grace with students and staff. This philosophy focused on showing respect, building relationships, listening before reacting, celebrating students’ individuality, teambuilding, shared processing and grace (Ozanam, 2016).

Gordon (2007) stressed the importance of positive energy in every environment to focus change. Gordon provides 10 rules to foster a positive environment:

1. You're the driver of your bus.
2. Desire, vision, and focus move your bus in the right direction.
3. Fuel your ride with positive energy.
4. Invite people on your bus and share your vision for the road ahead.
5. Don't waste your energy on those who don't get on your bus.
6. Post a sign that no energy vampires allowed on your bus.
7. Enthusiasm attracts more passengers and energizes them during the ride.
8. Love your passengers.
9. Drive with purpose.
10. Have fun and enjoy the ride. (p. 157)

These key elements of supporting a positive environment enriched the culture of my organization. Through positive energy and a shared vision the change process can shift the culture of the institution to be aligned with the building vision.

Gordon and Smith (2015) continued by stressing the importance of a positive environment by stating, "Research from the HeartMath Institute (heartmath.org) shows that when you have a feeling in your heart, it goes to every cell in the body, then outward-and other people up to 10 feet away can sense feelings transmitted by your heart" (p. 23). The focus on creating a positive atmosphere can be contagious and a collegial culture among staff can be developed. Gordon and Smith (2015) recanted the advice of Pete Carroll, "My challenge is to be a consistent and optimistic, that every person in the organization feels that tomorrow will be better than today and we expect it to be" (p. 40). With a shared focus on a positive and optimistic environment we can garner the culture we need for our students and staff to support one another in our educational journey.

Liesveld and Miller (2005) explained, “Great teachers show their pride in and care for their students using words and actions. Our best teachers show that they are proud of their students’ academic achievements and personally invested in their growth as people” (p. 35). Through understanding of educators strengths, teachers develop and promote a positive environment for all students to provide a climate conducive for empowered culture. To promote a positive environment Mueller (2010) pointed out eight key steps for positive change:

- Get the Picture – Think it ‘til you feel it.
- Risk – Run to, Not from.
- Full Responsibility – Life is your mirror.
- Feel all your feelings – Allow emotional freedom.
- Honest communication – Send and receive the highest truth.
- Forgiveness of the past – The power of release.
- Gratitude for the present – The power of appreciation.
- Hope for the future – The power of surrender.

The process focused around the theme that academic optimism empowers teachers to develop an environment of grace and support for fellow educators and students that may be at risk. The process and sense of self-efficacy was delineated and supported throughout the culture of the building.

Rath and Harter (2010) promoted a similar premise in that there are five essential elements that make a positive wellbeing; career wellbeing, social wellbeing, financial wellbeing, physical wellbeing and community wellbeing. Through focus on these five elements a positive self-image can be obtained and Eagle Middle School can thrive to help promote a positive

environment. “Every human being has talents that are just waiting to be uncovered” (Rath, 2007, p. 30).

Desrochers (2015) explained the value of a positive school environment as being critical to improved achievement test scores and mental health. “Supporting students’ mental wellness creates significant improvements in school climate, student behavior, and academic performance” (Desrochers, 2015, p. 50). Through a positive school culture sustained optimism can be prevalent among students and staff. Desrochers (2015) reported, “It’s not just about the students; it enhances the positive school culture among the teachers as well” (p. 50).

Nelson, Caldarella, Adams, and Shatzer (2013) utilized the mid-continent research for education and learning report in 2003 to state, “Effective collaboration is essential in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) where teachers and administrators share goals to improve student learning, share decision making, and learn together, all of which are supported by good communication and strong personal and professional relations” (p. 64). Developing effective collegial relationships is critical through the development of a positive environment. “Effective collaboration requires collegial relationships. Collegiality means more than congeniality” (Nelson, Caldarella, Adams, & Shatzer, 2013, p. 64). Nelson et al. (2013) explained the value of a positive environment, “A way to potentially strengthen teachers’ collaborative relationships is through the use of praise, a strategy commonly used as part of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)” (p. 65). “Teacher-to-teacher praise may similarly foster more positive relationships among teachers and improve their perceptions of school community” (Nelson, Caldarella, Adams, & Shatzer, 2013, p. 66). The study found validity in developing a praise system to promote a positive environment through staff praise notes among teachers. Nelson et al. (2013) concluded their study, “In conclusion, the peer

praise note intervention appears to have improve teachers' perceptions of their relationships with one another and their sense of school community" (p. 74). A system of peer to peer notes and positive praise was needed to support a positive environment.

Hoy and Hannum (1997) concluded the power and influence of a positive environment through collegial staff:

In summary, the extant research suggests that collegial principals who are friendly, open, supportive, egalitarian, and committed to excellence are most likely to create a school climate conducive to student achievement. Likewise, teachers who are committed to students, their colleagues, and their school; who are enthusiastic: who set high but achievable academic goals for students; and who are cohesive and cooperative rather than critical and divisive are most likely to develop a climate conducive to student learning. (p. 298)

Collective teacher efficacy is a researched portion of academic optimism that is imperative to support a positive environment. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk (2004) explained, "Collective teacher efficacy is the judgment of teachers that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the actions required to have positive effects on students" (p. 4). Huffman and Moss (2008) mentioned, "Teachers need to care about their students as individuals and accept the trying task of identifying the interests the students have" (p. 11). To ensure a positive environment, "the faculty has a collective and optimistic view that it can be successful in improving student learning, even for those students with difficulties" (Wu, 2013, p. 420). Through the work of a positive staff, the morale and efficacy of the culture can create a systemic belief in collective change and empowerment of the staff throughout Eagle Middle School.

Shared Leadership

Shared leadership was a central focus of this research and initial component of developing an empowered collegial culture. In an effort to drive building culture building decisions needed to be made and disseminated throughout the staff. I developed a shared

leadership approach by developing and implementing a building leadership team, content specific professional learning communities, building site committees, common planning times, a student improvement team, and teacher leader positions. These initiatives are based on the culmination of the researched findings and were measured to ascertain how focusing on shared leadership may influence the building culture and which of these shared leadership practices had an impact on the building culture.

DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005) described the value of administrative support and shared leadership:

The PLC concept operates from the premise that leadership should be widely dispersed throughout a school, and thus developing the leadership potential of all staff members is imperative. Principals in PLCs are called upon to regard themselves as leaders of leaders rather than leaders of followers, and broadening teacher leadership becomes one of their priorities. (p. 23).

This empowerment process drives the value of administrative support to deliver shared power. Hoaglund, Birkenfeld and Box (2014) stated, “Activities that support professional learning within the school setting should be provided to avoid teacher isolation” (p. 524). I must show the value of educators and work to broaden their leadership abilities through shared reflective empowerment of each educator in the building. Watson (2014) promoted the value of community through the PLC practice with the concept that “mutual trust, respect and support along with openness, networks and partnerships. After the appeal to shared vision and values, the importance of ‘trust’ and ‘openness’ in the working of the PLC perhaps emerges most consistently in the literature” (p. 21). To accomplish this DuFour (2005) defined a vision that model administrators should adhere to:

- Teach a class in effective effort to a group of students.

- Give teachers feedback on how they send the three crucial messages and use the arenas for attribution retraining.
- Model your own openness to taking risks and making and correcting errors by sharing when this happens with staff.
- Be seen and heard in one classroom every day talking to a student about something he or she is working on and making positive attribution statements about that work.
- Let others see and hear you're learning something new. (p. 106)

These crucial steps allows administrators to develop a model for shared leadership and empowerment for staff. "Participation in this valuable experience facilitated candidates' growth and allowed them to view their peers as an essential resource to improve their practice" (Hoaglund, Birkenfeld & Box, 2014, p. 523).

Hoy and Hannum (1997) explained, "...principals can influence teaching either by administrative support and collegial leadership or by administrative control" (p. 296). Creating an open door policy with a clear mission and vision are keys to my development of a culture conducive to change. Bambrik-Santoyo (2012) described, "Building a great staff culture is not about being a born "inspiration"; it's about making purposeful choices that will enable you to realize the staff culture you want and need. The five most important places to focus are:

1. Set the vision. Wisely design a clear and palpable vision for the work environment in your school.
2. Get the right people on the bus. Without great people, little else matters. Ensure your vision helps drive your hiring.
3. Put a stake in the ground. Reflect your commitment to developing a strong staff culture by prioritizing it from the first interactions of the year.

4. Keep your ear to the rail. Look and listen for negative culture warning signs that are coming down the tracks.
 5. Lather, rinse, repeat. Staff culture is fragile. If you're not intentional about building, maintaining, or communicating your staff culture, someone else will define it for you.
- (pp. 191 – 192)

Graham (2014) wrote, “Administrative support with a systemic emphasis on professional practice and focus on extensive teacher training and professional development is particularly relevant in schools with academically at-risk populations” (p. 41). I was visible and had a clearly defined mission that is focused throughout the staff. Being visible and available to staff is a key to expose staff to the shared expectations and cultural development.

“When reviewing the data relative to teachers who worked in urban, high poverty schools, NCES researchers found that job dissatisfaction accounted for 40% of the teachers leaving” (Graham, 2014, p. 41). Educational leaders must be able to attract the right people to the building and ensuring they remain is essential. Graham (2014) stated, “Teachers who think that they are successful and that they make a difference in their students' lives will be more likely to remain in a school than those who feel unsuccessful and frustrated” (p. 42). By building a staff that supports one another through shared processing and clear expectations, an empowered culture can be developed. Graham (2014) and Green (2009) suggested that instructional leaders “...distribute leadership responsibilities and facilitate the establishment of a school culture conducive to student learning” (p. 198). Furthermore, the effective instructional leader must be committed to providing the faculty with opportunities to identify instructional strategies that enhance learning and best meet the needs of all students (Green, 2009). Consistency in these elements is important to drive the continuous process and development of the building culture.

“School administrators must make it a priority to support their teachers if they expect educators and, in turn, students, to experience the success necessary for schools and the United States as a whole not to be a nation at risk” (Graham, 2014, p. 44).

Through Graham’s process, openness to feedback can become prevalent and develop the collegial conversations necessary for cultural change. “This teamwork approach to systemic reform points to the role of coaching as a critical component for building instructional capacity” (Graham, 2014, p. 42). Educational leaders must be aware of their building culture while being reflective to what they can do to make their educators lives easier. “Great leaders maintain strong staff cultures by remaining continually on the lookout for warning signs. They look for signs of stress before those signs become larger problems” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 203). Bambrick-Santoyo went on to describe day-to-day excellence as keeping an open face, listen first, waiting before sending emails, use we instead of I, having a bias toward yes, revisiting the mission often and keeping it up as key administrative roles to support shared power. Bambrick-Santoyo, (2012) concluded, “The key, though, is to be systematic and prioritize sustaining staff culture over commitments” (p. 209). The focus on we instead of me will be crucial to my development of a strong sustaining staff culture.

Schmoker (2006) highlighted the value of working together compared to when staff work alone. He focused on the importance of curricular and instructional alignment in a school district. Literacy education is also a key component that provides value to reading and writing across the curriculum for cross-curricular integration. An important part illustrated is the value of professional learning communities improving instructional practices as educators. It is essential to focus on the importance of leadership and the role of central office and state leadership in my learning community.

Cheliotis and Reilly (2010) stated, “In the new leadership model, the leader does not know all the answers” (p. 11). They went on to state the following keys to framing a new leadership model:

- Asking, listening, then directing (in that order).
- Focus on personal growth.
- Delegating, coaching, and modeling accountability.
- High task, high relationship, and a culture of passionate engagement.
- Sharing resources, collaborating, and partnering across function areas.
- Open and transparent.
- Respectful of different points of view.
- Original thinking; exposing one’s view of reality about issues.

These concepts framed the leader’s perspective on shared power. Working with staff and not through staff is crucial for the growth and development of an empowered school culture.

Lencioni (2012) described, “More than any policy or system, there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance” (p. 212).

This is an area that I will need to continue to focus on to improve accountability among staff.

The following items will be shared with team leaders in regards to what happens when accountability is avoided:

- Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance.
- Encourages mediocrity.
- Misses deadlines and key deliverables.
- Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline. (Lencioni, 2012, p. 213)

These are items that I reflected upon to move forward with improving lack of accountability. It is important to empower staff and work to ensure that educators are making each other accountable.

D'Ardenne, Barnes, Hightower, Lamason, Mason, Patterson, and Erickson, (2013) stated with regard to shared processing through PLCs, "The influence this experience had on us as professionals was arguably as valuable as the student gains" (p. 148).

Our group of reading teachers came together to address the needs of our struggling readers. Notably, our district respected our goals to help our students grow academically and supported these goals by allocating time, funding for texts, and freedom to make instructional decisions (D'Ardenne et al., 2013, p. 149).

D'Ardenne et al. (2013) stated that "respect and support were vital for us as we fostered a culture of collaboration. Establishing our PLC was facilitated by our district's administration but was fueled by our own collective desire to learn from our varied expertise" (p. 149). The study concluded by stating that "working together to develop materials that met our students' needs stimulated and challenged us as thinking professionals and also delivered us from the more isolating experiences to which we had previously become accustomed" (D'Ardenne et al., 2013, p. 149). D'Ardenne et al. (2013) point out the value of administrative support:

Thanks in part to district level and administrative support, we were empowered to gather and develop resources that focused on meaningful, text-based formative assessment and the specific needs of our students. In doing so, we created a space in which we grew as professionals while our students were nurtured as literacy learners. (p. 150)

The doctoral cohort candidates, Coleman and Alford (2007) explained reflecting upon the work of Leithwood and Riehl (2005):

A successful school leader is reflective, has a clear vision, achieves a shared vision among stakeholders, effectively fosters communication, grows leaders, utilizes models of distributive leadership, and creates an environment of

collaboration by building and maintaining positive relationships with all stakeholders. (p. 39)

They believed that not one individual has the time, skill, and talents to complete the tasks of an entire school building. Through shared power and support the work of improving the culture and climate can take a collective approach to empower staff. Gardner (2000) stated, “No individual has all the skills-and certainly not the time- to carry out all the complex tasks of contemporary leadership” (p. 12). Shared leadership is essential to develop progress that is driven through an empowered culture.

Sparks and Hirsh (1997) explained, “Research and experience have taught us that widespread, sustained implementation of new practices in classrooms, principals’ offices, and central offices require a new form of professional development” (p. 1). This is a key concept to create a sustained system of administrative support and shared power throughout the district. I worked to ensure that all staff are engaged in the “game.” This shared power has been defined through the research of academic optimism. “Academic optimism is a school characteristic, which has been associated with school achievement, despite student SES” (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011, p. 544). Kirby and DiPaola (2011) went on to state, “Optimism can be learned, developed, and nurtured among stakeholders in a school” (p. 544). The concept of academic optimism is framed around the idea that academic achievement is crucial and provided through a valued faculty with the support and recognition of parents. For students and staff to be successful, there has to be a shared belief and with support for one another.

Shared Processing with Reflective Practices

Shared processing with reflective practice has shown to be a critical for developing an empowered collegial culture. These practices are developed over time and after the building have built a positive environment with shared leadership practices. This process is emphasized

and developed after shared leadership practices are in place and allow for the building to work collegially to support one another while developing reflexivity in the staffs' approach. This essential element is developed after there has been a clear and concise focus on developing a positive environment and shared leadership practices.

Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) explained, "What most undermines failing schools is that everyone on the staff is doing his or her own thing" (p. 215). I must set out to develop a shared mission and vision to incorporate the goals of the educational institution. DuFour and DuFour (2012) stated, "Attempting to improve the school one teacher at a time through teacher supervision is not an effective strategy for schoolwide improvement" (p. 58). Professional Learning Communities (PLC) allow for this process to take shape by empowering all members of the educational institution to be part of the landscape of the improvement process. According to Garrett (2010), the PLC process "...outlines a process for creating a school-wide culture that ensures no student is overlooked and allowed to fail" (p. 4). As the building leader this should be a central focus. With the development of a structured PLC process each educational stakeholder can reflect and process the needs of their students and each other. Williams (2012) explained:

Moreover, teachers at the high performing schools found that collaborating before school, in the hallways, during lunchtime, and other times of the day was just as helpful as scheduled PLCs. A collaborative culture assured that all educational teachers had a forum for questions and problem-solving. (p. 37)

Staff are able to collaborate with each other to utilize the varying skills and techniques of each educator to develop the individual accommodations needed to develop student success for all.

"PLCs seemed embedded in the cultures of campuses rated as Academically Recognized or Academically Exemplary, where more than 80% and more than 90% of the students, respectively, passed the TAKS" (Williams, 2012, p. 38). To infuse the reflective practices

needed the PLC concept continues to be a central focus of shared processing. Williams (2012) stated, “When implemented as a professional-development strategy, PLCs can lead to organizational improvements in the areas of job-embedded learning through collaboration and shared data-driven decisions” (p. 38). Williams (2012) concluded by stating that “collaboration through PLCs is an important piece of the equation for continuous improvement” (p. 39).

Garrett (2010) explained, “Becoming a professional learning community is a new experience” (p. 5). As the building principal I have been entrusted to provide a setting for change. To change the culture of the building it is imperative that all educators take part in the educational decisions to prepare not only students, but also educators. “A PLC is distinguished by three key elements: a focus on learning, professional collaboration and a focus on results” (Garrett, 2010, p. 5). To encompass the culture of the mission and vision in each educator must have a community approach to instructional decisions. There must be a shared approach in decision making to take risks while ascertaining the value of failure to create success. Freeman and Newcomer (2015) pointed out, “The school principal can be instrumental in allowing systems changes such as altering existing procedures and providing time for grade level or student intervention teams to meet and review data and engage in problem solving” (p. 68). Each team member can become comfortable with each other and value their input to develop a collaborative effort to drive student achievement. Educational teams were data driven. A procedure to systematically analyze and reflect upon data were utilized to define an effort of continuous improvement to the educational institution. Through the implementation of shared leadership and positive environment practices the culture shift can allow for experienced educators to learn and develop the abilities of less skilled educators. “The process of analysis, reflection, and action is continual” (Garrett, 2010, p. 5). This practice of consistent analysis

creates a climate of sharing and collaborating together to share the workload. The procedure creates effective instruction for students with decreased work. The teaming approach allows for a culture shift from the lone educator to a team of leaders and supporters. Garrett (2010) explained, “The encouragement, expertise, and support of colleagues in the learning community create a team even more resilient than the strengths of its individual experts” (p. 6).

A key to effective leadership is sustained change and improvement with or without the leader’s presence. “PLCs thus complement and help sustain other intervention efforts by creating a fundamental change in educators’ approach to teaching and learning” (Garrett, 2010, p. 7). Through effective PLCs, a sustained improvement process can be developed to provide the format to tackling multiple issues. The team will become comfortable with the thoughts and reflections of each member in order to create a system for comfortably expressing and reflecting upon concerns and failures. This sustained culture change developed a shared approach to deal with instructional, social or emotional concerns that staff members may be facing. Garrett (2010) illustrated the strength of the sequoia when its roots are entangled with each other providing a stronger base for each of the sequoias. This is a key component to sustaining change, trust and empowerment of each PLC member to work together. Garrett (2010) went on to state that “the goal is to empower instructional leaders with skills to perpetuate a continual process of identifying needs, developing response strategies, and evaluating results” (p. 7). To have a sustained change model, Eagle Middle School needed to be able to understand the data and analyze the results. This process allows for shared decision making to implement responsive results. The continuous process of reviewing the interventions and developing team-based decisions is a critical element to Eagle Middle School’s improvement process. The systemic nature of the PLC process allows for a systematic change in the professional climate and culture

that my educators can flourish. Spanniet (2010) described, “They participate in reflective dialogue about instructional challenges and work cooperatively to identify teaching strategies that positively address them” (p. 1). Through this shared process all educators are equal stakeholders with shared support and equal footing.

