

The Unheard Voices of School Culture:
An Exploratory Study from Non-Certificated Personnel's Perspectives in K12 Schools

by

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ABSTRACT

School culture is a construct that proves to be especially important for educational institutions. When considering current research relatable to school culture, certificated personnel appear to be the prominent perspectives captured, suggesting that certificated personnel have derived the concept of school culture. This then raises the question: where are the other voices and perspectives within our educational institutions?

There are five specific components that must be present for school culture to be operational and effective. A conceptual model was developed to strengthen much needed conversation associated with school culture.

Through a review of the literature pertaining to exploratory research, information redundancy, leveraging subcultures, relationships, change and human behavior and organization culture, the capturing of non-certificated voices and perspectives must occur to determine if the notion of school culture is limited. There were five emergent themes to erect from conducting the study and it is suggesting that these five must be present for the notion of school culture to be functional. The five emergent themes consists of perspectives on school climate/school atmosphere, connectivity/sense of belonging to the school, contributions to the school environment, respect, and strengths and stretches of the school.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

“There is always a culture driving any group of people who have spent a significant amount of time together serving a common place” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019, pg.108). The establishment of school culture is strongly conveyed through mediums of informal conversations and narratives that occur in corridors verses stiff, formal collaborations with administrators and district personnel who proclaim to possess new mindsets. Educational institutions, just like other social organizations, are influenced in same ways by culture. Culture, the values and forms of behavior that characterize different social groups—culture is the way things are done around educational institutions (Robinson & Aronica, 2015). Culture answers the following questions: Does the school environment feature mutual trust, respect, and openness? Does your school culture press for student achievement (William, 2018)? Culture is the filter through which all other facets of educational institutions operate. Nothing that occurs in educational institutions can avoid the filter of culture.

Culture is a social narcotic to which practically all of us are addicted—we feel good when we belong to a group. Members of a culture will help to shape one another, and the culture in turn will evolve into a unique group of individuals who share certain characteristics and take some pride in being set apart from those outside the group.

(Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015, pg. 7)

How will persons outside of this exclusive culture effect the overall culture? School culture is comprised of all involved personalities, particularly certified, and non-certified persons. Yet, non-certified personnel’s (office staff, substitutes, and custodial staff) perspectives

are largely absent in school culture research. “Everyone has roles, responsibilities, and problems to deal with in the workplace” (Whitaker, 2012). The term ‘everyone’ should be inclusive of both certificated and non-certificated personnel in the K-12 setting. After a review of the literature on school culture, there appears to be limited information relatable to capturing the perspective of culture through the lens of non-certificated personnel, particularly in an at-risk urban setting. Cultures are based on a set of collective beliefs. In an effort to operate within the authentic confines of the definition of culture, all voices, all perspectives, and all narratives must be captured and considered.

Background

There is a distinct difference between climate and culture. Culture deals more with the informal conversations and stories that actually occur in the hallways and in-between classes among teachers, and not so much during formal meetings with administration that promotes a new mindset (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2019). Bruner (1997) explains that culture is a way of knowing and if we exceed what we know then a changing of culture becomes inevitable. Culture is viewed as how we behave. (Muhammad, 2018). Culture, derived from the Latin root *cultus*, translates to care. Daniel Coyle, author of *Culture Code* defines culture as a set of living relationships working towards a shared goal. It is not something that you are, but something that you do. A school’s climate, similarly, is both a window into its culture and a learned response that the culture teaches new members. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) provides ways to differentiate between climate and culture. Figure 1 displays the differences.

Table 1

Differences between Climate and Culture

Culture	Climate
Is the group's personality	Is the group's attitude
Gives Monday permission to be miserable	Differs from Monday to Friday, February to May
Provides for a limited way of thinking	Creates a state of mind
Takes years to evolve	Is easy to change
Is based on values and beliefs	Is based on perceptions
Can't be felt, even by group members	Can be felt when you enter a room
Is a part of us	Surrounds us
Is the way we do things around here	Is the way we feel around here
Determines whether or not improvement is possible	Is the first thing that improves when positive change is made
Is in your head	

Muhammad (2018) conveys the following definition of school culture generated by Kent D. Peterson (2009) who is an educational consultant and professor. Peterson considers school culture to be a set of norms, values, beliefs, rituals, symbols, and stories that make up the 'persona' of the school. "For years, we did not consider how the varied and diverse human elements from stakeholders—students, parents, and educators—impacted our schools. But we do now" (Muhammad, 2018, p.20). This definition is seems sound, yet it is limited at best. Stakeholders included students, parents and educators. Are non-certificated persons not essential

enough to be considered as stakeholders? Is it possible to develop an authentic, thorough set of cultural norms when there are key people who were overlooked or deliberately neglected?

Muhammad (2018) continues to share what expressions relatable to school culture by Kent D. Peterson. Peterson (2009) is suggesting that a positive school culture is a place where educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways. Additionally, educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in each of the students' abilities. Non-certificated persons such as office staff, custodial staff and front office personnel are ignored and not included in conversations that could potentially reveal skews in policies and procedures that support educators' confidence in student abilities.

When analyzing educational institutions, it becomes very apparent that meaningful and productive growth is primarily a function of the cohesion of human resources. Conversely, if human factors are unhealthy or not even considered, growth and transformation become challenging and fragmented (Muhammad, 2018). Unfortunately, many school leaders find themselves ill-equipped to handle the diverse aspects of school leadership, specifically as it pertains to developing a healthy school culture (DuFour, 2001).

The concept of change can be baffling. Change wears many hats. Change can sometimes be stifling. Consequently, change can also be invigorating. Change can drive people to work together to solve new problems, build new relationships, and even make new mistakes. Moreover, to change a culture is to change a part of the organization's personality. While attempting to change, mistakes are destined to occur. Positive cultures value mistakes. By contrast, toxic cultures attempt to obstruct change and hide mistakes at all costs (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

“Rapid change does not call for abandoning disciplined thought and disciplined action. Rather, it calls for upping the intensity to zoom out for fast yet rigorous decision making and zoom in for fast yet superb execution” (Collins & Hansen, 2011). As the public k-12 sector strives to operate within the constructs of greatness, intentionality pertaining to capturing the narratives and perspectives from non-certificated personnel—cafeteria workers, secretaries, substitutes (both long and short term), paraprofessionals, nurses and school resource officers (SRO’s), with a specific emphasis on office staff, substitutes and custodial staff—becomes imperative.

First capturing, then capitalizing on these necessary narratives does not abandon disciplined thought nor disciplined action; in essence it has the potential to strengthen both paradigms. Although toggling back and forth between the micro and macro lens will increase intensity yielding superb execution, the objective is not directly relatable to improving test scores, but to enhance the ‘whole-child’ and school culture inclusive of all involved personnel. Ken Robinson (2015) discusses how the concepts of alignment and coherence relate. He suggests that healthy systems work in a holistic fashion with each element sustaining the other. Education should work similarly. In a highly complex system like education, one constant risk is that the preoccupations of different interest groups become misaligned. In eminent systems, the vision for education is aligned with practice across all phases and all levels of the system which are inclusive for all personnel. After all, we are dealing with humans and not machines, therefore the coherence of their experiences must be highly considered. (Robinson & Aronica, 2015). Since our operating domain involves humans, how can we leverage these unheard voices, these missing perspectives and mindsets to strengthen the school culture learning experience for all

students or all involved persons? Bernhardt (2018) articulates that if we want I know what students, staff, and parents perceive about the learning environment, we need to ask them.

Statement of the Problem

When school culture is framed as something that is possessed, it becomes something that can easily be set aside or changed without influencing one's actions or thoughts. On the contrary, viewing culture as something one assimilates into makes it indelible and difficult to deny, alter or change (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2019). Many proponents that help define school culture, such as cafeteria personnel, secretaries, short and long-term substitutes, custodial staff, paraprofessionals, school nurses and school resource officers have long been excluded as influencers. The voices, perspectives, and mindsets of these important players in the school ecosystem are simply not being captured and have the propensity to impact student learning experiences and well-being in at-risk, urban environments. Having these voices go unheard potentially hinders or stunts the growth of the overall school ecosystem. These talents and voices are not leveraged in the space referred to as school culture. Bernhardt (2018) exclaims that our actions do not deviate from what we value, believe, or perceive. This further supports the possible skewness presented if all stakeholders perspectives and voices relatable to school culture is not captured. Perception data is important for continuous improvement because it can tell us what individuals are thinking. Bernhardt (2018) poses the question is it possible to change perceptions? The response is, yes. However the follow-up question that will lead to more discussion is how?

The most operative approach is through behavior changes. One way to change the population's collective thought procedures is to increase their understanding of the approach and create opportunities to experience it—exposure. “Awareness and experience can lead to basic

shifts in opinions first, and then changes in attitudes and beliefs” (Bernhardt, 2018, pg. 49). Another important way to change perceptions is through cognitive dissonance. “Cognitive dissonance creates perception changes when people experience a conflict between what they believe and what they, or trusted sources experience” (Bernhardt, 2018, pg. 49).

When pursuing cultural change, intentionality regarding protecting the most valuable people in the organization becomes priority (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). “It’s your job to identify and support the big producers—and at the same time, offer advice, training, or other aid to all of the less-skilled people who are striving to become better producers” (Whitaker, 2012, p. 95). In this regard the concept of a ‘big producer’ is somewhat subjective. How do you identify and support the big producer’s when the subject pool is incomplete? Who are we valuing regarding school culture? Who gets a seat at the table? Because we have failed to capture all voices, it is practically impossible to determine the most valuable persons.

Theoretical Framework

This study operates on a socio-constructivist framework that acknowledges multiple realities. To capture these realities, an exploratory qualitative case study was conducted in which participants were recruited to serve as interviewees in an attempt to collect perception data. Currently there is little to no perception data captured by non-certificated personnel and their perspectives on the construct of school culture. Once interviews were completed, two sets of coding occurred and research memos for each interview based on the codes were generated. The memos were shared with the participants for multiple reasons. Firstly, it allowed for member checks to transpire. Secondly, sharing the memos has the potential to increase the researcher’s reliability. Thirdly, sharing the memos could potentially solicit one more round of input and or insight from participants. Each case, moreover, was analyzed in cross-case fashion to determine

the significance of unheard perspectives and how they either aligned or worked contrary to current research relatable to school culture and other educational constructs. There are multiple realities that exist within the k-12 public education domain and unheard voices/perspectives matter.

Significance of the Study

There is a substantial amount of information pertaining to school climate and culture capturing certificated personnel's (teachers, instructional coaches, deans, assistant principals, and executive principal's) voice. While the perspective of certificated personnel is valued, valid and viable, it is severely restrictive. More research is needed to capture the voices of non-certificated personnel, which include office staff, substitutes, and custodial staff. Steve Gruenert and Todd Whitaker, authors of *School Culture Rewired: How to Define, Assess, and Transform it*, generated a school culture survey. The school culture survey is an instrument designed to be administered to teachers in a school to get a sense of how much their culture is collaborative. Although their school culture survey is robust and includes thirty-five items (See Appendix A), this seemingly comprehensive list is not inclusive of non-certificated personnel.

Culture specialists Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) generated the elements of organizational culture. Though there is no definitive list of elements that make-up a culture, there seemed to be a common thread of 12 elements specific school culture.

Table 2

The Elements of Organizational Culture

Vision	What do people look forward to
Mission	Why are we here
Rituals	Habitual Activities
Language	Local jargon, humor
Ceremonies	Glorified Rituals
Symbol	Tangible Stuff
Values & Beliefs	What's really important
Hero	Who are we proud of
Climate	The mood we are usually in
Norms	Unwritten Rules
Tools	What we use to get work done
Story	Myths passed on to rookies

This list was drafted solely based on certificated responses which is restrictive and partial. What other trends would have emerged had non-certificated personnel been included? If non-certificated personnel were given this survey, how would these elements differ? Would they remain the same? What new information would be acquired?