The focal point of every PLC is to improve skills. I worked with PLC leaders to drive improvement around a multitude of areas, which could include school culture, curriculum and instruction, and systemic social issues. Spanniet (2010) points to the value of utilizing research and sharing scholarly works. “The exchange of ideas could move to discussing teachers’ understandings of the impact those components have on school personnel, leadership, instruction, and achievement” (p. 2). PLCs provide the time and resources to improve instruction, but more importantly the process to apply and reflect upon new practitioner practices in their community. “Principals also can emphasize how those skills may be applied for interpreting and discussing the answers to their questions as well as for reaching agreement about ways to use information to make deliberate instructional improvements in their schools” (Spanniet, 2010, p. 2). Our PLC cultures needed to be deliberate in their professional reflection, analysis and shared risk taking to drive instructional improvement across the building. Spanniet (2010) went on to point out the value of utilizing the leadership styles of educators and principals as a core to the community focus and relationship building for harmonious culture. Spanniet (2010) continued by stating, “By weighing their shared experiences, beliefs, and knowledge, PLCs can begin to consider, develop, implement, and assess instructional improvement strategies tailored to their schools’ specific needs” (p. 2).

According to DuFour et al. (2005) “the PLC concept is specifically designed to develop the collective capacity of a staff to work together to achieve the fundamental purpose of the

school. Leaders of the process purposefully set out to create the conditions that enable teachers to learn from one another as part of their routine work practices” (p. 18). This capacity develops a climate of cultural change to empower collegial educators to take control of their practices and reflective analysis. “Educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture” (2005, p. 36). To develop collaborative culture systemic change must occur. “This focus on continual improvement and results requires educators to change traditional practices and revise prevalent assumptions” (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005, p. 41).

Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith, and Albritton (2013) expressed the value of shared processing in each educational setting:

With a spirit of partnership, meaningful conversations are the safe spaces that are set aside for purposeful, intentional, focused, and authentic discourse that includes: committed listening; rallying around the vision; sharing of perspectives; sharing of passion; planning and working through agreements for action; nurturing and celebrating the value of others; and resolving and managing conflict. (p. 20)

The focus on a partnership to create shared processing and reflective practice is critical to school’s culture. “This can be done when schools begin unwrapping the gift of meaningful conversations that are geared toward personal and professional development and accountability, and a focus on each person "being better today than yesterday" (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013, p. 22).

Support Staff and Shared Resources

Having the appropriate support staff and resources available are a driver for the development of an empowered collegial culture. These resources provide the needed tools for staff to support one another and drive the collaborative process essential in the development of a

positive working environment and provide the resources to drive shared leadership. This component of culture is limited in scope and sequence based on the districts resources and funding available. Creating an atmosphere of collegial conversations that drive the collective analytical analysis of instruction and curriculum integration will be key factors to a productive change system. This construct was utilized to support positive environmental influence and shared leadership practices through the research findings in an effort to develop an empowered collegial building culture.

Crocker and Heighman (2013) stated, “Hord and Tobia acknowledge that in many schools creating successful PLCs requires a significant shift in culture, which almost inevitably meets resistance” (p. 249). To create effective change we must build trust through collegial conversations. Spannuet (2010) explained, “There is an air of professionalism among all teachers as they participate on effective learning teams and share basic norms and values relative to students” (p. 1). To integrate reflective sharing, educators must respect and respond to each other with professional admiration to their unique skills and abilities.

Spannuet (2001) stated, “When teachers trust each other, they share more, they help one another more, and they are more supportive of one another” (p. 1). The concept of open sharing is a key factor in developing positive collegial conversations of respect and rapport among staff. Without norms the open sharing of a PLC may be displaced and develop a punitive effect on the group. Spannuet (2001) commented, “When teachers trust administrators, they feel less threatened and more likely to take risks in creating learning opportunities. With trust, building communities will more likely occur” (p. 1). I listened and respected the ideas of all of my educators while working to create an atmosphere of calculated risk taking to provide the necessary reflective growth process to continuously improve. Principals are key members to

share ideas with, as I should work to reflect with practitioners without pre-judging. Spannueit (2010) explained, “Open sharing among teachers, though, should be continuous rather than occasional” (p. 1). The importance of continual reflection and analysis is a key component to long-term success. The district office needs to provide ample time to allow for consistent reflection amongst educators on an ongoing basis.

Schmoker (2001) provided as the title alludes to, “practical strategies from dramatically improved schools.” His research gives a more detailed approach about specific schools that have shown improvement. He continued to focus on the value of professional learning communities. In this book he added a higher focus on the value of analyzing data to make educational instructional decisions in a shared approach to improve instruction with a shared support from central office, building office and educators. The value of empowering staff comes from above. A central office must empower educators to drive the system and provide recognition for staff. A front office must create an inviting environment and provide resources and support from entities such as instructional coaches and administrative support. The value of collegial conversations is a crucial element to empower educators to work together by creating a shared culture of support and respect. “The 21st century school setting is one that requires of its students, faculty, and staff a highly specialized set of collaborative skills” (Hoaglund, Birkenfeld, & Box, 2014, p. 527).

According to Hoy and Hannum (1997) there are “two related aspects of principal behavior that are part of the healthy school configuration are the influence of the principal and the extent to which the principal is able to furnish teacher with the adequate supplies and additional instructional materials to do their jobs” (p. 296). As educational leader I can garner staff support by utilizing influence to get the needed materials and resources for staff. This

attention to detail and individualized approach creates an empowered culture while developing mutual respect and rapport among staff and administrators.

External Factors

External factors can have an impact on the building culture. Through the development of a positive environment and shared leadership practices external factors can be managed and dealt with to ensure that negative influences don't impact the development of an empowered collegial culture. I must understand the politics and the news coverage related to educational policies and procedures to disseminate them to staff and stakeholders. Through understanding of federal mandates such as special education, English as a second language and testing initiatives I was able to share the news in a positive way with staff to ensure that these external factors are not driving a negative cultural divide among the school community. "Strong relationships are critical to completing rigorous and relevant work successfully" (ICLE, 2012, p. 112).

Hoy and Hannum (1997) stated, "A healthy middle school is one in which the technical, managerial, and institutional levels are in harmony and the school is meeting its basic needs as it successfully copes with disruptive external forces and directs its energies toward its mission" (p. 293). Our multi-media society provides instant access to the nature of the educational environment and policies that drive education. Finding a shared approach to solicit positive factors from the school community are key elements to developing my building's culture. As the president of the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE), Daggett focused on the value of relationships in developing school culture with the variety of external factors that influence a school building. In his address to the Shawnee Mission School district in 2015 he emphasized, "Culture trumps strategy." This enduring statement places culture as the most impactful and beginning of developing a model school. "Students who perceive teachers to be

creating caring, well-structured learning environments in which expectations are high, clear and fair are more likely to have greater developmental outcomes” (ICLE, 2012, p. 29). I must cultivate and understand the nature of each stakeholder’s family and the importance of developing this type of relationship with staff and students.

Fowler (2013) related the following beliefs as key external factors when focusing on policies:

- Educational leaders must be literate about policy and the policy process.
- Educational leaders need both theories and practical information about education policy and policymaking.
- Educational leaders must understand power and how to use it responsibly.
- All public policy, but especially education policy, is value laden.
- State government has become increasingly important since the late 1970s and will probably continue to be so. (p. v)

Being an educational leader means being aware of the current state of the legislative bodies decisions. I took steps to be involved in the policy process and understand what will be coming in the future. Being prepared is crucial to help prepare a school to develop a culture that is effective with change and prepared for the consistent changes of the policy process. De Dreu and Nijstad (2008) tested the value of threat rigidity to the value of mindset. They state, “The general idea was that, compared with a cooperation set, a conflict set leads to less positive affect, more arousal, and a great taxation of cognitive resources and that, therefore, a conflict set leads to more rigid, black-and-white thinking and less creative performance” (p. 658). The focus on threat rigidity plays a crucial role when focusing on external factors.

With the changing face of the political environment throughout the nation, external factors play a crucial role in school culture. Stephen and Eric (2011) pointed out, “Theoretically, when the environmental changes are so radical, response rigidity may be dysfunctional since prior, well-learned responses are inappropriate under such a completely new condition” (p. 174). I worked to ascertain the external factors and tailor them in a way to not evoke fear and worry among staff. “In contrast, when a threat of the environment is known and coping mechanisms are clear, and such causal relationships are already tested and established” (Stephan & Eric, 2011, p. 174). Stephan and Eric (2011) explained, “In an adverse funding environment, funders have been demanding social enterprises for performance” (p. 176). With the conservative focus on quantitative measures in our educational system as it relates to funding it is imperative to build strong educational culture with shared administrative support throughout the district.

In today’s high stakes educational community, it is imperative that all educators become reflective practitioners. Shawnee Mission School District’s (SMSD) board policy states “the board of education recognizes the need for and value of a systematic, ongoing program of curriculum development and evaluation” (Shawnee Mission School District, 2015, p. 29). Through the policies of the board of education the PLC process fits this systemic need. Policy IDA goes on to reflect the value of a strategically aligned curriculum that will be disseminated by staff to students through a shared approach. Data is to be analyzed and reflected upon to make instructional and curricular decisions to best meet the needs of students while utilizing the skills and attributes of our educators. Part seven of the IDA focuses on the critical importance of instructional leaders to receive resources through professional learning opportunities to deliver varied instructional strategies. Policy IC states, “The academic program shall assist students to grow intellectually, to master the curriculum objectives, and to prepare them to be college and

career ready” (Shawnee Mission School District, 2015). Understanding board policies and federal policies are crucial for me to frame school culture.

Community Support

A focus on community expectations and support is a key element in the development of an empowered collegial culture. Participating in community events where community members can interact with students inside and outside the school is crucial. “Making connections with a student’s family usually strengthens the support a student receives for learning and gives the teacher support for instructional activities, classroom rules and policies, grading systems, and so forth. Teachers and instructional leaders need to reach out to parents to engage them in their student’s program” (ICLE, 2012, p. 144). In the development of an empowered collegial culture I worked to engage the community through positive environment and shared leadership practices to improve community support.

Liesveld and Miller (2005) explained, “Teachers influence on students is second only to that of their parents” (p. 15). A missing piece of many schools is their parent and community support. To reach the varied needs of all students takes a community effort. To achieve this goal the ICLE (2012) lists the following suggestions:

- Develop community support for and involvement in the character education initiative.
- Make parents partners in the initiative.
- Determine the community’s key guiding principles. (p. 143)

Hoy and Hannum (1997) described:

The institutional level connects the school and the community. Schools need the support of their communities. Both teachers and administrators need backing if they are to perform their respective functions in a harmonious fashion without undue pressure from individuals and groups outside the school. (p. 293)

To help my educators reach out to foster stronger community relations the ICLE (2012) recommended the following actions:

- Get to know parents on a first-name basis and encourage them to address you by your first name.
- Occasionally sacrifice the administrative business suit for more informal dress, if that is consistent with the parents you serve.
- Work hard to demonstrate to parents that they are equal to you as human beings you just have different roles.
- Remember that a liberal use of humor breaks down barriers. Accept good-natured teasing from parents and enjoy a good laugh together.
- Demonstrate active listening. Seek first to understand and then to be understood.
- Be aware of your nonverbal behavior. Realize that this communication says more than the actual words you speak.
- Practice truth-telling with community members. Be candid about the school's challenges and adopt this philosophy: "In this school, we tell the truth. Our problems are opportunities. What makes us different is that by recognizing these 'probletunities,' we have the change to improve conditions for our children."
- If you practice authenticity, you will be able to anticipate and prepare for the types of questions and concerns that parents will present.
- One of the most important attributes for any school leader is visibility.
- When parents sense that you care, they will open up and ask questions.
- When engaging in partnerships, always focus on the children, not on the attributes or behaviors of the parents.

- Recognize that in order to develop trust among parents, you must exhibit trustworthiness.
- Always remember that you and your staff work for the community; they pay the taxes and elect the school board members who employ you. (p. 144)

These acts of authenticity can flourish and develop a strong community partnership for years to come at Eagle Middle School. Communicating frequently with the community and parents are key factors to drive an empowered school culture. I worked to be visible and active in the community whether it is a school sponsored event or a community event. “Above all, make meaningful parent involvement fun and inviting. When people truly feel welcome, they will return” (ICLE, 2012, p. 148).

Survey and Interview Protocols

To measure the impact of culture on the building environment the latest survey and interview instruments were researched. Hoy (2016) developed the organizational health inventory in which he stated, “A healthy school is one in which the institutional, administrative, and teacher levels are in harmony; and the school meets functional needs as it successfully copes with disruptive external forces and directs its energies toward its mission.” This survey instrument focused on institutional integrity, collegial leadership, consideration, principal influence, resource support, teacher affiliation and academic emphasis. The organizational climate description for middle schools (OCDQ-RM) focused on six dimensions; supportive principal behavior, restrictive principal behavior, collegial teacher behavior, committed teacher behavior and disengaged teacher behavior. These two instruments take a scientific approach to building culture including positive environment and shared leadership.

The California school staff survey (2016) was developed, “To efficiently and cost-effectively provide schools with data from their teachers, administrators, and other staff to guide

school improvement efforts and foster positive learning and teaching environment.” The survey particularly worked to ascertain the level of trust, support, collaboration, and environment of the school building. The 116 questions will provide practical examples to analyze in the development of the survey and interview instruments. The survey takes an overarching approach to ascertain if the students are provided with an inviting, supportive, and culturally relevant learning environment (csss.wested.org, 2016).

The school climate survey given to staff in New Jersey focused on school climate and contained specific questions relating positive environment and shared leadership factors. The New Jersey school climate survey (2016) worked to “improve student relationships, learning conditions, and the school’s overall environment.” This four part survey allows for quick response and a large data collection across the state. Collaboration, time management, school pride, and environment of examples I will utilize in the development of my survey instrument.

“Does your school have the positive teaching conditions research shows are important to teacher success” is the premise of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2016). The survey stressed how it “fits in naturally with the culture of our schools” (NCTWCS, 2016). This improvement based process is utilized throughout the state to drive the cultural sense of the building and deliver data-driven changes for their school communities. The value of the state survey is touted by school leaders as a critical instrument to their improvement process. The National School Climate Center (NSCC, 2016) also provided some similar survey questions to validate other data tools in measuring school culture. These tools will provide a wealth of examples in the development of my research instruments. The work of Dr. Hoy is especially relevant to determining key factors in developing a positive culture and shared leadership to determine its impact on an empowered collegial culture.

Conceptual Framework

In my first year in the building, it was explicitly shared with me and also apparent that there was a need for an empowered collegial building culture. The building was without consistent leadership for the past ten years with a wide turnover of administrative staff and educators in the building. The building had a reputation of poor customer service and not serving the community effectively. Through poor culture, staff has been leaderless and cycling toward a continuous state of academic cultural decline. In the literature six key constructs were derived; positive environment, external factors, support staff with shared resources, shared leadership, shared processing with reflective practice, and community support to drive an effective culture. Research on change theory provided this study with the focus to research and influence the six constructs to impact an empowered building culture. This conceptual framework was designed based on the development of an empowered collegial culture that is initially supported through the development of positive environment and shared leadership practices.

These constructs are emphasized through the research and notion of academic optimism. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) defined academic optimism as:

The shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve, and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor—in brief, an organizational property based on confidence that students will succeed academically. (p. 204)

This shared belief is the development of an empowered collegial school culture. Hoy and Mickel (2012) described academic optimism as a way to capture school culture in terms of the collective optimism of the faculty. Through this process I have three dimensions cultivated; collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust in parents and students, and academic emphasis. These three elements are imbedded in the six constructs in the research of this study in figure 2.1 below:



Figure 2.1 - Empowered Collegial School Culture Framework

Developing a positive environment is a critical element that was needed improved by focusing on teambuilding, public recognition, and reflective practice. Teambuilding activities while providing the personal touches to reach stakeholders on an individual level are essential to my development of a positive environment. Various forms of teambuilding were utilized from personality traits tests to the specifics of understanding personal skills and traits of our educators and students. The key to teambuilding is to reach the inner values of each individual and utilize their strengths while developing a teaming approach. As the literature points out, developing a positive environment is the first essential step to developing an empowered collegial school culture.

Eaker, DuFour and DuFour (2002) stated, "Celebration is frequent, tied directly to the school's values, and recognizes the accomplishments of individuals as well as groups" (p. 25). Utilizing personal experiences as an administrator, I developed and implement personal notes, public recognition, champion awards, teambuilding exercises, daily visits, interactions with students and staff, and multi-media sources such as Twitter. These resources are impactful in developing a positive environment. Ensuring the building is aesthetically pleasing and promoting the values and work of students and staff is crucial. Staff and students had the resources necessary to be successful in their endeavors. Wu (2013) suggested, "Faculty trust reflects an optimistic view of teachers that students and parents are willing to cooperate with them in pursuing student learning" (p. 420).

Focusing on the importance of visibility, longevity and hosting an open door policy to develop empowered collegial conversations was crucial to my development of an empowered collegial building culture. Administrative support with shared power is a cornerstone to the development of an empowered culture. Instructional rounds or classroom walkthroughs drive

empowerment and a shared will toward a common vision and mission with staff. This data collection tool allowed staff to gather data from outside sources and develop reflective practices. I worked to ensure my visibility and be available to staff, students and community members. I was a part of the team and was willing to get my hands “dirty” to be amongst the staff and develop a culture of shared support for one another. This can be accomplished through enveloping regular collegial conversations with staff, students, and community members while being available for any needs that may arise. Eagle Middle School’s longevity of leadership has been a concern. I worked to provide a sense of longevity with their community and develop long-term commitments. Wu (2013) acknowledged, “Faculty trust is the essential element for improving the quality of teacher-student relationship and student learning. When teachers create a trustful and safe learning environment, students are more willing to learn despite obstacles, and parents are more willing to believe that what teachers do are for the benefit of their students” (p. 421). This shared vision is driven through administrative support with shared power and is crucial for the culture to be supportive of one another.

Through the work of DuFour and colleagues, they stressed the value of professional learning communities with some varying viewpoints on the structural capacity of the process. In researching their work the focus on empowerment and shared decision-making through reflective practice are keys to structuring the learning communities. DuFour et al. stated, “Effective leaders do not begin by focusing on changing assumptions and beliefs; they begin by focusing on changing behaviors” (p. 108). An effective PLC process is a research-based process to fundamentally change the way staff works with one another while developing the support and structure necessary to be an effective community. Through this study, including the parameters of the building, there was a multitude of PLCs to impact the cultural identity of the building.