Summary

Culture is not something you are—it's something you do. Here is one of the most disturbing things about successful cultures. During moments of crisis, many are forgotten (Coyle, 2018). Front office staff, custodial staff and substitute teachers' perspectives and voices

relatable to school culture has yet to be thoroughly captured. To see a change in one's culture, we must start by taking small strides simply to be inclusive. It would be behooving to think of successful cultures as engines of human cooperation (Coyle, 2018). Dr. Spencer Johnson, author of *Who Moved My Cheese*, explains that *cheese* is a metaphor for what we want to have in life, whether it is a job, a relationship, money, house, freedom, health or a positive school culture. 'The More important your cheese is to you, the more you want to hold on to it' (Johnson, 1998). Once the educational sector begins to fully embrace the significance and potency of our '*cheese*', which is positive culture in this instance, the stronger the desire to acquire the missing narrative and missing voice of non-certified personnel. For we must recognize that old beliefs do not lead us to new cheese (Johnson, 1998).

The process to change culture by inclusivity of non-certificated persons will take time. Gruenert and Whitaker, authors of *Committing to the Culture: How Leaders Can Create and Sustain Positive Schools*, suggest that culture change takes time, but it does not always work. The rationale is for school leaders to not do the heavy lifting to change the culture of their schools. Leaders should operate as seed-planters and generate spaces for this change to occur. Most of the heavy lifting will be conducted by the few strong teachers who represent the future of the school (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2019). Additionally, other persons who occupy spaces in our educational institutions could assist with some of the heavy lifting. If the heavy lifting was better distributed and non-certificated personnel were included in the efforts to improve the school for the well-being of the children with whom they spend a substantial amount of time, it is possible that our educational institutions would shift.

This exploratory qualitative project established a clear mission and shared vision by collecting perception data by way of interviews conducted with non-certificated personnel—

front office staff, paraprofessionals and janitorial staff—in an effort to gain perspectives regarding school culture in urban at-risks elementary schools in the middle Tennessee area. The following chapters detail potent and necessary background research needed for this project as well the outcomes, limitations, and recommendations for being more inclusive with all staff, with a particular emphasis on non-certificated personnel.

In Chapter 2, triangulation surfaces when the collection of major researchers' ideas and or claims related to the topic of school culture began to communicate. There is a robust canvassing of what has been done thus far related to providing platforms to collect perception data from paraprofessionals, front office staff and janitorial staff concerning school culture. In Chapter 3, I give a clear rationale for the explicit guidelines and process of how and why I will gather, analyze, and conduct my research for the exploratory qualitative study. I will reveal in Chapter 4 the results from the exploratory qualitative study including the emergent themes and points of triangulation found after generating a cross-section analysis between the subjects, what they revealed and how that information supports or conflicts with major researchers in the field of school culture. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of my findings and what it all means. I offer a prototype that display key features related to school culture generated by the participants. Additionally, I offer a conceptual model to assist with decision-making—Fitzgerald Fuqua.

Research Questions

Creswell (2013) conveys that the intention of qualitative research questions is to taper the purpose to questions that will be addressed in the study. Research questions should be distinct and could provide an opportunity to encode and foreshadow an approach to inquiry. Research

The core of this study centers around the following key school culture questions, all aimed at uncovering hidden yet important voices from non-certified staff and personnel.

1. What is the current mindset of non-certificated personnel—office personnel, substitute teachers, custodial staff, and paraprofessionals—regarding school culture in an at-risk urban elementary school?

Driving the study to this single question will help the research capture these voices, analyze trends and patterns, and then recommend ways to move forward and leverage these voices for the betterment of the overall school experience for students.

Definition of Terms

Because definitions provide assistance with unpacking and unveiling words, phrases and concepts, it is essential to identify terms that may not necessarily be unfamiliar, but the terms may take on different characteristics when discussed within confines of certain educational domains. Furthermore, definitions provide an opportunity for oneness when discussing or reading about a particular concept. As we prepare to discuss concepts directly and indirectly related to our k12 institutions and the many factors that influence culture, it is important to identify terms in this context that will potentially strengthen the content and allow for a more fluid interpretive experience.

Inclusiveness: including everyone especially: allowing and accommodating people who have historically been excluded as because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>)

Belonging Cues: behaviors that create safe connection in groups. They include, among others, proximity, eye contact, energy, mimicry, turn taking, attention, body language, vocal pitch, consistency of emphasis, and whether everyone talks to everyone else in the group (Coyle, 2018)

Teaming: to form a team or association: join forces or efforts (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>)

Collaboration: to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>)

School Culture: a conglomerate of the beliefs and values of the groups they were members of; culture is who we are, not what we do (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2019)

Growth Mindset: Growth mindset is a concept coined and studied by Stanford University psychologist Carolyn Dweck, Ph.D. that refers to a person's belief in his or her own ability to learn and develop skills, regardless of natural ability, through determination and hard work.

Funds of Knowledge: The authors define the key term "funds of knowledge" as the skills and knowledge that have been historically and culturally developed to enable an individual or household to function within a given culture, and argue that integrating funds of knowledge into classroom activities creates a richer and more-highly scaffolded learning experience for students. (<https://serc.carleton.edu/resources/40768.html#:~:text=The%20authors%20define%20the%20key,a%20richer%20and%20more%2Dhighly>)

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

ASCD, Assessment and Curriculum Development, discusses school culture in this fashion. School Culture refers to the way teachers and other staff members work together and the set of beliefs, values, and assumptions they share. A positive school climate and school culture promote students' ability to learn. Similarly, school climate refers to the school's effects on students, including teaching practices, diversity and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Contrastingly, but with similar implications, the NSCC, National School Climate Center, articulates that school climate is based on patterns of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life. It also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. Peter DeWitt (2014) articulates that student climate and culture have a huge impact on student learning. He also suggests that school climate and culture is something you can feel upon entering an establishment. Todd Whitaker (2012) exquisitely differentiates between school culture and school climate. Before delving into the differences, it is important to note that these concepts have a direct effect on adult morale, student learning and parent involvement. Climate deals with the weather today, conversely, culture asked the question, what is the weather like over a long period of time? Climate deals with how school personnel greet and interact with the learners. Peter DeWitt (2014) expresses that when school climate is warm, inclusive, engaging and accepting, there is an increased chance that learners will attend school regularly

Positive climate and culture precedes instruction yielding and confirming that climate informs instruction (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). To inform means to give (someone) facts or

information or to tell. When considering the notion that climate informs instruction, there are two possible scenarios. Firstly, we need to note that if the climate is toxic, instructional practices will be contaminated. On the contrary, if climate is healthy and positive, instructional practices will be conducive to and for learning. Climate communicates with instruction. Positive instruction will never maximize nor manifest itself wholly until a healthy and positive climate is established and sustained.

Climate is the culmination of the collective attitudes of the members of a group (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Since this is true, individual classes have the unique ability to establish positive climate within the classrooms. When we fully understand how our own actions and attitudes could create either a positive or toxic climate, we then have leverage and can learn to circumvent those actions and substitute more positive actions.

School Subcultures

Another crucial aspect of an established positive culture and climate is the notion of generating a subculture. The subculture usually innately develops predicated on teacher strengths. Consider the following. There may be a group of teachers at your educational institution who are successful at arranging and providing after school tutoring. It would be advantageous for the administration to inform and encourage new teachers to seek out and join the newly formed subculture associated to tutoring (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Additionally, because subcultures ensure that multiple realities exist in any school, managerial control of the culture is bound to be quite limited (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). What this further suggests is that the control of culture is merely impossible for one person or even a small team of persons to spearhead and sustain. Furthermore, culture is generated and sustained by subcultures, which are engineered by the educators in the building. If you are interested in dismantling a culture within

a school building, encourage the development of a subculture containing your most effective teachers (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Because educators are the only one's engineering building level subcultures, the generation of subculture is, at best restricted and partial. Until non-certificated personnel is included in establishing both school culture and school subculture, our scope of both constructs are diluted. the way subcultures are generated suggests that even subcultures are limited and restricted at best due to its no inclusivity by design.

Anthony Muhammad (2009) conducted both formal and informal observations in 34 schools across the United States to ascertain how staffs and the schools functioned with their school communities and how their behavior supported or hindered change that could create more favorable conditions for universal student achievement. This study exposed a war of belief systems. There were four groups discovered and each of these groups possessed very specific characteristics (Muhammad, 2009, pg).

Table 3

Leveraging Subcultures: Adapted from: Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division.

CLASSIFICATION	STRATEGY
Believers	Encourage believers to engage in intellectual discourse with those opposed to ensuring success for all students.
Tweeners	Connect tweeners with a stellar example of professionalism and grant access to that mentor on a regular basis. Connect tweeners to the school community.
Survivors	Remove survivors from the conditions that caused the depression until he or she can get proper treatment.
Fundamentalists	Clearly communicate reasons for proposed changes and support the proposals with empirical and anecdotal evidence of effectiveness from different sources. Create frequent opportunities for fundamentalists to voice their viewpoint. Extend a public olive branch to opposing viewpoints by encouraging intellectual dialogue about organizational goals.

“If you want to bust a culture, encourage the development of a subculture of your most effective teachers” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 20). Based on Muhammad’s discovery through his qualitative study, the best group to execute this task would be the group of persons who are identified as believers. Believers are educators who believe in the core values that make up healthy school culture. It is vitally important to be intentional about establishing and operating within the realm of positive climate. Until positive climate is engineered, instruction will continue to suffer. One of the many dangers relatable to a toxic school culture is that it encourages individuals to see failures as the inevitable results of circumstances outside of their control rather than as opportunities for improvement (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Steer clear of subcultures who function with this mentality.

Relationships

Rita Person, a former educator who unfortunately transitioned from this eternal place at the age of 61, shared some extremely powerful characteristics regarding relational components during a TEDTALK. She discusses the power of human connection and the value and importance of relationships. One of the most potent quotes from the TEDTALK exclaims, “kids don’t learn from people they don’t like.” This concept suggests that teachers, paraprofessionals, culinary workers, secretaries, and the custodial staff also do not learn from people they do not like. Moreover, we must stop celebrating failure. It is counterproductive to think that if one emphasizes failures that in turn it will inspire one to do better. On the contrary, if one is told what they have done right and/or correctly, it will inspire one to do something else right and/or correctly which fosters the notion of acknowledging accomplishment.

As we consider this construct of school culture, relationships are a vital component. Stephen Downes (2010) articulates that we need to revisit and potentially exchange the concepts

of providing and creating. Education is more closely aligned to something we create versus something that is provided. One question to ponder is what exactly are we creating and is what we are creating inclusive? Are all involved stakeholders benefiting or maximizing from what our educational institutions are creating? As it relates to relationships, typically what we model is what we get. In relationships, it is not probable to convey to others how they should behave. There is a hope that appropriate behavior will morph organically yielding the three most important words in education—relationships, relationships, relationships. Without them, we have nothing (Couros, 2015). Couros (2015) shares how Stephen Covey, a leadership guru and author of *The Speed of Trust*, explains how trust, which is a prerequisite for an authentic relationship, influences the performance within a business. This is also applicable to education.

“When trust is low, in a company or in a relationship, it places a hidden “tax” on every transaction: every communication, every interaction, every strategy, every decision is taxed, bringing speed down and sending costs up. My experience is that significant distrust doubles the cost of doing business and triples the time it takes to get things done. By contrast, individuals and organizations that have earned and operated with high trust experience the opposite of a tax—a “dividend” that is like a performance multiplier, enabling them to succeed in their communications, interactions, and decisions and to move with incredible speed. A recent Watson Wyatt study showed that high-trust companies outperform low-trust companies by nearly 30 percent!” (Couros, 2015, p. 69)

Couros (2015) encourages us to think about roles as educational leaders and the level of trust in our schools and districts. Consider the following questions exhibited in the table 4.