Curriculum and instructional learning communities were developed for English language arts, math, science, social studies, exploratory arts and exploratory technology. Teachers were divided amongst their instructional realms to develop collegial conversations while working to develop a shared and supportive culture to empower educators. To develop a shared building leadership, a building leadership team was utilized following the Rigor, Relevance, and Relationship model presented by Daggett (2015). This team was developed and drove the mission and vision while creating a shared vision of professional learning. To support the wellness of staff health and social vitality, PLCs was enacted to enhance the culture and community of staff. Fostering productive learning through researched practices, behavior intervention support teams (BIST), positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS), and an enrichment hour PLC were developed to provide tiered interventions to students through research based practices with staff empowerment to drive sustained change initiatives to meet the needs of all learners. These PLCs can create a self-sustaining atmosphere to provide an empowered building culture to support the change initiatives of the community.

A focus on customer service and relevance through central office and front office staff provide the ability to empower staff and develop a shared support with shared power to reinforce the theory of change. DuFour et al. (2005) proclaimed, “Principals in PLCs are called upon to regard themselves as leaders of leaders rather than leaders of followers, and broadening teacher leadership becomes one of their priorities” (p. 23). Central office staff can support a collective culture through a collaborative approach with curriculum and instruction by ensuring staff members are engaged in the development of the district curriculum. Districts should provide fair and appropriate financial compensation and publicly recognize staff for their work and diligence to students. Modeling shared input and fostering collegial conversations among all staff

members from the superintendent down are critical to developing a culture open and free to support one another. Front office staff needs to be supportive and create an inviting atmosphere for students, staff, and community members. An instructional coach provided the needed instructional and personal motivation with reflective feedback. This scholar-practitioner's experience with a variety of instructional coaches has seen the impact that an instructional coach can have upon a building. To have a lasting impact on the culture staff must understand the curriculum and instructional methods of other teachers. Cheliotis and Reilly (2010) stated, "It is not one person who determines success; it is the group that creates success. This engenders a culture of continuous improvement for all and share pride in achievements" (p. 12). By supporting educators, with support from administration and office staff, educators can have the necessary time to garner this collegial culture and work together to develop cross-curricular integration among staff members.

External factors that play a role in the building culture is essential. I was informed about political, federal factors, and recent events to inform and relay this information to staff while building conscious knowledge of individual family's needs and values. Fowler (2013) stated, "In education, state policy actors are now considerably more important than either federal or local ones" (p. 125). With the bevy of expectations that are dictated by the federal, state, and local government it was crucial for Eagle Middle School's leadership team to be aware and reduce the stress of staff members to adhere to the policies in a positive light. In Kansas, a massive change was prevalent in working to reduce funding and capacity of the public school system. Creating a family atmosphere while building a strong community focus is key. Shared support staff and resources provide the collegial environment to develop curricular and instructional gains to develop empowerment. Through personal experience in multiple buildings

I can draw upon experiences and previous relationships to foster a community atmosphere to share resources and network with staff to help improve the external factors that influence the climate and culture of the educational institution.

The sixth construct, community support, is often mentioned in the literature as a piece that is commonly ignored in developing a building culture. “In model schools, it is clearly evident that staff members support each other and learn from one another” (ICLE, 2012, p. 112). Daggett referred to community relationship as being a key factor in developing the external factors needed to successfully promote an empowered school culture. Working with the parent teacher association, site councils, extra-curricular activities and community functions helped me develop a focus of community empowerment and support for the building. Visibility is an essential element to buy in and development of community support. Providing opportunities and reaching out to community members to have them attend events is crucial. Publicizing and sharing the news and events that are occurring while developing community connections is a crucial element. Community members must come into the building and students must attend community events to develop a positive and supportive culture with the community. PTA and community based site councils provided the needed support to empower the culture of the community and building by supporting one another and providing the community resources to meet the needs of students and staff.

These six constructs develop a broad range of items to develop a methodology for a developing an empowered collegial building culture. Working through the elements of change to support a caring and nurturing culture is crucial. Identifying barriers to change while developing strategies to support change initiatives is a key step in the change process. Utilizing the literature and through experience with collegial support drove the focus on the building culture. Through

these constructs I worked to focus on developing a positive environment with shared leadership to develop an empowered collegial building culture. These two constructs have the most leverage to develop an empowered collegial culture. Eaker et al. (2002) proclaimed, “Remember, what you need to reculture your school lies within. Collaborate with one another. Support one another. Care for one another. Encourage one another, and remarkable things will happen” (p. 29). Through the implementation of these concepts this study worked to analyze how these initiatives have impacted the building culture and which initiatives had the most leverage in the development of a collegial culture.

Chapter Summary

The literature focused on the experience of the researcher as it relates to the culture of an educational setting. Working through theories of change I have developed six key constructs with a focus on two to drive the research focus to develop an empowered building culture and climate. Through the development of shared leadership practices and developing a positive environment the work of this research was to enhance and empower staff utilizing these constructs. The literature provides a base for the value that these key elements play on the development of a collegial school culture. Utilizing the workings of the research, I utilized the conceptual framework to develop an empowered collegial culture that is conducive to continuous improvement and change.

Chapter three will focus on the methodological approach to this study. Qualitative and quantitative methods will be utilized to determine the impact of the two constructs on the building culture. I worked to ascertain which elements provide a quantitative and qualitative impact toward empowering members in the building. Chapter three includes an introduction, rationale of methodology, problem setting, research sample, data collection methods, data

analysis methods, trustworthiness, limitation and delimitations and a summary of the methodological design of the study.

Chapter 3 Inquiry Methods

Introduction

To improve the nature of an educational setting a clear focus on the mission and vision of the institution is paramount. In an effort to delineate the mission and vision, it is crucial to develop an empowered culture of building educators to support a common goal. This study focused on the development of a positive environment with shared leadership to develop an empowered building culture utilizing the theories of change to create a collegial culture for students, staff, and community members.

This study used a mixed method approach utilizing change theories while building a positive environment through shared leadership to develop a positive culture. The research questions guide and center the research. Herr and Anderson (2015) noted, “Research questions are often formalized versions of puzzles that practitioners have been struggling with for some time and perhaps even acting on in terms of problem solving” (p. 92). The following questions guided the study and framed the work to be completed:

1. How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?
2. What positive environment practices impact the building culture?
3. How does shared leadership influence school culture?
4. What shared leadership procedures impact the building culture?

Chapter 3 outlines the rationale, problem setting/context, research sample and data sources, data collection methods, data analysis methods, trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and the summary of the chapter. Working through the problem of practice will guide building staff members to create a positive environment and develop life-long problem-solving skills to approach instructional and cultural challenges.

Rationale

For the purpose of this research study, mixed methods were used when organizing, collecting, and analyzing data. Saldana (2015) stated, “Thinking qualitatively also means purposely adopting different lenses, filters, and angles as we view social life so as to discover new perceptions and cognitions about the facet of the world we are researching” (p. 4). This study analyzed and determined if a positive environment and shared leadership practices empowered staff to influence the building culture. Understanding the nature of human constructs, the value of the environment, and the power in which individuals share is critical to develop a strong building culture. Furthermore, reflections and feedback of co-workers is crucial in the research design. Survey and interview data were analyzed as to the impact that positive environment and shared leadership practices influenced the building culture.

Taking a pragmatic approach to analyze and decode the state of the cultural environment to ascertain and develop an approach to empower staff through data analysis and implementation of the researched based practices was the rationale of this study. Creswell (2105) explained, “It is appropriate to use mixed methods when the use of quantitative research or qualitative research alone is insufficient for gaining an understanding of the problem” (p. 14). Utilizing the mixed method of surveys and personal interviews determined the value of a positive environment and shared leadership in developing an empowered building culture. By focusing on the context-specific data of this research study, Eagle Middle School was able to implement, develop, and analyze the data to determine the value of a positive environment and shared leadership in the development of an empowered collegial culture.

Problem Setting/Context

The research study focused on Eagle Middle School staff as the primary focus of the research. Eagle Middle School's MAP data indicated that out of 693 students taking the math assessment in the fall of 2014 only 31% of students met the target or grade level goal. A bigger concern was that the growth index from the fall of 2013 to the fall of 2014 was -0.46 as reported by the NWEA building growth index. This performance translates to Eagle Middle School having the lowest growth index in math when compared to the five other middle schools in the district (Shawnee Mission School District, 2015). Other concerns influencing cultural building issues are staff and administrative turnover. The building had a reputation of poor customer service and not serving the community effectively. Through poor culture, the staff has been leaderless and cycling toward a continuous state of decline. Each year from 2013 to 2015 there was a new building principal. The building is in the lowest socioeconomic portion of the district and is classified a Title 1 building as of the 2016-2017 school year. Students come from a variety of backgrounds with a prominent Caucasian population and with over one third of the students identified as Hispanic. The community is blue collar and very supportive of education. To improve the student academic outcome and reduce staff turnover the building needed a focus on developing an empowered culture (ICLE, 2012). The development of a positive environment while implementing shared leadership for all staff and students is the primary constructs for the development of an empowered school culture. Culture is at the very essence of the change process (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). To improve the systematic nature of an educational institution I had to reach to the very nature of the culture. Quantitative data will be reviewed in the descriptive statistic section of Chapter 4 to show trends in the building data.

Research Sample and Data Sources

A request was submitted to the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this research study. Once the IRB was approved, appendix 3.3, permission was requested from the school district where the research study was conducted. After authorization was given from the district, demographic and descriptive statistical information was collected using archival data, surveys, and interviews.

Through the non-experimental mixed method approach of this study, participants from Eagle Middle School were coded based on their position in the building. Creswell (2015) described mixed methods research as:

An approach to research in the social, behavioral, and health science in which the investigator gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. (p. 2)

A stratified random sample was used where certified and classified staff members were placed into two groups. Staff members were randomly selected from each group using a random generator to gain insight from certified, classified, and administrative staff in the building. Each participant played an active role in the building and was vital to the development of an empowered school culture through the development of a positive environment and shared leadership. Each participant was active in supporting a positive environment and utilizing shared leadership to develop an empowered school culture. Participants were randomly selected using stratified sampling based on their position in the building, nature of their involvement in the cultural process, and willingness to participate in the study. All participants' identities were kept confidential and used as the basis of an evaluative performance.

An IRB approved survey was developed and administered to solicit the feedback of all classified and certified staff in the building. This survey allowed each member to have input on

the development of a positive environment and shared leadership for the use of this study. Participants' responses were anonymous and allowed for access to all building employees as to the development of culture at Eagle Middle School. The summary of the responses was shared with all participants. Additionally, the data were utilized for the summation of this research study. The data collection was completed during the 2017 spring semester to allow time for the development of positive environment and shared leadership initiatives in the building.

Data Collection Methods

Clark and Ivankova (2016) stated that mixed methods “researchers can produce stronger and more credible studies that can yield both complementary and corroborating evidence about the research problem of interest” (p. 9). This study used a mixed method approach to collect and analyze data on the influence of a positive environment and shared leadership on building an empowered collegial school culture. Saldana (2015) stated that “the qualitative data collected and analyzed are primarily (but not exclusively) nonquantitative in form, consisting of textual materials (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, documents) and visual materials...” (p. 3). For the purpose of this research study, surveys, and interviews were utilized as the primary quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated:

Research participants are and should be seen as experts of their own experiences with much to teach us about their lives and experiences, and it is essential that you view their stories as contextualized and embedded in larger phenomena, experiences and realities. (p. 111)

Participants were employees at the building and were volunteers that signed a consent form prior to participating in the interviews. The nature of the study was discussed with each participant. Participants were informed of the nature and rationale of this study with confidentiality maintained through the research project. Participants were informed of the option to withdraw from the study at any time during the research study. Building data were collected

on students who made the honor roll, average daily breakfast service, daily attendance rates, tardiness, and positive behavior intervention supports rewards to quantitatively measure the impact of positive environment and shared leadership practices.

Creswell (2015) explained study design as, “an explanatory sequential design, in which the intent is to first use quantitative methods and then use qualitative methods to help explain the quantitative results in more depth” (p. 6). This design allowed the research to grow based on the quantitative analysis of the survey data. “The strength of this design lies in the fact that the two phases build upon each other so that here are distinct, easily recognized stages of conducting the design” (Creswell, 2015, p. 38).

Surveys

Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that, “a survey approach to research is often used to gather information about individual’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors” (p. 172). The first part of the research study included a survey. The survey drove the data analysis and provided the insight to follow-up with interviews to delve into why and some of the initiatives impacted the building culture. The survey was designed to give a holistic view of the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership on the empowerment of building collegial culture. Each employee in the building had an opportunity to share their opinion on a five point Likert scale survey as to the value that they felt had a positive environment procedure played on developing a building culture. The survey contained shared leadership practices that were utilized in the building and how each practice was believed to impact the building culture.

The survey data were collected and organized in Microsoft Excel. The data set was then analyzed to provide a voice to participants in the building as to the value of positive environment and shared leadership initiatives in the researched building. Each survey used a five point Likert

scale where each question was given a one to five ranking with five indicating a high impact to the building culture. Each specific initiative was analyzed on the impact it was believed to have on the building culture.

The survey was created after researching the work of Hoy (2016) and contained multiple questions. A pre-survey email was sent to the staff letting them know an electronic survey was going to be sent to them and that their participation was voluntary and appreciated. Furthermore, the email contained the purpose and significance of the study. Next, an electronic survey utilizing Google Forms was sent to all building staff members. A cover letter was included stating the purpose and significance of the study, the time allowed to complete the survey, and that the survey was voluntary and submitting the survey indicated participant permission for the data to be used collectively.

Participants took the survey at their convenience over a one week period after they signed consent to participate in the approved research study. This was done to create a comfortable environment to allow all participants to share their opinions. Surveys were delivered to participants from an UARK email address to provide a non-evaluative feel and to be seen in a research environment. Participants had the option to provide their name or respond anonymously. Confidentiality was upheld as the participants' answers were summarized through the output of the entire data collection of the survey. A reminder email was sent to participants during the survey timeframe to complete the survey. The survey is shown in Appendix 3.1.

Interviews

Turner (2010) stated that, "Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic" (p. 754). For the purpose of this study semi-structured interview questions were used to allow participants to give detailed

answers. Additionally, this format allowed for probing questions to obtain a better understanding of the data and follow-up opportunities. Seidman (2013) described that “recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience” (p. 8). As an interviewer and scholar-practitioner, questions were formatted to allow open-ended responses with some probing for deeper understanding of participant responses. As the researcher, I worked to be an active listener while giving non-directive feedback to participants. According to Seidman (2013), having personal connections and developing rapport to elicit accurate information is a key to reliable and valid data through the data collection process.

Holestein and Gubrium (1995) explained, “An interview is a social interaction with the interviewer and interviewee sharing in constructing a story and its meanings; both are participants in the meaning-making process” (p. 8). The interview process was used to determine the value of a positive environment and shared leadership initiatives and the impact of the development of an empowered collegial school culture. The initiatives and constructs were developed from the literature review and contextual framework for the basis of the interview questions. The interview protocol is listed in appendix 3.2. This protocol was a beginning base and was amended based on the survey data to allow for deeper understanding as to the impact on the building culture.

At the beginning of each interview the participants were asked questions pertaining to individual demographics and the participant’s role in the building. Each participant was asked to describe the perceived influence of behavior, Behavior Intervention Support Teams (BIST), Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), Eagle Hour morning triage, Soaring Truths, Soaring Shout Outs, and visibility of staff members in the hall and school events played on

building a positive environment. Eagle Middle School utilizes BIST to promote a positive environment through processing with students and behavior interventions. PBIS is also used to promote positive rewards for students through our token economy, SOAR tickets, along with quarterly celebrations and VIP Fridays to reward students for Safe, On-task, Active learning and Responsible behavior (SOAR). Eagle Hour morning triage is used to provide a safe place for students to meet in small groups in the morning with a staff member in alignment with BIST procedures. Soaring Truths are personal staff positive notes written to students and staff members while Soaring Shout Outs provide public recognition of staff that is shared with all team members in the building. Next, participants were asked about the value of shared leadership through the building leadership team, content specific professional learning communities, building site committees, building decisions and leadership opportunities. The final questions asked participants how they felt the environment and shared leadership efforts affected the building culture and how the building culture had changed.

The interviews were designed to be conversational and allow participants the ability to freely express their opinions. The interviews were conducted at a time that was mutually beneficial for all participants and in the participant's room to provide confidentiality. The interview location was designed so everyone could feel comfortable, confident, valued, and an integral part of this research study. Interviews were recorded utilizing a digital recording device and then transcribed.

Data Analysis Methods

The data were collected and organized in a Microsoft Excel sheet. The first step of the initial data analysis was to code the survey data. With the goal of approximately 70 participants contributing to the survey, a majority of the population was accounted for in the data sample.

The data were coded to determine the responses contributed by females, males, certified and non-certified to delineate the data. The Likert scale responses were calculated to derive mean and mode scores of the participants and compared to the population. A non-directional t-test for independent samples was derived based on the sum of the means for the data for each section. This provided the data as to the most impactful positive environment factors and shared leadership factors. Open-ended questions were coded and provided in chapter 4 to solicit open-ended feedback and drive the development of interview questions throughout the study.

The interviews were transcribed to provide the qualitative data to answer the research questions after critical analysis of the survey data. This data were analyzed and common themes were investigated to determine the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership to create an empowered school culture. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data a summation of the most impactful influences of a positive environment and shared leadership was summarized and included in Chapter 4.

Building data were collected to show students who made the honor roll, average daily breakfast service, daily attendance rates, tardiness, and positive behavior intervention supports rewards to measure the quantitative impact of positive environment and shared leadership practice on building culture. Additionally, descriptive data were solicited from the district human resource department. To develop the descriptive statistics of this research project, building data and average daily breakfast from the cafeteria manager was also collected and analyzed in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

As the building principal it is of the utmost importance to lead with honesty, integrity, and demonstrate a high level of character and ethics. A mixed method approach was used to

develop valid and reliable data to be used in this study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained, “researchers must make deliberate methodological choices to acknowledge, account for, and approach researcher bias and the assumptions that drive, frame, and shape your research. Criticality, reflexivity, collaboration, and rigor are necessary as framing concepts for conducting ethical and valid qualitative research” (p. 383). As the building principal, I must think and act critically to be seen as a researcher and not as an evaluator by being reflexive in my language and actions through the application of the survey and interview process. The data were provided without my reflections to staff to allow them to draw, collaboratively, conclusions as to how the survey and interview data impacted the building culture. “A common mistake in this type of research is to treat one’s personal and professional self as an outside observe rather than an insider committed to the success of the actions under study” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 42). As the building principal, with the support of shared leadership practices, this data will be evaluated by the building leadership team as to the impact it may have on the building culture to drive decisions for future initiatives in the building.

Survey data were provided anonymously and confidentially to allow for honest sharing and open feedback by participants. This allowed participants that elected to be part of the study to share their opinions confidentially without any knowledge of what responses were from specific individuals. Each survey was delivered to staff by Google Forms coming from an UARK email address provided a non-evaluative feel with the survey. Participants were not able to provide their name or identify themselves. All participants’ identities were kept confidential and not utilized as an evaluative performance at Eagle Middle School. Results of the survey were shared with participants to allow reflective practices to continue the development of a positive environment and shared leadership in an effort to empower the building culture.

Creswell (2003) described that “a mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds. It employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems” (p. 18). Procedures were used to provide validity and accuracy throughout the project utilizing credible participants that could provide accuracy and confidentiality to this study. Interview questions from randomly selected participants allowed for open-ended sharing without judgement of responses or positionality of participants. Ravitch and Carl (2016) wrote, “Qualitative research, through purposeful sampling, provides context-rich and detailed accounts about specific populations and locations” (p. 128). The study utilized member checking, key informants that were involved in positive environment and shared leadership initiatives, and random sampling to increase validity and credibility. Through the course of the research the data were continually coded and analyzed to draw common themes to decrease bias and develop credibility and validity to the research project.

Limitations and Delimitations

Creswell (2003) explained that “delimitations address how the study will be narrowed in scope, whereas limitations identify potential weaknesses of a study” (p. 150). The scope of the research was limited by the number of participants that were selected for interviews. The survey was open to all staff members in the building that completed the consent form. Time to complete interviews and surveys was a limiting factor of the research. With staff turnover and movement to and from other buildings, exposure to strategic focus on positive environment initiatives and shared leadership practices was a limiting factor in the exposure of all staff to the nature of the study. Staff was also limited by their exposure or absence to professional learning opportunities on positive environment initiatives and shared leadership practices. The scope and nature of

classified staff to these practices was limited by their duty time and exposure to students throughout the day. The sample size of the interview was limited to get data rich feedback and to dig deeper in the nature and scope of the research questions.

Each participant was given the opportunity to be a part of the positive environment and shared leadership initiatives to impact the building culture. During the course of this study all members of the staff were focused on collaboration and collegial conversations to immerse a systemic momentum for all staff members. The focus on a positive environment and shared leadership was systematic in nature and allowed for all participants to be active in the research and problem of practice.

Creswell (2003) wrote that “a researcher needs to delimit the proposal so that readers understand its parameters” (p. 142). Only building staff members were utilized to inform the data for this study. Students and parents impact the building culture, but staff perceptions on the impact of positive environment and shared leadership practices were the focus of this study as to the short nature of the scope and sequence of the research project. This study developed rationale for continued research with students and parents as to their perceptions of the building culture. Other positive environmental and shared leadership practices were omitted from the research due to the changing environment of practices that were added over the course of this research project. The study of the culture, environment and shared leadership were limited to the focus of initiatives over the two-year span of the research project.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided a description of the study’s methodology that was designed on a mixed method approach. This study was based on the conceptual framework that the two constructs delineated to empower culture are a focus on the development of a positive

environment and shared leadership. The purpose of this study was to create a positive environment with shared leadership to develop an empowered collegial building culture. The data instruments measured the impact that positive environment initiatives and shared leadership procedures have on the building culture.

Data were collected using surveys and interviews. All building staff had an opportunity to share their reflections on the value of a positive environment and shared leadership with the focus of empowerment of the building culture through the survey. An in depth analysis was done of these factors through the use of structured interviews with members of the building that hit a cross-section of the building make-up.

The study utilized member checking, key informants, and random sampling to increase validity and credibility. The research data were gathered ethically and with skill to develop the data for the purpose of this study. Chapter 4 presents the data and data analysis of the research around the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership toward developing an empowered collegial school culture. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and recommendations from the data analysis.

Chapter 4 Presentation of Data

Introduction

For the purpose of this research study, mixed method measures were used to devise, collect, and analysis data. This study worked to develop an understanding of how to create a positive environment and shared leadership to empower the building culture. Understanding the nature of human constructs, the value of the environment, and the power of shared responsibility can be enhanced through the reflections and feedback of work participants at Eagle Middle School.

A pragmatic approach was used to understand the current state of the cultural environment and develop an approach to empower staff through data analysis and implementation of the researched based practices. Quantitative and qualitative measures of surveys and interviews were used to determine the value of a positive environment and the importance of shared leadership in developing an empowered building culture. By focusing on the context-specific data of this research study, the middle school implemented and developed shared leadership and positive environment practices then analyzed the data to determine the value of a positive environment and shared leadership in the development of an empowered school culture.

Descriptive Statistics

The target site for this research study was a seventh and eighth grade middle school in Johnson County Kansas. The school district's human resource department supplied building data to elicit the descriptive statistics used for this study. The researched sample consisted of 84 participants that worked in the building. There were 68 females, which represented 81% of the sample, and 16 males which comprised 19% of the sample, in the subject middle school. The

middle school contained 22 (26.2%) classified staff members and 62 (73.8%) certified employees. Responses were elicited from the data management system in the building that provided critical data and reflective feedback. Table 1 contains the various positions of the participants.

Table 1

Middle School Staff (N = 84)

Staff Positions	<i>n</i>	%
Math Teacher	8	9.5
ELA Teacher	7	8.3
Social Studies Teacher	5.5	6.5
Science Teacher	5.5	6.5
Foreign Language Teacher	2	2.4
Art Teacher	1.5	1.8
Family & Consumer Science Teacher	2	2.4
Technology Teacher	1.5	1.8
Computer Teacher	1	1.2
Drama Teacher	1	1.2
Physical Education Teacher	2	2.4
Choir Teacher	1	1.2
Band Teacher	1	1.2
Orchestra Teacher	1	1.2

Table 1 (Cont.)

Staff Positions	<i>n</i>	%
Talented & Gifted Teacher	.5	.6
Special Education Teacher	8	9.5
Administrator	3	3.6
Counselors	2	2.4
Social Worker	.5	.6
Security Resource Officer	1	1.2
Kitchen Staff	7	8.3
Custodians	5	6.0
Para Educators	6	7.1
Aides	3	3.6
Educational Support Staff	4	4.8

Note. N = 84 employees where 74% were certified staff members and 26% were classified staff members.

Table 2 outlines the age range of employees in the researched middle school.

Table 2

Staff Age Statistics

Descriptive Statistic	Value
Range	24 – 73 years
Mean	46
Median	47

Table 3 outlines the statistical data of years of experience for the sample of this research project.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Staff Experience Statistics

Central Tendency & Range	Value
Range	1 – 38 years
Mean	8
Median	7
Mode	2

In the 2015 - 2016 school year the student enrollment was 783. In the 2016 – 2017 school year there were 849 students which is an increase of 8.4 %. The student population consisted of 446 (52.5%) male students and 403 (47.5%) female students. Table 4 lists the student demographics: socioeconomic status as defined by student meal status, ELL status, and students with disabilities status.

Table 4

Student Descriptive Statistics (N = 849)

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	446	52.5
Female	403	47.5
Ethnicity		
White	483	56.9
African American	67	7.9
Hispanic	211	24.9
Other	88	10.3
Socioeconomic Status		
Free/Reduced Meals	461	54.3
Paid Meals	388	45.7
ELL Status		
ELL	115	13.6
Non-ELL	734	86.4
Disability Status		
Students with disabilities	82	9.6
Students without disabilities	767	91.4

As part of the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) plan, each quarter students are recognized for their grades and behavior efforts. Students are eligible to attend a quarterly field trip if they do not have a D or F in any classes and no behavioral referrals for the quarter. Table 5 provides the data from the start of the 2014-2015 school year which was the start of the positive environment and shared leadership practices implementation.

Table 5

Positive Behavior Intervention Support Rewards

Quarter	Number of Eligible Students	Total Students	%
14-15			
Q1	435	763	57.0
Q2	363	766	47.3
Q3	405	774	52.3
Q4	436	771	56.5
15-16			
Q1	456	775	58.8
Q2	425	773	55.0

The average number of students that qualified was 54.5%.

From the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015- 2016 school year, the data indicates an increase of 1.8% for the first quarter and a 7.7% increase for second quarter.

Decreasing the number of tardies was explored using positive environment and shared leadership initiatives. In the morning, during breakfast, students were able to go into the building classrooms instead of a large group setting in the cafeteria. This was accomplished by having students pick up breakfast and take it to their Eagle Hour teacher directly. This smaller group setting in the morning allowed students to eat breakfast and work on assignments before school started. The tardy comparison is listed in Table 6 along with the average breakfast meal service in Table 7.

Table 6

Quarterly Tardiness

Quarter	2014-2015	2015-2016
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Q1	2,008	590
Q2	2,257	313
Q3	2,179	799
Q4	1,868	874

There was a 70.6 % decrease in tardies from the 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 and an 81.6 % decrease in tardiness. Since the implementation of the positive environment and shared leadership initiatives, tardies decreased each quarter compared to the previous year.

Table 7

Breakfast Service Comparisons

Month	2014-2015 Mean	2015-2016 Mean	% Increase
August	35	60	71.4
September	57	100	75.4
October	65	115	55.4
November	74	115	55.4
December	72	116	61.1
January	76	105	38.2
February	82	120	46.4
March	83	120	44.6
April	91	121	33.0
May	93	119	28.0

Breakfast service showed a monthly increase ranging from 55.4 % to 75.4 % in average daily service each month from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.

Furthermore, breakfast, Honor Roll and average daily attendance were recorded. This data were from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. The average increase in breakfast service was 50.89%. Students who earned honor roll status had a minimum of a 3.0 grade point average. The percentage of students on the Honor Roll increased every quarter when comparing the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. The highest Honor

Roll percentage was 56.6 % during the first quarter of the 2015-2016 school year. Daily attendance rates remained steady at 96 % during the 2015-2016 school. The comparison data is compiled in Table 8 and Table 9.

Table 8

Quarterly Honor Roll

Quarter	2014-2015		2015-2016	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Q1	272	36.2	438	56.6
Q2	207	28.6	430	55.2
Q3	247	27.1	323	43.6
Q4	237	31.4	305	41.2

Table 9

Average Daily Attendance

Average Daily Attendance	2014-2015	2015-2016
	%	%
Q1	96	96
Q2	93	96
Q3	94	94
Q4	94	92

Findings and Major Themes

Survey

The survey was the initial data analysis tool and provided the insight to follow-up with interviews to delve into the positive environment and shared leadership initiatives that impacted the building culture. The survey was designed to give a holistic view of the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership on the empowerment of building collegial culture. Each eligible employee in the building had an opportunity to take a survey and share their opinion on a five-point Likert scale as to the value that they felt positive environment procedures played on developing a positive collegial building culture. The survey contained shared leadership practices that were utilized in the building and the impact of each practice on the building culture.

Questions 1: How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?

The survey was coded based on the research questions to ascertain the value of classified and certified employees' perceptions on the impact of each building program to the development of collegial building culture. Fifty-five staff members gave consent to take the survey with 50 staff members completing the survey. The staff were asked to rate their opinion on how focusing on a positive environment and shared leadership influenced their building culture. Using a six point scale where: 0 = Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 = Very Negative, 2 = Negative, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Positive, 5 = Very Positive, the following data were ascertained.

Table 10

Certified Survey Results: How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
At this time how would you rank our building culture.	3.58	7.0% (3)	55.8% (24)	27.9% (12)	7.0% (3)	2.3% (1)
Staff at this school build strong relationships with each other.	4.00	25.6% (11)	55.8% (24)	14.0% (6)	2.3% (1)	2.3% (1)
Staff at this school build strong relationships with their students.	4.21	32.6% (14)	55.8% (24)	34.9% (15)	0% (0)	0% (0)
I am proud to tell others that I work at this school.	4.30	46.5% (20)	37.2% (16)	48.8% (21)	0% (0)	0% (0)
This school is a good place for me to work and learn.	4.09	37.2% (16)	41.9% (18)	16.3% (7)	2.3% (1)	2.3% (1)
There is a clear vision and mission to drive the building.	3.79	20.9% (9)	39.5% (17)	37.2% (16)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)
Students encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning.	2.98	2.3% (1)	25.6% (11)	46.5% (20)	18.6% (8)	7.0% (3)
Staff encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning and personal conduct.	3.81 (4)	9.3% (29)	67.4% (8)	18.6% (2)	4.7% (0)	0%
The school is an orderly and purposeful place.	3.93	20.9% (9)	53.5% (23)	23.3% (10)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)
Staff members are student centered.	4.19	34.9% (15)	53.5% (23)	9.3% (4)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)
Table 10 (Cont.)						
Students are rewarded extrinsically for positive academic and behavior.	4.26	37.2% (16)	51.2% (22)	11.6% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Table 10 (Cont.)

Certified Survey Results: How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Students are rewarded intrinsically for positive academic and behavior.	3.45	7.0% (3)	41.9% (18)	37.2% (16)	11.6% (5)	0% (0)
Staff go above and beyond with their students.	4.26	37.2% (16)	51.2% (22)	11.6% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Educators believe all students can “grow” and be successful.	4.05	23.3% (10)	60.5% (26)	14.0% (6)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)

N= 43 certified staff participated in the survey. One (2.3%) participant answered 0 – Not

Enough Information to the question, Students are rewarded intrinsically for positive academics and behavior.

Table 11

Classified Survey Results: How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
At this time how would you rank our building culture.	3.29	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)
Staff at this school build strong relationships with each other.	4.00	42.9% (3)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)
Staff at this school build strong relationships with their students.	4.14	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Table 11 (Cont.)

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
I am proud to tell others that I work at this school.	4.43	71.4% (5)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
This school is a good place for me to work and learn.	4.42	57.1% (4)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
There is a clear vision and mission to drive the building.	3.43	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	0% (0)
Students encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning.	2.86	0% (0)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)
Staff encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning and personal conduct.	4.14	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
The school is an orderly and purposeful place.	3.57	29.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
Staff members are student centered.	4.57	57.1% (4)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Students are rewarded extrinsically for positive academic and behavior.	4.17	29.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Students are rewarded intrinsically for positive academics and behaviors.	3.71	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Staff go above and beyond with their students.	4.86	85.7% (6)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Educators believe all students can “grow” and be successful.	4.29	29.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

N= 7 classified staff participated in the survey. The only answer selected as 0 – Not Enough Information was by one (14.3%) participant to the question, Students are rewarded intrinsically for positive academics and behavior.

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between classified and certified staff in the perceptions of how does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture. The respondents were divided into two groups: classified (N=7) and certified (N=43). The results of the *t*-test, $t(23) = 2.069$, $p = 0.70$, showed there was not a significant difference between classified and certified staff perceptions.

Research Question 2: What positive environment practices impact the building culture?

The survey was coded based on the research questions to ascertain the value of classified and certified employees' perceptions on what positive environment practices had an impact in the development of collegial building culture. The staff were asked to rate their opinion on how focusing on impactful positive environment practices influenced their building culture. Using a six-point Likert scale where: 0 = Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 = Negative Impact, 2 = No Impact, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Impactful, 5 = Very Impactful, the following data were ascertained.

Table 12

Certified Survey Results: What positive environment practices impact the building culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Impactful	Impactful	Neutral	No Impact	Negative
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Morning Eagle Hour	3.95	27.9% (12)	41.9% (18)	27.9% (12)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)
Soaring Truths	3.53	11.6% (5)	48.8% (21)	25.6% (11)	9.3% (4)	4.7% (2)

Table 12 (Cont.)

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Impactful	Impactful	Neutral	No Impact	Negative
Soaring Shout Outs	3.26	7.0% (3)	37.2% (16)	34.9% (15)	11.6% (5)	7.0% (3)
Wednesday Popcorn	3.58	14.0% (6)	41.9% (18)	25.6% (11)	7.0% (3)	4.7% (2)
PBIS VIP Days	3.91	20.9% (9)	55.8% (24)	16.3% (7)	7.0% (3)	0% (0)
SOAR Store	3.51	7.0% (3)	41.9% (18)	46.5% (20)	4.7% (2)	0% (0)
PBIS Quarterly Celebrations	4.16	37.2% (16)	44.2% (19)	16.3% (7)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)
Building Social Events	3.56	7.0% (3)	51.2% (22)	27.9% (12)	7.0% (3)	2.3% (1)
BIST Philosophy and Process	3.74	14.0% (6)	55.8% (24)	23.3% (10)	4.7% (2)	2.3% (1)
GreenDot	3.31	4.7% (2)	34.9% (15)	39.5% (17)	7.0% (3)	4.7% (2)
Staff Social Committee Events	3.76	11.6% (5)	53.5% (23)	25.6% (11)	4.7% (2)	0% (0)
Focus on relationships	4.14	34.9% (15)	48.8% (21)	11.6% (5)	4.7% (2)	0% (0)
Personal staff conversations compliments	3.83	20.9% (9)	44.2% (19)	23.3% (10)	7.0% (3)	0% (0)

N= 43 certified staff participated in the survey. The only answer selected as 0 – Not Enough Information was by one (2.3%) participant to Soaring Shout Outs , 3 (7.0%) participants to Wednesday popcorn, 2 (4.7%) participants to building social events, 4 (9.3%) participants to

GreenDot, 2 (4.7%) participants to staff social committee events, and 2 (4.7%) participants to personal staff conversations and compliments.

Table 13

Classified Survey Results: What positive environment practices impact the building culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Impactful	Impactful	Neutral	No Impact	Negative
Morning Eagle Hour	3.43	0% (0)	71.4% (5)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)
Soaring Truths	3.57	0% (0)	85.7% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)
Soaring Shout Outs	3.86	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)
Wednesday Popcorn	4.67	57.1% (4)	28.6% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
PBIS VIP Days	3.71	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
SOAR Store	4.00	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
PBIS Quarterly Celebrations	4.14	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Building Social Events	3.14	0% (0)	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)
BIST Philosophy and Process	3.43	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)
GreenDot	3.00	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)
Staff Social Committee Events	3.71	14.3% (1)	71.4% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)
Focus on relationships	4.00	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
Personal staff conversations and compliments	4.00	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (0)	0% (1)	14.3% (1)

N= 7 certified staff participated in the survey. The only answer selected as 0 – Not Enough Information was by one (14.3%) participant to popcorn Wednesdays.

Certified and classified staff have such different roles in the building. Certified personnel work with students and classified personnel may work with students but may be more removed from the learning process. Therefore, an independent *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was significant difference in the perceptions of what positive environment practices impact the building culture between classified and certified staff. The respondents were divided into two groups: classified (N=7) and certified (N=43). The results of the *t*-test, $t(20) = 2.086$, $p = 0.83$, showed there was not a significant difference between classified and certified staff at the 95% confidence interval.

The open-ended responses solicited the following data as it relates to; how does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?

Table 14

Certified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding Positive Environmental Practices that are Impactful?

Practice	N	%	Quotations
Soaring Shout Outs	1	5.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOARing shout outs/truths, social events for the staff, and quarterly celebrations.
Personal staff conversations and relationships	1	5.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal communication among staff with shared students about effective strategies for those students.
Visibility	5	26.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals being "visible" (hallway during passing; outside during morning/afternoon traffic; cafeteria during lunch.) Jeff greeting students at the door is impactful. • Teachers are always in the hallways during passing period and interacting with students. • Visibility of administrators to students and teachers (hallway/cafeteria/mornings) • Administration, Counselors and Police officer in the hallways between classes! • Hallway presence.

Table 14 (Cont.)

Practice	N	%	Quotations
BIST	1	5.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST, Student of the Month, PLCs, Cross-Curricular Teams, BLT (I think all these things impact relationships and a positive environment.
Student of the Month	2	10.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST, Student of the Month, PLCs, Cross-Curricular Teams, BLT (I think all these things impact relationships and a positive environment. • Teacher SOAR stores, student jobs, student of the month, etc.
PLC	2	10.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST, Student of the Month, PLCs, Cross-Curricular Teams, BLT (I think all these things impact relationships and a positive environment. • Time collaborating with colleagues when we can REALLY work to improve student outcomes
Cross-Curricular Teams	2	10.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST, Student of the Month, PLCs, Cross-Curricular Teams, BLT (I think all these things impact relationships and a positive environment. • Time collaborating with colleagues when we can REALLY work to improve student outcomes
BLT	1	5.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST, Student of the Month, PLCs, Cross-Curricular Teams, BLT (I think all these things impact relationships and a positive environment.
Spirit days	1	5.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spirit days for the staff & students!
PBIS	1	5.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher SOAR stores, student jobs, student of the month, etc.
Extra-Curricular Activities	2	10.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra-Curricular Activities • Sports/intramural.