Table 4

Questions to Consider when Thinking about Educational Leaders and the Level of Trust in our Schools and Districts

Do people often ask me for permission or guidance?
Have I created an environment where risks are not only encouraged but expected?
How have I highlighted the great work being done by our school to others in and out of the organization?

These questions are directly related to the concept of innovation, but they are also important for the establishing of healthy relationships. In fact, relationships are crucial for innovation.

Another important aspect of relationships within a school is directly applicable to differentiating between a classroom teacher and a schoolteacher. Classroom teachers are those who do great things within their classroom and will do awesome things with their learners. Consequently, schoolteachers consider every student in the school as their own regardless of grade or subject. School teachers see things like supervision as a unique opportunity to mold and prune. Lastly, and the most important component is schoolteachers are willing to share their ideas which is what is needed to in order to build cohesive relationships (Couros, 2015). “This collaborative spirit is a trait that both teachers and administrators should embody” (Couros, 2015, p. 74).

Change, Process of Change and Human Behavior

Change is innate and will occur in every facet of life. Kotter (2012) explains that a current challenge in today’s society is that the notion of stability is no longer considered the

norm. The current stride of societal and technological transformation requires a relentless assimilation of new information affecting everyday life, nonetheless, change should not be dreaded. Aristotle frames it this way, “change in all things is sweet.” Growth, strength, and new opportunities are all indications of change yielding potential benefits. Because of the signals for change, frameworks have been created for providing a systematic approach to and for managing the process of change. One example is the ADKAR model which is used to understand change at an individual level (Hiatt, 2006). The model contains five elements that are referred to as building blocks. These non-negotiables must be possessed for change to be realized. Balestracci (2003) describes a similar four-step process to generating change at a personal level. The two approaches are compared in Table 5.

Table 5

Processes of Change

Hiatt's Process	Balestracci's Process	Common Themes
Awareness of the need for change	Achieving awareness	Awareness represents a person's understanding of why the change is being made and the risk of not changing
Desire to support and participate in the change	Choosing a breakthrough in thinking	Desire represents a personal choice and motivation in deciding to support and engage in a change
Knowledge of how to change	Gaining a breakthrough in knowledge	Knowledge represents the information, training, and education necessary to know how to change
Ability to implement required skills and behaviors	Choosing a breakthrough in behavior	Ability is turning knowledge into action and is achieved when a person demonstrates capability to implement the change
Reinforcement to sustain the change		Internal and external factors that sustain a change. Balestracci includes reinforcement in the previous

		stage and emphasizes the need for continuing training and feedback as does Hiatt.
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Utilizing a framework to drive the modalities of change is commendable; however, implementing a change solely because of uncertain or tumultuous events should be dodged. Change should be purposeful and methodical. Just because your environment is troubled by dramatic change does not mean that you should inflict radical change upon yourself (Collins & Hansen, 2011). Organizations that adopt a deliberate and purposeful process of change with “clear performance markers, self-imposed constraints, and within a proper timeframe” are more apt to thrive in volatility (Collins & Hansen, 2011, p. 65).

Resistance. Regardless of the degree of planning involved in implementing change, resistance to change is inevitable (Balestracci, 2003). Resistance is defined as a state of mind reflecting an unwillingness or unreceptiveness to change (Hultman, 1999). Human factors that can fuel resistance and an unwillingness to change include “fear of the unknown; lack of information; threat to core skills and competence; threat to power base; fear of failure; reluctance to experiment; and reluctance to let go” (Shen, 2008,). This is the rationale for many persons who intentionally or unintentionally resist change.

Because resistance to change is an inevitable aspect of human nature, change agents have the unique ability to promote an alternative approach to change. A change agent is best defined as one who organizes and influences people in a unique, personal way (Morin, 1975). One primary way of influencing people is by sharing unique perspectives. For example, Beenen (2016) recommends the unique perspective of viewing change as an opportunity rather than a threat. Table 2 illustrates the differences between viewing change as a threat and viewing change as an opportunity:

Table 6

Views of Change

Change as Threat	Change as Opportunity
Behavioral inhibition	Behavioral activation
Prevent losses	Promote gains
Avoid punishments	Pursue rewards
Prevent loss of skills	Develop new skills
Avoid failure	Pursue performance

Framing change as a challenge to be conquered rather than as a threat to be avoided can lead to success. In addition to promoting a change in mindset, change agents can tailor strategies to the types of resistance that can be encountered. For instance, if resistance stems from lack of information, use education to communicate reasons for the desired change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). If resistance stems from reluctance to experiment, encourage resisters to participate in the design and implementation of the change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). The individual needs of those involved in the change should be the driver of the strategies used in the change process. Questioning participants to generate insights and consider their unique perspectives can be an effective way to diagnose resistance and design solutions (Hultman & Hultman, 2018). There are many reasons for resistance to change and there are many approaches that can be taken to avoid stagnation. They all center on individual needs.

Education Sector. Change, coupled with friction and resistance, is a natural occurrence in all industry sectors and there is no exception for the educational realm. Change in education, commonly referred to as education reform, has taken on many faces throughout the years. Recently, education reform has centered around an adoption of more rigorous standards and assessments as well as greater accountability for teachers and schools. Similar to past changes, current changes have triggered much discussion and examination.

To provide order and focus when undergoing change, educators can embrace a collaborative model referred to as a professional learning community (PLC). Although there are different variations, the overarching idea of a PLC is to promote educators working together to implement necessary change. DuFour declares that initiating and sustaining a PLC "requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement" (Dufour, 2004). Maintaining a focus on student learning can be a nucleus for accomplishing meaningful change.