Table 15

Classified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding Positive Environmental Practices that are Impactful?

Practice	N	%	Quotations
Administration	2	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the administration "takes care of issues" immediately, and enforces the rules. • I believe that the way the administration speaks and teaches the positive to both the staff and students is huge. They have been a rock when it comes to this and it has built a strong foundation for the school.
Extra-Curricular Activities	1	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationships built in sporting events (coaches/players and pep club) that have been implemented in the middle schools.
SIT	1	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When choosing a classroom environment, thought is given to whether the student would do benefit from a male vs female teacher/role model.

Table 16

Certified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding the Most Impactful Positive Environment Practices?

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Administration	2	2.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration recognition of my skills. • Positive support by the administration. I believe our kids understand that negative behavior is not accepted or tolerated in our school. I really believe when you have high expectations for positive behavior then quality things will happen in your school.
Eagle Hour	8	23.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships built with Eagle Hour students has allowed those students to have an adult that they can rely on and depend upon no matter what. • Morning Eagle Hour has been the most impactful to me because I have developed some very strong relationships with some of my kids. • Morning Eagle Hour has drastically improved student behavior in the morning. Removing them from the "holding area" of the MPR has lessened anxiety in the morning and has resulted in a more calm way to start the day. • Implementation of Eagle Hour and Morning Eagle Hour Triage. • Morning Eagle Hour Triage has been the most impactful practice because it allows students to grow a bond with an adult in the building that is different from that of other teachers. It is a positive start to their day, and the morning tends to set the tone for the whole day with many middle schoolers. • As one whose space is in the main hallway, I am amazed at the difference in morning behavior due to the Morning Eagle Hour Triage. Before, when the students were released from the MPR to head to their first hour, it was bedlam in the hallway. Behavior was out of control, with students running, pushing, yelling, etc. Now, they walk fairly calmly to their Eagle Hour, either with friends or alone. It has changed the entire atmosphere of our mornings. • Relationships building in the morning, teacher SOAR store, Social Committee gatherings, and popcorn Wednesdays. It is the most important thing that the students relate to their teachers. They work harder for them, behaviors decrease, and they are more motivated to and they know they have your respect, so they give it back to you. • Eagle Hour. When done correctly, it allows for meaningful relationships and accountability.

Table 16 (Cont.)

Theme	N	%	Quotations
BIST	4	11.8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST • PBIS & BIST: Staff buy-in. When we have solutions and help to guide students in the right direction for grades and behaviors, teachers feel empowered. We all speak the same language to students and parents. We get to see each other change the way they deal with students and it causes everyone to want to change. • BIST and the focus on relationships with students. This has given me the tools to manage my classroom and create an environment that I have always wanted. • Relationships building in the morning, teacher SOAR store, Social Committee gatherings, and popcorn Wednesdays. It is the most important thing that the students relate to their teachers. They work harder for them, behaviors decrease, and they are more motivated to and they know they have your respect, so they give it back to you.
Collaboration	1	2.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a coworker that is open and willing to collaboratively plan lessons and assessments.
Personal staff conversations and relationships	7	20.6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal staff conversations and compliments. • The staff relationships have been most impactful to me. Everyone is friendly and welcoming and that transpires to the students. • Having friends as co-workers - we can laugh and support each other during terrific and tough times. • Working with the other staff members here at Hocker Grove. • Social Events - being able to interact with staff members outside of school. • Relationships building in the morning, teacher SOAR store, Social Committee gatherings, and popcorn Wednesdays. It is the most important thing that the students relate to their teachers. They work harder for them, behaviors decrease, and they are more motivated to and they know they have your respect, so they give it back to you. • I really enjoy the staff get together. I think that having strong relationships with your peers is vital for success as a team.
PBIS	1	2.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBIS & BIST: Staff buy-in. When we have solutions and help to guide students in the right direction for grades and behaviors, teachers feel empowered. We all speak the same language to students and parents. We get to see each other change the way they deal with students and it causes everyone to want to change.
PLC	1	2.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross curricular staff discussions and idea generation.

Table 16 (Cont.)

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Soaring Truths	1	2.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soaring Truths
Relationship Focus	9	26.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST and the focus on relationships with students. This has given me the tools to manage my classroom and create an environment that I have always wanted. • The staff relationships have been most impactful to me. Everyone is friendly and welcoming and that transpires to the students. • Having friends as co-workers - we can laugh and support each other during terrific and tough times. • Reminding everyone to focus on relationships. • Focusing on relationship-building with students • Relationships building in the morning, teacher SOAR store, Social Committee gatherings, and popcorn Wednesdays. It is the most important thing that the students relate to their teachers. They work harder for them, behaviors decrease, and they are more motivated to and they know they have your respect, so they give it back to you. • The focus on relationship building. Giving staff the permission to take time to focus on the student and relationships within the building creates a positive environment that allows us to understand one another as separate human beings with different needs and barriers. • Focus on relationships. • Eagle Hour. When done correctly, it allows for meaningful relationships and accountability.

Table 17

Classified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding the most Impactful Positive Environment Practices?

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Administration	2	40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That my opinion is valued, and I feel like the administration and my teacher have "my back" when there is an issue with a student or parent. • As with anything being consistent is a huge part of being successful. I feel that we have accomplished that and are continuing to strive forward as we are getting stronger everyday with consistent administration.
Eagle Hour	2	40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Eagle Hour Triage is a much improved method of handling students arriving at school. There is so much that can happen both physically and emotionally in the time before school starts. Morning Eagle Hour allows students to have a smaller environment with more supervision. That being said, I also recognize this has been a challenge for teachers who need that time to prepare for the day as well as build relationships and collaborate with fellow teachers. • The morning Eagle hour triage has been the most impactful practice that has been implemented in our school because the students have a specific place to go in the morning.
Personal staff conversations and relationships	1	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Eagle Hour Triage is a much improved method of handling students arriving at school. There is so much that can happen both physically and emotionally in the time before school starts. Morning Eagle Hour allows students to have a smaller environment with more supervision. That being said, I also recognize this has been a challenge for teachers who need that time to prepare for the day as well as build relationships and collaborate with fellow teachers.

Research Question 3: How does shared leadership influence school culture?

The survey was coded based on the research questions to ascertain the value of classified and certified employees' perceptions of how shared leadership influences the development of a collegial building culture. The staff were asked to rate their opinion on how focusing on shared leadership influenced their building culture. Using a six point scale were: 0 = Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 = Very Negative, 2 = Negative, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Positive, 5 = Very Positive, the following data were ascertained.

Table 18

Certified Survey Results: How does shared leadership influence school culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
At this time how would you rank our building culture.	3.58	7.0% (3)	55.8% (24)	27.9% (12)	7.0% (3)	2.3% (1)
Staff at this school get the chance to work independently	3.44	16.3% (7)	34.9% (15)	25.6% (11)	11.6% (5)	7.0% (3)
Staff at this school get The chance to work collaboratively.	3.44	9.3% (4)	46.5% (20)	23.3% (10)	20.9% (9)	0% (0)
Staff have close working relationships with each other and their students.	3.91	14.0% (6)	65.1% (28)	18.6% (8)	2.3% (1)	0% (0)
Adults that work in the building typically work well with one another.	3.93	14.0% (6)	72.1% (31)	9.3% (4)	2.3% (1)	2.3% (1)

Table 18 (Cont.)

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Staff have developed common learning communities	3.48	11.6% (5)	39.5% (17)	32.6% (14)	11.6% (5)	2.3% (1)
Staff feel comfortable sharing and collaborating.	3.65	9.3% (4)	58.1% (25)	20.9% (9)	11.6% (5)	0% (0)
Data driven processes are utilized to analyze data and drive school improvement.	3.63	11.6% (5)	51.2% (22)	27.9% (12)	7.0% (3)	2.3% (1)
The school's schedule allows adequate time for staff collaboration.	2.36	2.3% (1)	18.6% (8)	13.6% (6)	39.5% (17)	23.3% (10)
School personnel have a sense of empowerment and control over their work.	3.19	14.0% (6)	32.6% (14)	16.3% (7)	27.9% (12)	7.0% (3)
Staff members are student centered.	4.33	41.9% (18)	46.5% (20)	9.3% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)
School personnel encourage collaboration among staff.	3.77	14.0% (6)	53.5% (23)	27.9% (12)	4.6% (2)	0% (0)
School personnel respect each other's opinion.	3.63	9.3% (4)	55.8% (24)	25.6% (11)	7.0% (3)	2.3% (1)
Staff work together to develop shared plans to support students and each other.	3.60	11.6% (5)	46.5% (20)	32.6% (14)	9.3% (4)	0% (0)

N= 43 certified staff participated in the survey. The only answer selected as 0 – Not Enough

Information was by one (2.3%) participant about staff have developed common learning

communities, one (2.3%) participant regarding the school's schedule allows adequate time for staff collaboration, one (2.3%) participant about school personnel have a sense of empowerment and control over their work and one (2.3%) participant regarding staff members are student centered.

Table 19

Classified Survey Results: How does shared leadership influence school culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
At this time how would you rank our building culture.	3.29	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)
Staff at this school get the chance to work independently.	2.86	0% (0)	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)
Staff at this school get The chance to work collaboratively.	4.00	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
Staff have close working relationships with each other and their students.	4.29	28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Adults that work in the building typically work well with one another.	4.28	57.1% (4)	28.6% (2)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
Staff have developed common learning communities.	4.00	0% (0)	85.7% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14.3% (1)
Staff feel comfortable sharing and collaborating.	4.17	14.3% (1)	71.4% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Table 19 (Cont.)

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Data driven processes are utilized to analyze data and drive school improvement.	4.20	14.3% (1)	57.1% (4) (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0%
The school's schedule allows adequate time for staff collaboration.	3.14	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)
School personnel have a sense of empowerment and control over their work.	2.86	0% (0)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)
Staff members are student centered.	4.43	42.9% (3)	57.1% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
School personnel encourage collaboration among staff.	4.29	28.6% (2)	71.4% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
School personnel respect each other's opinion.	4.00	14.3% (1)	71.4% (5)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Staff work together to develop shared plans to support students and each other.	4.29	28.6% (2)	0% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

N= 7 certified staff participated in the survey. The only answer selected as 0 – Not Enough Information was by one (14.3%) participant about staff have developed common learning communities, one (14.3%) participant to staff feel comfortable sharing and collaborating, and two (28.6%) participants to data driven processes are utilized to analyze data and drive school improvement.

Certified and classified staff have such different roles in the building. Certified personnel work with students and classified personnel may work with students but may be more removed from the learning process. Therefore, an independent *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was significant difference in the perceptions of how does shared leadership influence school culture between classified and certified staff. The respondents were divided into two groups: classified (N=7) and certified (N=43). The results of the *t*-test, $t(25) = 2.06$, $p = 0.13$, showed there was not a significant difference between classified and certified staff at the 95% confidence interval.

Research Question 4: What Shared Leadership Procedures Impact the Building Culture?

The survey was coded based on the research questions to ascertain the value of classified and certified employees perceptions on what shared leadership procedures had impact in the development of collegial building culture. Using a five point scale where: 0 = Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 = Negative Impact, 2 = No Impact, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Impactful, 5 = Very Impactful, the following data were ascertained.

Table 20

Certified Survey Results: What shared leadership procedures impact the building culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Impactful	Impactful	Neutral	No Impact	Negative
Building Leadership Team	3.15	4.7% (2)	37.2% (16)	25.6% (11)	14.0% (6)	9.3% (4)
Building Site Committees	3.30	2.3% (1)	48.8% (21)	23.3% (10)	16.3% (7)	4.7% (2)

Table 20 (Cont.)

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Impactful	Impactful	Neutral	No Impact	Negative
Common Plan	3.64	14.0% (6)	41.9% (18)	25.6% (11)	7.0% (3)	2.3% (1)
SIT	3.02	4.7% (2)	25.6% (11)	39.5% (17)	18.6% (8)	7.0% (3)
Collegial Conversations	3.73	16.3% (7)	37.2% (16)	41.9% (18)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Teacher Leader Roles	3.49	9.3% (4)	34.9% (15)	30.2% (13)	11.6% (5)	0% (0)
Administrative Shared Leadership	3.44	9.3% (4)	37.2% (16)	37.2% (16)	17.3% (4)	2.3% (1)
PLC	3.05	7.0% (1)	51.2% (15)	27.9% (14)	7.0% (9)	2.3% (3)

N= 43 certified staff participated in the survey. The only answer selected as 0 – Not Enough Information was by four (9.3%) participants to Building Leadership Team, two (4.7%) participants to Building Site Committees, four (17.3%) participants to Common Plan, two (4.7%) participants to SIT, two (4.7%) participants to Collegial Conversations, six (14.0%) participants to Teacher Leader Roles, two (4.7%) participants to Administrative Shared Leadership, and one (2.3%) participants to PLC.

Table 21

Classified Survey Results: What shared leadership procedures impact the building culture?

Survey Protocol Questions	Mean	Very Impactful	Impactful	Neutral	No Impact	Negative
Building Leadership Team	3.50	0% (0)	42.9% (3)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Building Site Committees	3.67	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Common Plan	3.5	0% (0)	42.9% (3)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
SIT	3.67	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Collegial Conversations	3.83	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Teacher Leader Roles	3.67	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Administrative Shared Leadership	3.67	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)
PLC	3.50	0% (0)	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	0% (0)

N= 7 classified staff participated in the survey. The answers selected as 0 – Not Enough Information was by one (14.3%) participants to Building Leadership Team, one (14.3%) participant to Building Site Committees, one (14.3%) participant to Common Plan, one (14.3%) participant to SIT, one (14.3%) to Collegial Conversations, one (14.3%) participant to Teacher Leader Roles, one (14.3%) participant to Administrative Shared Leadership, one (14.3%) participant to PLC.

Certified and classified staff have such different roles in the building. Certified personnel work with students and classified personnel may work with students but may be more removed from the learning process. Therefore, an independent t-test was conducted to determine if there was significant difference in the perceptions of what shared leadership procedures impact school culture between classified and certified staff. The respondents were divided into two groups: classified (N=7) and certified (N=43). The results of the t-test was significant, $t(10) = 2.23$, $p = 0.02$, where certified staff ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .45$) indicated on average a positive perception on shared leadership then classified staff ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .29$).

The open ended responses solicited the following data as it relates to; what other shared leadership practices are impactful?

Table 22

Certified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding what Shared Leadership Practices are Impactful?

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Administrative Shared Leadership	1	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff leading sessions during PD.
Building Site Councils	1	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PBIS, which is included in the school site councils, but I believe that building the PBIS team would result in more opportunities for impacting students.
PLC	2	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not get common plan. It would be nice one Tuesday morning a month we got common plan. Opportunities to collaborate across curriculum.

Table 23

Classified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding what Shared Leadership Practices are Impactful?

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Collegial Conversations	1	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including the Para's in the conversations.

Table 24

Certified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding the most impactful shared leadership practices

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Administrative Shared Leadership	1	5.6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff-led PD because when we see our peers leading staff development, teachers listen and respect each other more.
Building Leadership Team	1	5.6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC/BLT. Time to use data to drive decisions.
Building Site Councils	1	5.6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBIS, the goal is to maintain a positive behavior support for all students and staff in the building. I would like to see more implemented with PBIS, which I believe would result a continued growth in our building.
Collegial Conversations	3	16.7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most impactful shared leadership practice for me would be having a common plan with my co-teacher and the other reading teacher. It has given us the opportunity to collaborate and plan lessons and units together. We have time to share ideas, reflect, and make changes as needed as we go as well. • Common Plan - being able to work collaboratively with other teachers to share lessons discuss different plans and ideas regarding student engagement. • PLC because I have seen the most productive outcome from that collaboration.

Table 24 (Cont.)

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Common Plan	7	38.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common plan • The most impactful shared leadership practice for me would be having a common plan with my co-teacher and the other reading teacher. It has given us the opportunity to collaborate and plan lessons and units together. We have time to share ideas, reflect, and make changes as needed as we go as well. • Having common plan time. • Common Plan - being able to work collaboratively with other teachers to share lessons discuss different plans and ideas regarding student engagement. • A common plan is crucial in developing good curriculum. • Common Plan • I have really enjoyed the common plan time. Being able to share your thoughts and ideas with your teachers has been very rewarding.
PLC	3	27.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher driven PD where teachers can actually have a PLC without an administrative agenda. • PLC because I have seen the most productive outcome from that collaboration. • PLC/BLT. Time to use data to drive decisions.
Teacher Leader Roles	2	11.1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher leader rolls, such as PBIS leadership, they seem to just roll right along getting things set up and done for the betterment of students. They ask and receive help from all when necessary. Very cool set up. • Teacher leader roles have impacted me in a positive way, but I wish more teachers would step up. Everyone works so hard during the day but some do not work past the 8:05-4:05.

Table 25

Classified Summary of Open-Ended Responses Regarding the most impactful shared leadership practice

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Collegial Conversations	1	5.6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a Para, being included in the conversations, so we know about students and how to help them best.

Staff Interviews

For the purpose of this study semi-structured interview questions were used to allow participants to give detailed answers. This format allowed for probing questions to obtain a better understanding of the data and follow-up opportunities. The interview process was used to determine the value of a positive environment and shared leadership initiatives and the impact of the development of an empowered collegial school culture. The initiatives and constructs were developed from the literature review and contextual framework for the basis of the interview questions. The interviews were designed to be conversational and allow participants the ability to freely express their opinions.

The interview was coded based on the research questions to ascertain the value of classified and certified employees' perceptions on the impact of each building program to the development of collegial building culture. Fifty-five staff member gave consent to participate in the interview and five staff members randomly selected, two certified staff members, two classified staff members, and one administrative staff member. The data were coded based on the responses of staff members to building positive environment and shared leadership practices. The following sections are divided based on coding regarding a positive environment and shared leadership practices.

Focus on a positive environment practices that influence school culture

Table 26

Certified Staff Summary of interview Responses about Positive Environment Practices

Practice	N	%	Quotations
Administration	2	6.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel like if I have a problem, there are people that I can go to and talk to about that. I am very comfortable with if -- I have no doubt that if I had a personal crisis or something was going on, and I had to leave, I would have the support that I needed. • I just think that the different practices we have put in place have helped me to see that with the right programs and with the right consistency and the right follow through.
BIST	4	13.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through BIST, especially. • I think it's come a long way to help those teachers to grow, and myself included, to just have that consistency. It has really helped. • I have just seen so many teachers improve their own practices, and just have a generally more positive attitude on a day-to-day basis because they are more confident in their classroom management.
Building Social Events	1	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIST processing • I think I've been a positive member with the social committee in trying to create activities for the staff, where we can let off a little bit of steam and just remember why we are all here together, and enjoy time outside of the classroom together. I think that is positive as well.
Collaboration	1	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How I interact with staff and how I interact with my peers has improved my practice.

Table 26 (Cont.)

Practice	N	%	Quotations
Eagle Hour	12	38.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think, you know, with starting our Eagle Hour that has changed. You know, I think it's been great for the students to have -- to be able to have that first contact with staff in the morning. I have enjoyed that personally. I think it's set more of a calm tone at the beginning of our day. So I think that's really been a positive change. • I think morning Eagle Hour, I would say for my kiddos, has been the most beneficial. • And so knowing that they have a specific place that every day they know they are going to go to and, for the most part, every day the people that they see when they first come in is going to be the same, I think has given them sort of a feeling of safety. • You know, they know, I am going to walk into this Eagle Hour and I am going to see these people, because this is who is in my Eagle Hour • I think creating Eagle Hour, where the students from day one feel like they have a community. I think that has been very positive. Just immediately having a group of students that they know that they can try to connect with is the most beneficial thing. • Gaining the confidence that they need through morning triage, through Eagle Hour. • The 8th graders may have hated it sort of, but they also on some level really appreciated that they didn't have that chaos in the morning cafeteria anymore. • It creates such a calming experience for our whole school in the morning to get kids to that place where they can interact with a specific adult in a smaller setting, versus the chaos of what that morning cafeteria duty used to be like. • Having those close, one-on-one relationships with the kids in the morning. • The morning triage. • Morning triage. • Morning triage.

Table 26 (Cont.)

Practice	N	%	
PBIS	2	6.5	I think what we have got going through our PBIS program is really positive.
Personal staff conversations and relationships	4	12.9	<p>So I think that those are positive things our PBIS team is doing is really helpful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff is amazing at being a team, and they truly are a family that works together and supports each other. And so I think that that comradery has just grown as I have been here. • I think we just have that nature about us, to be warm and caring and want to be there for each other, and it makes it -- it is a better place to be. People want to come here. • I feel like if I have a problem, there are people that I can go to and talk to about that. I am very comfortable with if -- I have no doubt that if I had a personal crisis or something was going on, and I had to leave, I would have the support that I needed. • I think that I am seen as someone that's open, so that kids feel comfortable in coming and talking to me. I am willing to do whatever I can to help support staff members in the building.
Relationship Focus	2	6.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would say that was the point where our focus shifted to the relationships, and how important it was to have the relationships first and foremost with the kids before you could get them to do anything. • Build relationships with the students in the halls, the teachers and the staff, have those conversations.
Staff Social Committee Events	1	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think I've been a positive member with the social committee in trying to create activities for the staff, where we can let off a little bit of steam and just remember why we are all here together, and enjoy time outside of the classroom together. I think that is positive as well.
Visibility	2	6.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that it is important for us to be able to be out and about in the building as much as we can, just continuing to remind teachers of how to work with their students and what supports that we can provide for them. • I think you can look at passing periods and see that it is -- teachers are out in the hall, they are visible, and students are, for the most part, doing what they need to do.

Building Culture with Positive Environment Practices

The following information is provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process the following quotations explained the cultural state with positive environment practices at Eagle Middle School by certified staff:

- The staff is amazing at being a team, and they truly are a family that works together and supports each other. And so I think that that comradery has just grown as I have been here.
- I feel like these students do feel like this is their building and their family.
- I think that it is a much more positive place than it had been previously. I truly do. You know, a lot of the problems that we had with fighting and things like that has great decreased, I feel like, in the last four years.
- I think we do some great things for kids, and I think we provide them some support that they truly need.
- I am proud when I come to work here.
- I am proud to say I am a member of this faculty, and I am proud to say these are my kids.
- I feel like we just know that we have to be there for each other and we have to support each other.
- I think we just have that nature about us, to be warm and caring and want to be there for each other, and it makes it -- it is a better place to be. People want to come here.
- And so I think that I just feel very feel, very positive about what we are doing here, and I am proud to be a member of this faculty.

- Overall, my daily experience is overall positive. Seeing colleagues and smiling in the hallway, talking, interacting with students, it is positive, yet there is always that stress and anxiety level as well.
- On the one hand, it has changed in very positive ways, I would say especially with the day-to-day support that teachers get from administration, consistency of implementation of programs, consistency of consequences.
- I feel like this has been a great place to work, and that most people feel that way on a daily basis
- I feel that it's much better. I think it's clear that our administration is a team, and two years ago that might not have been the case.
- At the end of the day, no matter what, I want this to be a great place because I care about it deeply.
- We have fewer office referrals and fewer blowups and fewer kids just losing it in the hallway, and fewer kids yelling down and screaming. Just the overall atmosphere on a day-to-day basis is more pleasant, and I think that helps everybody in terms of culture.
- When I first got here, it was different building leader and the culture was a little bit more rocky.
- I enjoy coming to work.
- We need to see that start trickling down into how we interact with the students, how we model these appropriate relationships.
- It is more of a family now. I feel like we are all, kind of, for the most part, have that same vision.

Cultural Impact

The following information is provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process the following quotations by certified staff were stated about what positive environment practices have impacted the building culture at Eagle Middle School:

- So I feel like we are learning to get along more, and I think having that home base with the Eagle Hour has just been really, really helpful. It is a more positive place.
- I think you can look at passing periods and see that it is -- teachers are out in the hall, they are visible, and students are, for the most part, doing what they need to do. That was the problem in the past.
- Maybe look at creating -- just like we have the building leadership team, maybe creating something that is a little bit more student driven, where they feel like they have a -- the opportunity to advocate for change within the building, or address problems that they see from a student point that maybe we don't have any idea.
- I think implementing those VIP celebrations more frequently than just the big quarter celebrations has been helpful for our students.
- I think creating Eagle Hour, where the students from day one feel like they have a community. I think that has been very positive. Just immediately having a group of students that they know that they can try to connect with is the most beneficial thing.
- I would say that was the point where our focus shifted to the relationships, and how important it was to have the relationships first and foremost with the kids before you could get them to do anything.

- I think the BIST program has been incredibly helpful just for kind of formalizing our approaches to interacting with students and trying to teach the skills that they are lacking when it comes to, you know, interacting appropriately with adults.
- So I feel like things like that, the morning triage has just -- and Eagle Hour too, I just feel like the culture here has changed for the positive in the sense that I don't perceive us having big problems.
- It is not top down like it was year one, but how we are implementing it with the students structurally -- our morning triage time, our PBIS, what we are doing with reward systems, our BIST approach that we brought in -- how that has changed quite drastically as well.
- Morning triage. And I think that's the most impactful, but it's probably the area that we have the opportunity for the most growth. It is a structured time to allow maybe unstructured things to happen.
- So I think that those are positive things our PBIS team is doing is really helpful.

Table 27

Classified Staff Summary of Interview Responses about Positive Environment Practices

Practice	N	%	Quotations
Administration	5	22.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have found that most every administrator that has come here wants what is best for kids. • I think we have excellent teachers and administrators. • I feel that the administration has come in as a team and they are here. • We have the building leadership team, let's say, so whatever the administration would miss, there is a team below that knows. • And then I also see some of the administrators taking the extra time, sitting down with kids and parents, trying to help them work things through.

Table 27 (Cont.)

Practice	N	%	Quotations
BIST	4	18.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the BIST program has been amazing as far as one of those tools. • I think that BIST has been really instrumental in that, in helping that culture change. • I really do think that BIST has helped a lot. I think the kids know that when a teacher makes eye contact with them what that expectation looks like, what they are saying. • Because I feel like I am treated with respect from faculty and I feel like the BIST program, and being able to incorporate that, just like the teachers do, that makes me look like we are all part of this huge, gigantic family.
Eagle Hour	1	4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think of Eagle Excellence, where the kids go to the classroom in the morning and touch base with teachers.
GreenDot	1	4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TAPS, the Green Dot program.
PBIS	1	4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The kids are excited about being able to go on these trips, and I think that says something.
Personal staff conversations and relationships	2	9.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And I feel that is important that we are included in that in the office. • Relationships between the teachers as well.
Relationship Focus	5	22.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And I also see teachers going the extra mile as far as technology and trying to teach kids in different ways to reach them. • I think by greeting everybody in the morning if I can. • Relationships. • The relationships that they build are very important. • I think the relationship building. I feel like I have gotten to know students a lot better in the last couple of years, and I feel like the culture here has allowed me to do that.
Visibility	3	13.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I just feel that people can come and tell me anything and I am there for them, and that to me is positive. • I feel like students understand expectations from teachers more clearly. I feel like there may be -- there is a lot more consistency, I guess is what I would say, than we've had in previous years. • I think meeting the kids at the door is absolutely amazing, letting them know that there is somebody here. I love having the teachers out in the hallway, you know, between classes. I love being part of that environment.

Building Culture with Positive Environment Practices

The following information is provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process the following quotations were explained about the current cultural state with positive environment practices at Eagle Middle School by classified staff:

- We had a horrible experience the two years before. The morale was so low, I don't think people -- teachers didn't even want to be here. And it was hard to keep things rolling in a positive way. All it was people talking behind each other's backs. It was not nice. Backstabbing, the whole thing.
- I feel good about coming to work.
- Yes, I do feel it has changed. I feel the kids -- overall, I feel the kids know that this is a safe place to come to.
- And I also see teachers going the extra mile as far as technology and trying to teach kids in different ways to reach them.
- I see our paras taking -- you know, being more concerned about -- if kids miss testing, they are willing to come in. And if they have something going on personally, they will rearrange their schedules so that they are here for the kids.
- I think we have got a great, great team.
- I just think it is more positive. The moral isn't so low like it was. People are willing to -- not all people, you know, sometimes it is always about the almighty buck, but there are very dedicated people here.
- I feel we probably have the best middle school in the district.

- And then the parents hear it, and then the parents tell other parents who are, you know, in a different school, and I think it just gets around that, you know, it is a very positive environment.
- I like what I do.
- I honestly feel it's been a very positive two years.
- So the first year there was a lot of just two cultures of schools getting to know one another. The school had a lot of issues with where people met.
- And I don't want to change their culture and change who they are and what they are, I want to see who those kids are and how I can help them to manage themselves in a world that has all different kinds of cultures.
- I honestly really, really enjoy my job.
- I feel like if Hocker Grove had one thing physically that they could do, it would be to make the school where kids aren't butting heads or they aren't so close together.
- As a para, for many years I have felt like I didn't have the clout in the classrooms that the teachers did. But I feel like -- in the last couple of years, I feel like that's really changed a lot.
- I feel like there is more respect given to me because I am able to do the same things that the teacher is doing to help the climate in the classroom.
- They are grateful there is somebody there that cares about them enough to, you know, do that for them.
- I feel like we are more like a family.
- I feel like there are very few people at Hocker Grove that I can't talk to about just about anything that's going on here at the school.

Cultural Impact

The following data are provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in chapter 5. Through the interview process the following quotations by classified staff were stated about what positive environment practices have impacted the building culture at Eagle Middle School:

- I just don't feel there is holes and gaps in the way that we do things. And I think there is just more -- overall, there is more caring in what is going on in our school.
- I also see teachers when maybe they want to take the day off and we don't get a sub, because we struggle with that, that they are willing to give up that day and come in until they are able to work out getting a sub.
- I have seen teachers stay after school and not get paid extra to work with kids to help them perhaps in math.
- I also see some of the administrators taking the extra time, sitting down with kids and parents, trying to help them work things through.
- I see in social studies, science, they will stay after because they have got things that they have got to get done, and teachers are going the extra mile for those kids.
- Whenever we ask if we can be included, we always are.
- I have the ability to offer my suggestions and that they are taken seriously, and that everybody here is included in getting involved and being able to be a part of the positive effects of what happens here.
- To be able to engage the kids, those that don't get to go on the field trips because I think if they got the opportunity to see what they are missing.
- Be as positive as I can, and that this is a safe place to be.

- Relationships.
- The relationships that they build are very important.
- And I see that not only with our students, but I see relationships between the teachers as well. And even in our office, the building of relationships between the three of us.
- I would like to see us all talking about how we can critique each other as well.
- I feel like I personally have been given more skills to deal with things that happen in the classroom. I think the BIST program has been amazing as far as one of those tools. The TAPS, the Green Dot program, the BIST program, I feel like, just gives students and teachers a means so that they can -- they have steps to follow so that they can handle disruptions.
- I think that BIST has been really instrumental in that, in helping that culture change.
- I really do think that BIST has helped a lot. I think the kids know that when a teacher makes eye contact with them what that expectation looks like, what they are saying.
- I think the relationship building. I feel like I have gotten to know students a lot better in the last couple of years, and I feel like the culture here has allowed me to do that.
- I think meeting the kids at the door is absolutely amazing, letting them know that there is somebody here. I love having the teachers out in the hallway, you know, between classes. I love being part of that environment.
- Because I feel like I am treated with respect from faculty and I feel like the BIST program, and being able to incorporate that, just like the teachers do, that makes me look like we are all part of this huge, gigantic family.

Focus on a shared leadership procedures that influence school culture

Table 28

Certified Staff Summary of interview responses about shared leadership procedures

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Administrative Shared Leadership	1	8.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think making sure that teachers feel like they have a say in what they need to accomplish and what they need to discuss, and I think that is important.
BIST	1	8.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think we also have all taken a responsibility in the BIST process within our individual classrooms and the hallway, and just how that has evolved the behavior in our school as a general rule.
Building Leadership Team	4	33.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The building leadership team has given people the opportunity to feel like they have, you know, a voice among the faculty, that they can share things that they are feeling. Building leadership team has just given me so many opportunities to grow and develop as a leader, and to be able to have that further impact beyond my classroom. The leadership team developing ideas and plans. The building leadership and saying, We don't have a mission or a vision, we need to create one, here you go, and letting it, you know, be totally teacher driven and not admin driven at all.
Building Site Councils	2	16.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site council has helped teachers to have, you know, a little miniature teams that they are on. We are seeing a social committee that wants to buy a grill so that they can once a quarter here at school barbecue for the staff, and bring that together.
PLC	2	16.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our cross-curricular time that we have once a month, I think that is important. Our cross-curricular teams that have been created have also given us the opportunity to just have discussions about ways and things that we really haven't been able to have before.
PTA	1	8.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTA meetings.
Teacher Leader Roles	1	8.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's made me step out of my comfort zone a little bit. I have had to step up what I am willing to say and what roles I am willing to take.

Building Culture with Shared Leadership

The following information is provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process the following

quotations were explained about the current cultural state with shared leadership at Eagle Middle School by certified staff:

- I think when we feel like we are a valued member of the leadership in this building, because we are all leaders in this building, then we take greater pride in what we are doing and, you know, we are vested.
- I think if we feel we are more involved, and we have more of a buy-in in what is happening in our building, it is just going to make everyone feel like we are doing this for each other, we are doing this for one another, we are doing it for the team, we are doing it for the students.
- I think it just makes things more positive because it creates one culture, not lots of different little pockets around the building. We are one team, we are doing it all, we are working together.
- If I could get people to just put their guards down and be honest and open, that would be good.
- I feel like we have seen a pretty positive change in the opposite direction to go back towards more shared leadership vision style.
- Now I think the majority of the staff is pretty bought-in, pulling in the same direction, so I have some work to do, but for the most part, I think we are a lot better than where I was year one.
- It's been more of that we are a family.
- You have got to take things slow, one step at a time, and really work together as a team to try to make fewer "I" decisions and more "team" decisions. And even though that takes

more time and more energy, most of the time it helps build that culture that we are in together.

- It's created buy-in of our staff.
- As a building we use shared leadership to create a vision. And once that vision was put in place, every aspect from there is to try to support that mission and vision, or make decisions as teams, as PLC teams, as cross-curricular teams, as site committee councils, with that same mission and vision.
- It would be nice to try to get our PTA a little bit stronger so that we have more input coming from parents as -- coming from there as well. I think that is our biggest opportunity for growth.

Cultural Impact

The following data is provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process the following quotations by certified staff were stated about what shared leadership procedures have impacted the building culture at Eagle Middle School:

- I think it is just my willingness to learn and to try new things and to be willing to step out of my comfort zone.
- I think just continuing to be open to new ideas and being willing to listen to new approaches and maybe try something that you might not be comfortable with but being willing to say.
- I have to change more than just what's going on here in my classroom, but to change what's going on in the whole school. Whereas, I used to just say, Tell me what to do, tell me what to do.

- Teachers can go in and be respected for their opinions, and share those, and be heard when needed to be.
- I think everybody in the building has an opportunity to be able to have a say on what those -- the direction of the building, how things are getting done.
- I feel like the building culture itself has changed. I don't know if maybe it is -- I guess since it is just my perception, but I think the building culture itself has changed drastically.

Table 29

Classified Staff Summary of Interview Responses about Shared Leadership Procedures

Theme	N	%	Quotations
Administrative Shared Leadership	2	25.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring open house. That was turned over to a teacher, several teachers, one in particular, and it turned out to be a very successful open house. • I think things are a really good chain of command here, and I feel like it is a very open chain. I feel like people at Hocker have huge shoulders.
Building Leadership Team	1	12.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building leadership team.
Building Site Councils	2	25.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a PBIS team that works very hard during the school year, and they do an amazing job. • Our site councils.
Collegial Conversations	1	12.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our para meetings.
PTA	1	12.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PTA and anything else, there are just some parents that just don't want to get involved.
Techer Leader Roles	1	12.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thought the teacher did a fabulous job.

Building Culture with Shared Leadership

The following information is provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process, the following

quotations were explained about the current cultural state with shared leadership at Eagle Middle School by classified staff:

- I am more of a follower than a leader, but I am willing to take on anything and am willing to do their research and things like that.
- There are just people that are willing to step up and take on the responsibility.
- I think it's made us a really good-looking school. I think that a lot of the schools look to us for our support when they try to do some different things.
- There are schools that have called me and want to know how we do honors and awards because they feel that we do such a good job.
- I think that we are just a very strong positive influence on this district.
- I am willing to do whatever it is to get it done or to accomplish whatever the goal is.
- I think things are a really good chain of command here, and I feel like it is a very open chain. I feel like people at Hocker have huge shoulders.
- I feel like we have more comradery.
- I think it is just -- you just feel like you are not alone.

Shared Leadership Cultural Improvements

The following data are provided in a narrative to show the holistic thoughts of staff perceptions and is delineated in Chapter 5. Through the interview process the following quotations by classified staff were stated about what shared leadership procedures have impacted the building culture at Eagle Middle School:

- I have the ability to offer my suggestions and that they are taken seriously, and that everybody here is included in getting involved and being able to be a part of the positive effects of what happens here.

- We have a PBIS team that works very hard during the school year, and they do an amazing job.
- I feel that when you put the opportunity out to everyone at a staff meeting, or whatever, Hey, here is what I got, who is interested, who will take the lead.
- You have all kinds of options available to you when you are dealing with a student.
- I think I am willing to look for answers with other people.
- I am willing to listen to other ideas from other people and seek out other ideas from different people.

Summary

The survey and interview procedures provided quantitative and qualitative data. This rich data delivered the information for data analysis as it related to the study's four research questions. A clearer understanding of the focus on a positive environment practices and shared leadership procedures has emerged as to the impact they played on the development of a building collegial culture. Chapter 5 will delve into these findings as they relate to the four research questions and what new information has been discovered.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop an empowered collegial school culture to systemically improve the function of the academic institution through the impact of a positive environment and shared leadership. When compared to the other middle schools in the district, Eagle Middle School had the lowest math achievement growth index during the 2014-2015 school year. The discrepancy in math achievement is one element that has created a culture problem for the building. Additionally, the building has a reputation of poor customer service and not serving the community effectively. Because of the poor culture, the staff had a lack of leadership and was cycling toward a continuous state of decline.