By placing student learning at the center of its work, a PLC can streamline efforts to meet the needs of individual learners. Posing purposeful questions is an avenue for accomplishing such a feat. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos (2016) offer four specific questions that can be used by a PLC to drive its work:

- (1) What knowledge, skills, and dispositions should every student acquire as a result of this unit, this course, or this grade level?
- (2) How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?
- (3) How will we respond when some students do not learn?
- (4) How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient? (p. 36).

These four questions not only promote clarity for accomplishing the goal but also encourage flexibility. Crafting and implementing a plan to respond when some students do not learn and extending learning for those who are proficient is pliable based on real-time data from students themselves. Rather than waiting until the end of the year to make necessary adjustments, PLC team members can continually seek feedback, monitor and adjust plans as they are being

implemented (Eaker, R., & Keating, J., 2012, p. 131). The PLC framework can provide order and focus in a changing environment through collaboration and purposeful questions.

In addition to using approaches specific to each educator classification, effective strategies can also be implemented that are applicable to all groups. Celebrations and professional development opportunities are great examples. Anthony Muhammad asserts that “celebration in school provides consistent reinforcement about what is important” (Muhammad, 2018). When leaders take time to celebrate achievements and remind one another of their purpose and priorities, educators are more likely to embrace the purpose and change involved (DuFour et al., 2016). Professional development can also be used to provide support for all types of educators. “The quality of student learning is directly linked to the quality of adult learning” (Eaker & Keating, 2012). High quality professional development can help teachers keep abreast of effective strategies for managing inevitable change.

How to change

“What if you were given that choice? For real. What if it weren’t just the hyperbolic rhetoric that conflates corporate performance with life or death?” Alan Deuschaman (2007) conveys the three keys to change often referred to as the three R’s— relate, repeat, refrain. “These are the three keys to change: relate, repeat, and reframe. New hope, new skills, and new thinking.” Please see table 7 for additional details.

Table 7

Three Keys to Change

Relate	You form a new, emotional relationship with a person or community that inspires and sustains hope. If you face a situation that a reasonable person would consider
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	<p>“hopeless,” you need the influence of seemingly “unreasonable” people to restore your hope—to make you believe that you can change and expect that you will change. This is an act of persuasion—really, it’s “selling.” The leader or community has to sell you on yourself and make you believe you have the ability to change. They have to sell you on themselves as your partners, mentors, role models, or sources of new knowledge. And they have to sell you on the specific methods or strategies that they employ.</p>
Repeat	<p>The new relationship helps you learn, practice, and master the new habits and skills that you’ll need. It takes a lot of repetition over time before new patterns of behavior become automatic and seem natural—until you act the new way without even thinking about it. It helps tremendously to have a good teacher, coach, or mentor to give you guidance, encouragement, and direction along the way. Change does not involve just “selling”; it requires “training.”</p>
Refrain	<p>The new relationship helps you learn new ways of thinking about your situation and your life. Ultimately, you look at the world in a way that would have been so foreign to you that it wouldn’t have made any sense before you changed.</p>

Flow, deemed as the secret of happiness, discussed very eloquently by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), directly relates to how and why one should change. Sir Ken Robinson (2015) explains how it feels to experience and operate within the constructs of flow. There were two very explicit by-products of operating within the state of flow. Firstly, when one experiences flow, there is a complete immersion in what one is doing. Although not an exhaustive list, some examples fall within the domains of reading, writing, singing, studying, performing, and organizing. Secondly, when one is in the barometers of flow, the state of ecstasy is reached.

Ecstasy is defined as an overwhelming feeling of great happiness or joyful excitement. In flow, one possesses a great inner clarity and a knowing that whatever is being done can be executed with finesse and accomplished. Additionally, one will experience tranquility with the restrictions relatable to time being obsolete. To feel the state of flow, intrinsic motivation will permanent the walls of one's inner being.

Flow is considered one of the contributors to living a life worth living. Let us consider the musical composer who does not need to travel anywhere physically to achieve this state of flow but can achieve this space only with his or her mind, paper, pencil and music notation. The musical composer has entered a new reality all-the-while being in the same physical space. Flow is two pronged—it is something that helps others while simultaneously helping you and creating a happy space while doing it. Flow provides a great inner clarity and sense of serenity all-the-while timelessness becomes the new normal.

In efforts to adequately articulate flow using vernacular, the status educational utopia is what resonates. The article entitled, 'Uncommon Schools; Change History,' speaks on how all of their graduates are admitted to college. This is flow! The uncommon school offers graduates 250.00 per semester to buy textbooks and sends counselors to campuses twice a year to encourage alumni to stay in school and never give up on the dream of a college degree. Additionally, forty-nine percent of alumni from the classes ranging from years 2004-2007 have earned bachelor's degrees. This is another example of flow. Principals are responsible for instruction. Directors of operations oversee everything else such as budgetary items. The teamwork between these two leaders allows principals to focus solely on supporting teachers. This seems to be the epitome of flow.

A personal reflection of flow looks a bit differently predicated on my current role. Our district recently implemented effective programming. The name of the program is called M3 which signifies Modeling and Maximizing Manhood. There are three different areas of the program. The 'Young Men of excellence' serves the k-4 population. The 'Young Men of Valor' aids the 5-8 grades, and the 'Young of Distinction' caters to the secondary level. These programs are designed specifically to support young men in the Hunters Lane, Pearl-Cohn and Whites Creek Clusters by helping them develop positive self-esteem, respect for self and others, exhibit appropriate behavior, and enhance academic achievement by exposing them to positive role models, curricular and extracurricular activities, and other opportunities that foster student success. This program has enabled me to operate in the posture of flow regardless of the substantial amount time and effort executed to ensure a dynamic program. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) articulates that the most enjoyable activities are not natural, but they demand an effort that one is reluctant to make. Nonetheless, once the interaction starts to provide feedback to the person's skills, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding.