Culture is at the very essence of the change process. Making a systemic impact to improve the nature of an educational institution requires an understanding of the very nature of the culture. School climate is a driver for the overall culture of the building. Developing a positive climate and shared leadership process is conducive to producing a culture that is collaborative and empowered.

For the purpose of this research study, mixed method measures were used to devise, collect, and analysis data. This study worked to develop an understanding of how to create a positive environment and shared leadership to empower the building culture. Understanding the nature of human constructs, the value of the environment, and the power of shared responsibility are crucial through the reflections and feedback of work participants.

A pragmatic approach was used to understand the current state of the cultural environment to ascertain the accounts and develop an approach to empower staff through data analysis and implementation of the researched based practices. Quantitative and qualitative measures of surveys and interviews were used to determine the value and validity of a positive

environment and the importance of shared leadership in developing an empowered building culture. By focusing on the context-specific data of this research study, the middle school implemented, developed, and analyzed the data to determine the value of a positive environment and shared leadership in the development of an empowered school culture. The following questions guided the study and framed the work:

1. How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?
2. What positive environment practices impact the building culture?
3. How does shared leadership influence school culture?
4. What shared leadership procedures impact the building culture?

Summary of Findings

Eagle Middle School had a reputation of poor customer service and not serving the community effectively. Because of the poor culture the staff had a lack of leadership and was cycling toward a continuous state of decline. The goal of this study was to analyze and implement strategic interventions to systematically improve the culture at Eagle Middle School by developing a positive environment and shared leadership throughout the building.

The descriptive statistics elicited the following data:

- There were 84 employees at Eagle Middle School in which 74% were certified and 26% were classified during the 2015-2016 school year.
- The mean age of a staff member was 46 with a mean of 8 years of experience in education.
- 56.9 percent of students were white with 24.9 percent of Hispanic decent making up the majority of the student population during the 2015-2016 school year.

- 54.3 percent of students qualified for free or reduced meals, 13.6 percent of students having ELL status, and 9.6% of students with disability status during the 2015-2016 school year.
- The mean number of students who qualified for the PBIS quarterly rewards trip was 54.5% during the 2014-2015 school year and the 1st and 2nd quarter of the 2015-2016 school year.
- There was a 68.3 average decrease in tardies from the 2014 -2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.
- There was a 60.3% increase in students earning honor roll recognition from the 2014 - 2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.
- Breakfast service showed a monthly increase ranging from 55.4 % to 75.4 % in mean daily service each month from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year.
- The mean daily attendance for the 2014 through 2016 school year was 94.4%.

Positive Environment Practices and Building Culture

The survey elicited data as it relates to developing a positive environment to develop an empowered collegial building culture. The data showed a mean of 4.05 for certified staff members and a 4.29 mean for classified staff members on 5.0 Likert scale. On a 5.0 Likert Scale, the highest classified response with a mean of 4.86 was, staff go above and beyond with their students. The highest certified response with a mean of 4.30 was, I am proud to tell others that I work at this school. The lowest classified response with a mean of 2.86 was, students encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning. The lowest certified response at a mean of 2.98 was also, students encourage and support each other in the improvement of

learning. Classified staff reported a mean of 3.29 while certified staff reported a mean of 3.58 when responding to at this time how would you rank our building culture.

The staff survey showed that the staff perceptions of the positive environment initiatives were above neutral (3.0) in all categories expect when responding to students encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning. The t-test did not show a significant difference in the responses between certified and classified staff members. The following were perceived as positive (4.0) or higher by classified and certified staff:

- Staff at this school build strong relationships with each other.
- Staff at this school build strong relationships with their students.
- I am proud to tell others that I work at this school.
- This school is a good place for me to work and learn.
- Staff members are student centered.
- Students are rewarded extrinsically for positive academic and behavior.
- Staff go above and beyond with their students.
- Educators believe all students can “grow” and be successful.

The data showed a mean of 3.71 for certified members and a 3.74 mean on 5.0 Likert scale. On a 5.0 Likert Scale, the highest classified response with a mean of 4.67 was, Wednesday popcorn. The highest certified response with a mean of 4.16 was, PBIS Quarterly Celebrations. The lowest classified response with a mean of 3.00 was, GreenDot. The lowest certified response at a mean of 3.26 was also, SOARing Shout Outs.

The staff survey showed that the staff perceptions of the positive environment initiatives impacted the building culture were above neutral (3.0) in all categories. The t-test did not show a significant difference in the responses between certified and classified staff members. The

following were perceived as positive (4.0) or higher by classified and certified staff as to what positive environmental practices impacted the building culture:

- PBIS Quarterly Celebrations
- Focus on Relationships

The open-ended survey responses showed that visibility (26.3%) was mentioned most often as impactful for certified staff. The certified staff also mentioned extra-curricular activities, student of the month, PLC and cross-curricular teams twice for each initiative as impactful. The open-ended survey data showed that administration (50%) was mentioned most often as impactful for classified staff.

The open-ended survey data showed that a focus on relationships (26.5%) was mentioned most often as impactful positive environment practice for certified staff. The certified staff also mentioned the Eagle Hour program (23.5%) and personal staff conversations and relationships (20.6%) as the most impactful positive environment practices to them. The open-ended survey data showed that administration (40%) and Eagle hour (40%) was mentioned most often as impactful positive environment practice to them for classified staff.

The interview data showed that Eagle Hour (38.7%) was mentioned most often as impactful positive environment practice for certified staff. The certified staff also mentioned the personal staff conversations and relationships (12.9%) as the second most impactful positive environment practices to them. The interview data showed that a focus on relationships (22.7%) and administration (22.7%) was mentioned most often as impactful positive environment practice for classified staff. The certified staff also mentioned the Eagle Hour program (23.5%) and personal staff conversations and relationships (20.6%) as the most impactful positive environment practices to them.

When describing staff perceptions of the building culture as it relates to our positive environment practices all stated they felt culture had improved and that we have made an impact to improve the building culture. All staff members described a sense of pride in working at Eagle middle school and that it has grown in the past two year. They described a sense of family among staff and enjoy coming to work. The most often explained impact to the building culture was the morning triage through the Eagle Hour program and in conjunction with the BIST philosophy. PBIS quarterly celebrations and focus on relationships were mentioned often as another key positive environmental practice that impacted the building culture. Working on improving and refining positive environment practices was noted in responses by all staff members.

Shared Leadership Procedures and Building Culture

The survey elicited a large amount of data as it related to developing shared leadership procedures to develop an empowered collegial building culture. The data showed a mean of 3.57 for certified members and a 3.91 mean on 5.0 Likert scale. On a 5.0 Likert scale, the highest classified response with a mean of 4.43 was, staff members are student centered. The highest certified response with a mean of 4.33 was, staff members are student centered. The lowest classified response with a mean of 2.86 was, staff at this school get the chance to work independently and school personnel have a sense of empowerment and control over their work. The lowest certified response at a mean of 3.19 was also, school personnel have a sense of empowerment and control over their work.

Certified staff had an average mean of 4.0 or higher, positive to very positive, for the following survey questions:

- Staff members are student centered.

Classified staff had an average mean of 4.0 or higher, positive to very positive, for the following survey questions:

- Staff at this school gets the chance to work collaboratively.
- Staffs have close working relationships with each other and their students.
- Adults that work in the building work well with one another.
- Staffs have developed common learning communities.
- Staff feel comfortable sharing and collaborating. 24. Data driven processes are utilized to analyze data and drive school improvement.
- Staff members are student centered.
- School personnel encourage collaboration among staff.
- School personnel respect each other's opinion.
- Staffs work together to developed shared plans to support students and each other.

There were no response means that averaged in the negative or very negative, 1.0 to 2.0, for any of the survey questions. The t-test did not show a significant difference between classified and certified staff.

The data showed a mean of 3.35 for certified members and a 3.63 mean for classified members on a 5.0 Likert scale. On a 5.0 Likert scale, the highest classified response with a mean of 3.83 was collegial conversations. The highest certified response with a mean of 3.73 was, collegial conversations. The lowest classified response with a mean of 3.50 was, Building

Leadership Team, Common Plan and PLC. The lowest certified response at a mean of 3.02 was SIT.

Classified and certified staff did not have an average mean of 4.0 or higher, positive to very positive, for any of the survey questions. There were no response means that averaged in the negative or very negative, 1.0 to 2.0, for any of the survey questions. The t-test did not show a significant difference between classified and certified staff.

The open-ended survey data showed that PLC (50%) was mentioned most often as the shared leadership practice that is impactful for certified staff. Collegial conversations (100%) was the only shared leadership practice mentioned for classified staff. Common plans (38.9%) was mentioned most often as the most impactful shared leadership practice to certified staff. Collegial conversations (100%) was the only shared leadership practice mentioned as the most impactful shared leadership practice to classified staff.

The interview data showed that the building leadership team (33.3%) was mentioned most often as an impactful shared leadership practice for certified staff. The certified staff also mentioned the building site councils (16.7%) and PLC (16.7%) as the second most impactful shared leadership practices to them. The interview data showed that a focus on administrative shared leadership (25.0%) and building site councils (25.0%) was mentioned most often as impactful shared leadership practice for classified staff.

When describing staff perceptions of the building culture as it relates to our shared leadership procedures all stated they felt culture had improved and that we have made an impact to improve the building culture. All staff mentioned the sense of value for their opinion and ability to be part of the leadership unit at Eagle Middle School. There is a sense that everyone has the opportunity to be involved, but would like to see more staff members and PTA be more

involved in the shared leadership practices. The most often explained impact to the building culture was the building leadership team. PLC and site councils were stated as impactful, but needing to continue to refine and improve to increase the shared portion of the leadership. Staff mentioned a sense of comfort to be involved with one staff member explaining a need for stronger trust with some staff members.

Interpretation of the Data

Utilizing the literature and through my experiences with collegial support these sources have driven the focus on the development of an empowered building culture. Through the two constructs I worked to focus on developing positive environment initiatives and shared leadership practices to develop an empowered collegial building culture. The literature stated these two constructs have the most leverage to develop an empowered collegial culture. Through the implementation of these concepts the study has worked to analyze how these initiatives have impacted the building culture and which initiatives have had the most leverage in the development of a collegial building culture.

The data showed a positive culture when looking at the survey and interview results compared to the culture of Eagle Middle School from two years ago. There were some practices and initiatives that showed more impact on the building culture than others. Though no direct correlation can be stated between the positive environment practices and shared leadership, Eagle middle school showed a decrease in tardies and increase in honor roll during the course of this study. The breakfast service increased during the implementation of the morning triage eagle hour program. The majority of staff listed the building culture as positive and all interview candidates stated the building culture has improved over the past two years. One staff member stated, "We had a horrible experience the two years before. The moral was so low, I don't think

people -- teachers didn't even want to be here. And it was hard to keep things rolling in a positive way. All it was people talking behind each other backs. It was not nice. Backstabbing, the whole thing.” In explaining the current culture, a staff member explained, “And then the parents hear it, and then the parents tell other parents who are, you know, in a different school, and I think it just gets around that, you know, it is a very positive environment.” A staff member described, “I just think it is more positive. The moral isn't so low like it was. People are willing to -- not all people, you know, sometimes it is always about the almighty buck, but there are very dedicated people here.” This growth mindset related to the continuous improvement process as described in chapter two is a continuing area of focus.

The data provided insight as to what specific positive environment practices and initiatives impacted the building culture and which programs provided the most impact for the building. Staff perceived that staff go above and beyond with their students and that they are proud to tell others that they work at this school. There biggest concern was that students don't always encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning. The focus on relationships and students continues to be an theme perceived highly by all staff through the survey and interview process. Eagle hour, PBIS and a focus on relationships have shown to be the most impactful positive environment practices to impact our building culture. When talking about the impact of the building culture our positive environment practices a staff member stated, “I would say that was the point where our focus shifted to the relationships, and how important it was to have the relationships first and foremost with the kids before you could get them to do anything.” Another staff member explained, “I think creating Eagle Hour, where the students from day one feel like they have a community. I think that has been very positive. Just immediately having a group of students that they know that they can try to connect with is the

most beneficial thing.” In talking about the building PBIS team a staff member declared, “I think implementing those VIP celebrations more frequently than just the big quarter celebrations has been helpful for our students.” The BIST program was also mentioned by a staff member, “I think the BIST program has been incredibly helpful just for kind of formalizing our approaches to interacting with students and trying to teach the skills that they are lacking when it comes to, you know, interacting appropriately with adults.”

The summary of interview and survey data showed positive impact on our building culture with the implantation of the positive environment practices. During an interview it was stated, “So I feel like things like that, the morning triage has just and Eagle Hour too, I just feel like the culture here has changed for the positive in the sense that I don't perceive us having big problems.” Another stated member explained, “It is not top down like it was year one, but how we are implementing it with the students structurally our morning triage time, our PBIS, what we are doing with reward systems, our BIST approach that we brought in how that has changed quite drastically as well.”

The data provided insight as to what specific practices and initiatives impacted the building culture and which programs provided the most impact for the building. The survey data explained that most staff felt that staff members are student centered while getting a chance to work collaboratively with one another. Key practices of the shared leadership approach that were perceived to have the highest impact on the building culture were our building leadership team, common plan and PLC. A focus on collegial conversations was mentioned most often as a key shared leadership approach when working with staff. The development and improvement of the PLC process and SIT programs are continuing areas of development for the building.

A focus on improving open communication and trust were mentioned by members as continued areas of growth for Eagle Middle School. When describing the current state of shared leadership a staff member stated, “Teachers can go in and be respected for their opinions, and share those, and be heard when needed to be.” Another staff member went on to state, “I think everybody in the building has an opportunity to be able to have a say on what those the direction of the building, how things are getting done.” A sense of empowerment through the shared leadership practices was described by a staff member, “I think it is just my willingness to learn and to try new things and to be willing to step out of my comfort zone.” The value of cultural impact of the shared leadership practices was disseminated throughout the research as the value that it played on each individual and the building as a whole. These practices have shown a positive impact on individuals and the building with some needed refinement to work to ensure that all staff members are involved in the shared leadership process.

Research Questions

Taking a pragmatic approach to analyze and decode the current state of the cultural environment to ascertain and develop an approach to empower staff through data analysis and implementation of the researched based practices was the rationale of this study. By focusing on the context-specific data of this research study, I was able to implement, develop, and analyze the data to determine the value of a positive environment and shared leadership in the development of an empowered collegial culture.

The questions below guided the study and frame the work completed:

1. How does focusing on a positive environment influence school culture?

The survey showed a mean of 4.05 for certified staff members and a 4.29 mean on a 5.0 Likert scale for classified staff members when replying to the survey questions stating that they

agreed to strongly agreed that the positive environment practices have influenced the school culture. A staff member explained, “The staff is amazing at being a team, and they truly are a family that works together and supports each other. And so I think that that comradery has just grown as I have been here.” A focus on creating positive atmosphere for all members at Eagle middle school has been key to a stronger culture. “I think that it is a much more positive place than it had been previously. I truly do. You know, a lot of the problems that we had with fighting and things like that has great decreased, I feel like, in the last four years,” stated a staff member when referring to the change in school culture through the work of positive environment practices.

The staff shared a sense of trust and unity during the data collection to elicit their perceptions of the building culture. One staff member explained, “I am proud to say I am a member of this faculty, and I am proud to say these are my kids.” Another staff member went on to state, “I think we just have that nature about us, to be warm and caring and want to be there for each other, and it makes it a better place to be. People want to come here.” The feeling of trust and unity in each other was mentioned throughout the data collection process. The development of a family mindset was described, “It is more of a family now. I feel like we are all, kind of, for the most part, have that same vision.” This was different than how the previous culture was described, “When I first got here, it was different building leader and the culture was a little bit more rocky.” When summing up the value of positive relationships and impact on culture a staff member explained, “And so I think that I just feel very feel, very positive about what we are doing here, and I am proud to be a member of this faculty.”

2. What positive environment practices impact the building culture?

The emphasis on a relationship focus was mentioned throughout the survey and interviews as a key piece in the development of a positive environment. The survey data showed a mean of 3.71 for certified members and a 3.74 mean on 5.0 Likert scale when responding to positive environment practices and how they impacted the building culture. No positive environment practices had a mean of no impact or negative by the staff on the survey. Eagle hour, BIST and PBIS were key initiatives that were stated as impactful positive environment practices on the building culture. A staff member explained, “The morning Eagle hour triage has been the most impactful practice that has been implemented in our school because the students have a specific place to go in the morning.” GreenDot was mentioned as a neutral impact and was stated by classified staff one of the initiatives that they had not had a great deal of exposure to.

A focus on relationships was central theme mentioned throughout the data collection process through the positive environment practices and literature review. The focus on relationships through the positive environment practices was mentioned 26.5% of the open-ended responses by certified staff. One staff member wrote, “It is the most important thing that the students relate to their teachers. They work harder for them, behaviors decrease, and they are more motivated to and they know they have your respect, so they give it back to you.” Another staff member went on to state, “The focus on relationship building. Giving staff the permission to take time to focus on the student and relationships within the building creates a positive environment that allows us to understand one another as separate human beings with different needs and barriers.” The focus on relationships through the positive environmental practices has impacted the building culture in a positive way. Another staff member went on to explain, “PBIS & BIST: Staff buy-in. When we have solutions and help to guide students in the right

direction for grades and behaviors, teachers feel empowered. We all speak the same language to students and parents. We get to see each other change the way they deal with students and it causes everyone to want to change.” The emphasis on empowerment and changes through the positive environment practices has shown impact on the building culture at Eagle Middle School.

The interview validated the themes from the survey that Eagle hour, BIST, PBIS and a focus on relationships have been impactful for the cultural development at Eagle Middle School. When describing the biggest impact that a positive environment practice had on the building culture a staff member exclaimed, “I would say that was the point where our focus shifted to the relationships, and how important it was to have the relationships first and foremost with the kids before you could get them to do anything.” This sense of relationship was explained that it is not just exhibited for students, but amongst staff as well, “I think that I am seen as someone that's open, so that kids feel comfortable in coming and talking to me. I am willing to do whatever I can to help support staff members in the building.”

When talking about the value of Eagle hour on the building culture a staff member explained, “So I feel like we are learning to get along more, and I think having that home base with the Eagle Hour has just been really, really helpful. It is a more positive place.” Another staff member validated this thought by stating, “I think creating Eagle Hour, where the students from day one feel like they have a community. I think that has been very positive. Just immediately having a group of students that they know that they can try to connect with is the most beneficial thing.” Another staff member continued by explaining, “So I feel like things like that, the morning triage has just done that and Eagle Hour too, I just feel like the culture here has changed for the positive in the sense that I don't perceive us having big problems.” With the culture growth from the Eagle hour program there is still room for growth as a staff member

stated, “Morning triage. And I think that's the most impactful, but it's probably the area that we have the opportunity for the most growth. It is a structured time to allow maybe unstructured things to happen.”

BIST and PBIS were also mentioned regularly, “I think the BIST program has been incredibly helpful just for kind of formalizing our approaches to interacting with students and trying to teach the skills that they are lacking when it comes to, you know, interacting appropriately with adults.” The transition to the BIST has created a drastic change in culture, “It is not top down like it was year one, but how we are implementing it with the students structurally our morning triage time, our PBIS, what we are doing with reward systems, our BIST approach that we brought in and how that has changed quite drastically as well.” The value of the PBIS program was also seen as impactful as a staff member explained, “So I think that those are positive things our PBIS team is doing is really helpful.”