Specific Change in Relation to Education

How to Escape Education's Death Valley TEDTALK details the importance of change relative to education. By the conclusion of the breath-taking monologue delivered by Sir Ken Robinson, a sense of empowerment permeated both the psyche and the soul. The TEDTALK helped to unveil uncouth idiosyncrasies embedded in the fabric of public education. He first conveys information about resources and the substantial monetary distribution. Robinson suggests that money allotment for public education is not the overbearing challenge. Conversely, there needs to be a stronger, more intentional alignment yielding better usage of available funds.

He goes on to provide 3 principles on which human life flourishes: (1) human beings are naturally different and diverse, (2) human beings are very curious, (3) human life is inherently creative. Human beings are naturally different and diverse which caused a cloud of disarray when working within the confines of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Although NCLB is buried and the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) has erected, we are still experiencing residue from NCLB. Robinson speaks on how NCLB is based on conformity, not diversity which is arbitrary to how human life flourishes. Ken eloquently states that whoever created the name, NCLB gets irony. He continues to say that there were millions of children left behind and all resources are going in the wrong direction.

“Curiosity is the engine of achievement.” Good teachers stimulate, mentor, provoke and engage. If there is no learning going on, then there is no education for learning and education are two different things. It is very possible to be engaged but not achieving. Let’s consider a few different constructs such as dieting, teaching and the role of a teacher. It is very possible to be dieting but not losing any weight. Debra, a teacher 34 year old teacher, is teaching but if no one is learning, engaged in the task of teaching, but not actually fulfilling it. The actual role of a teacher is to facilitate learning. Testing is what we have turned to although it should not be the dominant culture; Standardized test should be diagnostic.

Sir Ken Robinson (2015) erects another very potent concept differentiating between dead and dormant. Without a close examination and thorough critique, something that is dormant will and can appear dead. This concept seems to be prevalent in many of our schools. Too often, creativity is suffocated due to the antiquated system. It would behoove us to move from the mechanical system that our current education system mirrors to a more humanistic system. Afterall, we are dealing with human beings. It is time to move from engaging to achieving.

Although this process will take some work, the rudiments have been laid. We must embrace diversity, give attention to one's curiosity, and stimulate one's creativity.

Human life is inherently creative. We should create space to awaken and develop these powers of creativity. Contrary to popular belief, teaching is an extremely high status. Education is not a mechanical system; it is a human system all about people. The authentic role of leadership is climate control. Individuals operate at maximum output at different climates. Some flourish when they are mentally warm. Others makes advancement when they are mentally cold. Benjamin Franklin conveys the concept that there are three types of people: Persons who are immovable, individuals who are movable and those who actual move.

Systems Theory and Change (Organizational Culture)

As we embark upon systems theory and change, the conception of front-line autonomy begins to emerge. Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company and chief developer of the assembly line technique of mass production, use to express that he wanted his employees' hands, but not their minds. Retailing operated similarly through the nineties. On the contrary, Best Buy provides an illustration for how to change the primitive constructs associated with organizational culture. 'Line-level employees at Best Buy can now have access to the same kind of knowledge as the CEO, but they also have access to knowledge the CEO doesn't have because of their direct contact with customers" (Wagner, 2012, p.233). How often in our traditional K-12 settings are district level personnel uniformed due to the disruption in the trickle-down process from state officials? Since clear messaging was not dispensed from state officials to district level persons, communication to building level persons only gets more convoluted. To change educational systems, accessibility becomes the conduit to achieve this construct. "Most people have something unique to contribute to the workplace, but it takes the right environment and

leadership. You have to engineer the business around the individual who works for you, rather than around the system you use” (Wagner, 2012, p. 233).

Front line autonomy tightly coincides with the concept framed by Mitchel Resnick (2017) pertaining to ‘open knowledge-building community.’ The company LEGO collaborated with the MIT research group. During one meeting with top LEGO executives to review the plans and strategies for the software, it was suggested that the LEGO Group allow other people and organizations to develop an alternative programming for one of the recently assembled kits. This sent a negative surge through the LEGO executives. One of them even posed the following question. “What if someone develops software that’s better than ours” (Resnick, 2017, p. 100)? This type of mindset must be dismantled for systems and theories to be changed. “Openness can enhance creativity in many different ways—not just for organizations like the LEGO Group, but also for individuals” (Resnick, 2017, p.100). This way of thinking promotes a culture of caring. Mitchel Resnick frames a culture of caring as an environment where community members respect one another, support one another and care about one another.

1st/2nd/3rd Order Changes

“Group culture is one of the most powerful forces on the planet” (Coyle, 2018, p.xviii). We experience its presence within successful business, championships teams and flourishing families. Consequently, we also sense when this notion of positive group culture is absent or toxic. Daniel Coyle spent years visiting and researching eight of the world’s most successful entities. Some of these groups were special-ops military units, an inner-city school, a professional basketball team, a movie studio, a comedy troupe, a gang of jewel thieves and others. The most prominent theme revealed is that cultures are created by a specific set of skills. Individual skills are not what matters. “What matters is the interaction” (Coyle, 2018, p. xvii).

When considering systemic change there are first, second and third order changes, referred to as skills one, two and three by Daniel Coyle (Coyle, 2018).

The first order change or skill one deals with the capacity to *build safety*. Building safety explores how signals of connectivity generate bonds of belonging and identity. There is a strong inclination to think that group performance is solely predicated on measurable abilities such as intellect, skill, and experience. Coyle's study conveyed that the miniscule and subtle behaviors were the most impactful. Let's assume, anytime there was conflict, leaders executed in the following ways. Firstly, the response was always conveyed with warmth which deflected the negativity and made what seemed to be unstable situations feel solid and safe. Secondly, the leader would pivot and pose simplistic questions that shifted the focus and hooked other team members. Essentially, an atmosphere of safety was generated and established (Coyle, 2018). Ron Clark (2015) provides instruction on how to accelerate your system. One simple construct state that one must learn to ask for help.