3. How does shared leadership influence school culture?

The survey and interviews worked to define how the shared leadership process influence the school culture. The survey data showed a mean of 3.57 for certified members and a 3.91 mean on 5.0 Likert scale when responding to how shared leadership influenced school culture meaning that on average staff felt the shared leadership had a positive impact on the school culture. The highest response was that staff perceived that they were student centered in their approach when working with students.

The culture impact of shared leadership was validated through the interview process when a staff member stated, “I think when we feel like we are a valued member of the leadership in this building, because we are all leaders in this building, then we take greater pride in what we are doing and, you know, we are vested.” The value of empowerment was shared throughout the

data collection process when referring to the shared leadership process at Eagle Middle School. The empowerment was qualified when a staff member explained, “I think if we feel we are more involved, and we have more of a buy in in what is happening in our building, it is just going to make everyone feel like we are doing this for each other, we are doing this for one another, we are doing it for the team, we are doing it for the students.”

The team approach was stated, “I think it just makes things more positive because it creates one culture, not lots of different little pockets around the building. We are one team, we are doing it all, we are working together.” The sense of team unity was explained as a strength, but also an area of continual development when a staff member explained, “If I could get people to just put their guards down and be honest and open, that would be good.” This change has been seen as gradual and an area of emphasis for the building to promote an empowered collegial culture, “Now I think the majority of the staff is pretty bought in, pulling in the same direction, so I have some work to do, but for the most part, I think we are a lot better than where I was year one.”

In explaining how it is has influenced the school culture a staff member explained, “As a building we use shared leadership to create a vision. And once that vision was put in place, every aspect from there is to try to support that mission and vision, or make decisions as teams, as PLC teams, as cross curricular teams, as site committee councils, with that same mission and vision.” The sense of team , “It's created buy in of our staff.”

4. What shared leadership procedures impact the building culture?

The survey and interviews worked to define what shared leadership procedures influenced the building culture. The survey data showed a mean of 3.35 for certified members and a 3.63 mean on 5.0 Likert scale when responding to what shared leadership procedures

impacted the school culture meaning that on average staff felt the shared leadership had a neutral to positive impact on the school culture. Both certified and classified staff did not see any of the shared leadership practices as negative or very negative. On the open-ended responses to the survey PLC (50%) was mentioned as the most impactful with 100% of responses from classified staff referring to collegial conversations.

The interviews validated this perception with the building leadership team being mentioned along with PLC through the value of collegial conversations in these two processes. The focus on collegial conversations has given a sense of empowerment and respect as a staff stated, “I think everybody in the building has an opportunity to be able to have a say on the direction of the building, how things are getting done.” The change in staff comfort level was described, “I think it is just my willingness to learn and to try new things and to be willing to step out of my comfort zone.” Another staff explained, “I think just continuing to be open to new ideas and being willing to listen to new approaches and maybe try something that you might not be comfortable with but being willing to say.” These statements explained the value that staff felt shared leadership had on them and the building culture at Eagle Middle School.

When researching the specific shared leadership practices that were impactful to the building culture, the building leadership team was mentioned regularly by staff as an impactful process for staff. A staff member explained, “The building leadership team has given people the opportunity to feel like they have, you know, a voice among the faculty, that they can share things that they are feeling.” Another staff member shared the value it has had to her, “The building leadership team has just given me so many opportunities to grow and develop as a leader, and to be able to have that further impact beyond my classroom.” In explaining the value it has had to the impact of shared leadership with the building culture a staff member describes,

“The building leadership and saying, We don't have a mission or a vision, we need to create one, here you go, and letting it, you know, be totally teacher driven and not admin driven at all.”

The PLC process and building site councils were mentioned throughout the survey and interview process as impactful shared leadership procedures to the building culture with the need for continual refinement. A staff member explained, “Our cross curricular teams that have been created have also given us the opportunity to just have discussions about ways and things that we really haven't been able to have before.” Another staff member explained, “We are seeing a social committee that wants to buy a grill so that they can once a quarter here at school barbecue for the staff, and bring that together.” These two procedures in alignment with the implementation of collegial conversations has shown the impact of shared leadership practices on the building culture.

Recommendations

The literature showed that the development of an empowered collegial culture can be enhanced by six constructs. Through the course of this research project the focus was on developing a positive environment and shared leadership approach. The survey and interview data explained that the positive environment practices impacted the school culture and drove the culture in the building. Shared leadership also impacted the building culture and provided a sense of trust and rapport amongst many staff.

Positive environment practices need to be continued with continual refinement to the practices. Eagle Hour has shown to be the most impactful practice for Eagle Middle school. Working to refine the program to allow for a shared approach in the implementation of the program will garner stronger cultural growth. The BIST philosophy needs to more consistent throughout the building to provide deeper and stronger relationships amongst staff, students and

the community. The PBIS program needs to be continued with refinement to allow for more consistent rewards and recognition of student success more often. Visibility of staff in the building is a strength and area of continued focus for the building. The focus on relationships was deemed to be a central theme of all of the positive environment practices and needs to be entrenched throughout all positive environmental practices across the building.

Shared leadership procedures have shown to be impactful for the building culture. There is a need to expand the leadership opportunities for staff and work to get more staff members involved in the daily leadership initiatives of the building. The PLC process continues to be an area of growth along with building site councils to enhance the shared leadership approach across the building. The building leadership team was defined by staff through the data collection process as a central piece to the development and continual enhancement of shared leadership to empower the building culture. Collegial conversations were a continual area of focus through all of the shared leadership procedures. The development of collegial conversations amongst staff will be critical in the growth of the shared leadership process at Eagle Middle School.

Going forward Eagle Middle School needs to continue to engage more staff in the shared leadership approach and work to develop fidelity to the programs in place. Open communication throughout the staff with shared processing and empowerment should be areas of continual focus to reach all staff members to grow the development of the culture. The current programming has shown to fit the needs of the building culture and allows for self-directed improvement with staff buy in throughout the building culture. Engaging all staff members, certified and classified, should be an area of recognition throughout the building.

As Eagle Middle School has focused on the development of a positive environment and shared leadership. In the coming years, continue this focus and work to implement the development of shared processing with reflective practices through the shared leadership procedures that are currently utilized through the BLT, PLC and SIT processes. Utilizing support staff and shared resources while understanding external factors will be another key movement for Eagle Middle School in the years to come. The last construct in the development of an empowered collegial culture is community support. Eagle Middle School should work to engage more stakeholders from the community to build stronger partnerships with parents and community members. This development should garner stronger community support and enhance the building culture.

Implications for Research

The scope of the research was limited by the number of participants that were selected for interviews. Broadening the interview participants would allow for more data in future research studies. The survey was open to all staff members in the building that completed the consent form. Time to complete interviews and surveys was a limiting factor of the research. Providing more than two weeks could provide further data in future research. With staff turnover and movement to and from other buildings, exposure to strategic focus on positive environment initiatives and shared leadership practices was a limiting factor in the exposure of all staff to the nature of the study. Staff was also limited by their exposure or absence to professional learning opportunities on positive environment initiatives and shared leadership practices. Providing make-up sessions would allow all staff exposure to all of the shared leadership and positive environment practices. The scope and nature of classified staff to these practices was limited by their duty time and exposure to students throughout the day. The sample size of the interview

was limited to get data rich feedback after survey data is analyzed to dig deeper in the nature and scope of the research questions. To get a more strategic sample, specific sampling for interviews could provide more data rich results.

Each participant was given the opportunity to be a part of the positive environment and shared leadership initiatives to impact the building culture. During the course of the study all members of the staff were focused on collaboration and collegial conversations to immerse a systemic momentum for all staff members. The focus on a positive environment and shared leadership was systematic in nature and allowed for all participants to be active in the research and problem of practice.

The organizational change to building practices at the beginning of the study were key implications to the research. The building administration set out to be role models for the positive environment and shared practice by focusing on relationships. There was a systematic effort to be visible with students and staff and promote positive interactions both publicly and privately. Administration was highly visible in the hallways and outside before and after school to model these practices and worked to embed a state of expectation for positive environment and shared leadership practices. Each administrator had set positions in the building to meet and greet students and staff throughout the school day. Administrative weekly goals were to be in each classroom weekly, write five positive notes, publicly state five positive comments to staff, make five positive calls to parents, and be clearly visible throughout the day with an open door policy.

A focus on relationships was a central theme throughout the building and advocated by the administrative team. Each administrator worked to promote value to every staff members thoughts and suggestions by meeting with staff regularly and setting up monthly meetings for

support staff and new teachers in order to promote a sense of vestment in the building culture. The administrative team worked to support staff by stepping in and being a part of lunch duty clean-up, serving students and staff, attending all staff functions, being proactive with staff concerns, communicating to promote transparency, modeling shared leadership and being vested in staff family matters outside of the school day. The end goal of the administrative team was to work to ensure that administration was on the same level as all staff and the expectations were the same for all staff members in the building.

In continued studies, a longer approach than a two year evaluation could provide deeper understanding as to the impact of positive environment and shared leadership practices. Continuing to evaluate the cultural impact can be checked yearly through the use of these instruments to evaluate the ongoing development of the building culture. In future cultural studies the impact of students and community members' perceptions could be considered as another construct to research. In an effort to continue cultural development positive environment practices and shared leadership approaches could be added to the building to elicit their effectiveness on the building culture.

Implications for Practice

The literature focused on cultural improvement practices as it relates to the culture of an educational setting. Working through theories of change I developed six key constructs with a focus on two to drive the research focus to develop an empowered building culture and climate. Through the development of shared leadership practices and developing a positive environment the work of this research was to enhance and empower staff culture utilizing these constructs. The literature provided a base for the value that these key elements play on the development of a collegial school culture. Utilizing the workings of the research, I utilized the conceptual

framework to develop an empowered collegial culture that is conducive to continuous improvement and change.

The research validated the importance of positive environment practices and shared leadership in developing a collegial building culture. Utilizing the literature, research and procedures of developing a positive environment the building has shown culture growth over the past two years. Staff validated this through the survey instrument and interview protocol throughout the research process. The implementation of positive environment practices throughout the building has made an impact with certified and classified staff to improve the building culture.

The school culture has been influenced in a positive way through the positive environment practices with an ongoing need for them to remain in place. Some positive environmental practices showed impact to the building culture with need for ongoing refinement. A staff member explained, "I just don't feel there are holes and gaps in the way that we do things. And I think there is just more overall, there is more caring in what is going on in our school." The continual focus on creating a positive environment through relationship building is critical to the development of an empowered school culture.

The change process through shared leadership has been impactful to the building culture, but it takes time as a staff member explains, "You have got to take things slow, one step at a time, and really work together as a team to try to make fewer "I" decisions and more "team" decisions. And even though that takes more time and more energy, most of the time it helps build that culture that we are in together." When summarizing the value of shared leadership on the building culture a staff member described the value, "I think that we are just a very strong positive influence on this district." When summarizing the value of shared leadership practices a

staff member stated, “I feel like the building culture itself has changed. I don't know if maybe it is I guess since it is just my perception, but I think the building culture itself has changed drastically.”

This research project validated the research that a collegial school cultural is driven through a positive environment and shared leadership practices. In developing these practices there must be a shared approach that involves all stakeholders in the building that must be ongoing and continues as indicated throughout the literature. Culture is living and must be cultivated regularly to ensure its growth and development for a successful school and work environment.

Conclusions

The need for a strong culture was a central theme throughout the literature to the development of a highly functioning school. The focus on a positive environment and shared leadership was gleaned from the literature to be the two most powerful constructs to improve the building culture. Through the development of these constructs Eagle Middle School has seen growth and development in its culture with recommendations for continual improvements in these two practices.

The survey and interview instruments provided the tools to research the current state of the positive environment practices and shared leadership approaches at Eagle Middle school to determine the impact of the development of an empowered collegial culture. The tools provided accuracy and validity to the research while determining which practices and procedures had the most impact of the building culture.

These tools provided the quantitative and qualitative data to ascertain the value of each program and its impact of the development of an empowered collegial culture. This research

process has helped develop the research skills necessary for me to develop and create a stronger culture for the school community that I work. I have developed a deeper understanding of the process to empower school culture and the value of cultivating it through my role as a building leader.

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Appendix 3.1

Survey

This study will work to develop an understanding of how a positive environment and shared leadership can empower staff to impact a collegial building culture. Understanding the nature of human constructs, the value of the environment and the power in which individuals share is crucial to develop a collegial building culture. Furthermore, reflections and feedback of co-workers is crucial in the research design. This survey should take approximately 5 - 20 minutes to complete. Survey data is provided anonymously and confidentially to allow for honest sharing and open feedback by participants. Each survey is delivered to staff by Google Forms. Participants are able to provide their name or not identify themselves to provide their data without knowledge of their identity. All participants' identities are kept confidential and not utilized as the basis of their evaluative performance at Eagle Middle School. All survey data will be shared with participants to allow for reflective practice to continue the development of a positive environment and shared leadership in an effort to empower a collegial building culture.

Position – Classified, Certified, Administrative

Culture is at the very essence of the change process. To make a systemic impact to improve the systematic nature of an educational institution one has to reach to the very nature of the culture. DuFour (2008) describes culture as, “the assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations and habits that constitute the norm for the organization” (p. 90). He continues by noting Roland Barth’s (2001) description:

The school’s culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, “the way we do things around here.” Ultimately, a school’s culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have... The culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act (pp. 7-8).

1. At this time how would you rank our building culture:

Likert Scale – 0 – Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 – Very Negative, 2- Negative, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Positive, 5 – Very Positive

Daggett, through the work of ICLE (2012), describes four relationship dimensions in creating a positive environment; “learning relationships, staff relationships, professional relationships and community relationships” (p. 112). The focus on creating these relationships is critical to promoting a systemic positive school culture.

2. Staff at this school build strong relationships with each other.

3. Staff at this school building strong relationships with their students.
4. I am proud to tell others that I work at this school.
5. This school is a good place for me to work and learn.
6. There is a clear vision and mission to drive the building.
7. Students encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning and personal conduct.
8. Staff encourage and support each other in the improvement of learning and personal conduct.
9. The school is an orderly and purposeful place.
10. Staff members are student centered.
11. Staff work to regularly praise each other.
12. Staff work to regularly praise students.
13. Students are rewarded extrinsically for positive academics and behavior.
14. Students are rewarded intrinsically for positive academics and behavior.
15. Staff go above and beyond with their students.
16. Educators believe all students can “grow” and be successful.

Likert Scale – 0 – Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 – Strongly

Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

17. What positive environment practices impacted the building culture positively?

Likert Scale - 0 – Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 –Negative Impact, 2

- No Impact, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Impactful, 5 – Very Impactful

1. Morning Eagle Hour Triage

2. Soaring Truths
3. Soaring Shout Outs
4. Wednesday Popcorn
5. PBIS VIP Days
6. SOAR Store
7. PBIS Quarterly Celebrations
8. Building Social Events
9. BIST Philosophy and Process
10. GreenDot
11. Staff Social Committee Events
12. Focus on relationships
13. Personal staff conversations and compliments
14. What other positive environment practices are impactful? (Open-ended)
15. What has been the most impactful positive environment practice to you and why? (Open-ended)

Watson (2014) promoted the value of shared leadership, “Mutual trust, respect and support along with openness, networks and partnerships. After the appeal to shared vision and values, the importance of ‘trust’ and ‘openness’ in the working of the PLC perhaps emerge most consistently in the literature” (p. 21).

18. Staff at this school get the chance to work independently.
19. Staff at this school get the chance to work collaboratively.
20. Staff have close working relationships with each other and their students.
21. Adults that work in the building work well with one another.
22. Staff have developed common learning communities.

23. Staff feel comfortable sharing and collaborating.
24. Data driven processes are utilized to analyze data and drive school improvement.
25. The school's schedule allows adequate time for staff collaboration
26. School personnel have a sense of empowerment and control over their work.
27. Staff members are student centered.
28. School personnel encourage collaboration among staff.
29. School personnel respect each other's opinion.
30. Staff work together to developed shared plans to support students and each other.

Likert Scale – 0 – Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

31. What shared leadership procedures impacted the building culture positively?

Likert Scale - 0 – Not Enough Information to answer the Question, 1 –Negative Impact, 2 - No Impact, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Impactful, 5 – Very Impactful

1. Building Leadership Team
2. Building Site Committees
3. Common Plan
4. SIT
5. Collegial Conversations
6. Teacher Leader Roles
7. Administrative Shared Leadership
8. PLCs
9. What other shared leadership practices are impactful? (Open-ended)

10. What has been the most impactful shared leadership practice to you and why?

(open-ended)

Appendix 3.2

Interview Protocol

Today is...date, and currently it is... o'clock. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to help with the research on our building culture. Is there anything that I can get you before we start the interview process? As a participant in the process your identity will be kept confidential as to the extent allowed by law and University policy to protect your anonymity. During the interview please feel free to ask any questions that you may have and let me know if there is anything that I need to clarify.

1. Tell me a little about your educational background, your years of experience, degrees, certifications, and professional positions?
2. Please describe your current position in the building and how you impact our building?
3. Tell me your story about our building and what you have experienced during your time here? (Get narratives about culture, environment, climate)
4. Can you describe what a perfect building culture looks like to you?
5. When you come to work can you describe the feelings you get? (Get practical examples)
6. If you had a magic wand what would you want our building to be like?
7. Do you feel the building culture has changed over the past two years and possibly share some examples of how it may have changed? (How, Why, How do you know, get practical evidence)
8. How would you describe the current building culture compared to two years ago?
9. Can you share some specific narratives of how the culture has changed?
10. What have been the most impactful positive environment practices to you? (why, how have they changed your practices)
11. How do you feel positive environment practices have impacted the building culture, what does that look like? (Specifics, share a narrative)
12. Would you explain how these practices have changed your perceptions of the building culture? (Specifics, share a narrative)

13. If you had to describe the shared leadership process at our building what would you explain to an outsider?
14. If you could make the perfect shared leadership approach in a school, what would that look like?
15. How do you feel shared leadership procedures have impacted the building culture? (why, how have they changed your practices)
16. Would you explain how these practices have changed your perceptions of the building culture?
17. Going forward what do you think we could do to improve the building culture through positive environment initiatives? (why do you see that being impactful)
18. How do you feel you are effective as a staff member helping create a positive environment?
19. What do you think are your strongest attributes that you bring to the building in regards to creating a positive environment?
20. What do you think are your strongest attributes that you bring to the building in regards to shared leadership?
21. If you could do anything to improve our culture what would it be?
22. How could we increase our shared leadership in the building?
23. What do you think has made the biggest impact over the past two years to impact our building culture?

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this interview and all the information you provided. As I work on collecting the data I may be in contact to follow-up on some of your responses to help me utilize your information as it relates to our building culture. Thank you for your time and dedication to the educational field and our building.

Appendix 3.3



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

March 20, 2017

MEMORANDUM

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

TO: Benjamin Pretz
John Pijanowski

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 17-02-502

Protocol Title: The Impact of a Positive Environment & Shared Leadership to Empower Collegial School Culture

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 03/17/2017 Expiration Date: 03/16/2018

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscpi/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 100 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.