“Don't be afraid to ask for direction when you need it. I think sometimes employees fall into this trap of thinking they must prove themselves by demonstrating they have all the answers—and that translates into being afraid to ask for help, even when they don't know what to do next” (Clark, 2015, p. 61).

Creating a domain of safety is a prerequisite for being able to unapologetically pose questions. Groups are successful not because its members are smarter but because they experience an atmosphere of safety.

Another aspect directly related to safety is belonging cues. Belonging cues are defined as behaviors that create safe connections in groups. Some of these behaviors include proximity, eye

contact, energy, turn taking, attention, body language, vocal pitch, consistency of emphasis, and whether everyone talks to everyone else in the group. Belonging cues envelopment three primary qualities. They are energy, individualization, and future orientation. Energy refers to the investment in the exchange that is occurring. Individualization means that persons are treated uniquely and with value. Lastly, future orientation gives the experience and signalization that the relationship will endure. These belonging cues promote the overall messaging that *you are safe*. “When we see people in our peer group play with an idea, our behavior changes. That is how intelligence is created. That is how culture is created” (Coyle, 2018, p.15).

Once you have established a safe place, the second order change or skill two deals with *shared vulnerability*. There are a series of small humble exchanges that can unlock a group’s ability to execute with fidelity. Three poignant questions help drive this work. (1) Anybody have any ideas? (2) Tell me what you want. (3) I will help you. These three questions go against instinct but births the concept of sharing vulnerability. When we observe highly cohesive groups in action, we will recognize many moments of fluid, trusting cooperation. “Without communication or planning, the group starts to move and think as one; finding its way through the obstacle in the same way that a school fish finds its way through a coral reef” (Coyle, 2018).

“Leaders can be forgiven for many mistakes as long as their colleagues trust them.” (Reeves, 2016, p.23). There is a strong positive correlation between trust and shared vulnerability. Building leadership trust starts with personal trustworthiness. Doug Reeves identifies three qualities leaders must embrace to establish and build personal trust. (1) Leaders must do what they say they will do. When leaders do what they say they will do, their actions speak for themselves. (2) Leaders must acknowledge mistakes quickly and openly. Building personal trust is not a by-product of leadership perfection but about openly admitting and

learning from mistakes in a public manner. Richard Elmore (2011) suggests ways that every educational leader can build trust with all involved personnel. (3) Leaders must confront conflicts between personal values and the professional environment. Leaders can build personal trust by confronting people who conflict with their values and having the courage and tenacity to address problematic situations (Reeves, 2016).

One interesting thing about shared vulnerability is it is sometimes awkward and painful, yet the interactions generate the highly cohesive, trusting behavior necessary for smooth cooperation. Coyle (2018) conveys that we intuitively know that vulnerability tends to spark cooperation and trust. “Trust does not require perfection. Instead, it acknowledges our imperfections in a manner that shows authenticity” (Reeves, 2016, p. 29). “The characteristics pertaining to cooperation can be summed up as follows: exchanges of vulnerability, which we have a natural tendency to avoid, are the pathways through which trusting cooperation is built. The mechanism of cooperation can be summed up as follows: exchanges of vulnerability, which we naturally tend to avoid, are the pathways through which trusting cooperation is built (Coyle 2018).

Building positive habits of group vulnerability is similar to building a muscle. It takes time, repetition and the willingness to feel pain in order to achieve gains. In order for our systems to be transformed, the following characterizes must be considered (Coyle, 2018). The specifics can be viewed in table 8.

Table 8

In order for Systems to be transformed, Consideration of these Characteristics are Necessary

Make sure the leader is vulnerable first and often
Over communicate expectations
Deliver the negative stuff in person
When forming new groups, focus on two critical moments <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the first vulnerability 2. the first disagreement
Listen like a trampoline: good listening is about more than nodding attentively; it's about adding insight and creating moments of mutual discovery.
In Conversation, resist the temptation to reflexively add value
Aim for Cando; Avoid Brutal Honesty
Embrace the discomfort
Align language with action
Build a wall between performance review and professional development
Use flash mentoring
Make the leader occasionally disappear

Once a domain of safeness has been established and shared vulnerability becomes a necessary part of the fabric, the third and final order changes or skill set three deals with *establishing purpose*. How can a few basic, straightforward sentences make such a difference in a group's behavior? When Daniel Coyle (2018) visited successful groups, he noticed that whenever communication went forth pertaining to their groups purpose or values they were as

subtle as a punch in the nose. The typical expectation for most groups is to fill their surroundings with a few reminders of their mission and/or purpose. Groups observed by Daniel Coyle vastly exceeded the expectation of minimally displaying the company's purpose. Groups who should know what they stand for, devote a substantial amount of time articulating their own story and reminding others what they stand for is a sign that purpose is not clearly established.

“Purpose isn't about tapping into some mystical internal drive but rather about creating simple beacons that focus attention and engagement on the shared goal. Successful cultures do this by relentlessly seeking ways to tell and retell their story. To do this, they build what we all call high-purpose environment” (Coyle, 2018, p. 180).

High purpose environments are occupied with small, vivid signals designed to create linkage between the present moment and the future ideal. This type of environment provides answers for the following statements: 'here is where we are' and 'here is where we want to go.'

Another phenomenon that aids in establishing purpose is called mental contrasting. Gabriele Oettingen (2014), a psychology professor, is credited for discovering that this method works simply because it triggers significant changes in behavior and motivation. Many have classified this as the most basic psychological experiment of all time (Coyle, 2018). Table 8 shows information pertaining to mental contrasting.

Table 8

Mental Contrasting

Step 1: Think about a realistic goal that you'd like to achieve. It could be anything: Become skilled at a sport, rededicate yourself to a relationship, lose a few pounds, get a new. Spend a
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few seconds reflecting on that goal and imagining that it's come true. Picture a future where you've achieved it.

Step 2: Take a few seconds and picture the obstacles between you and that goal is vividly as possible. Don't gloss over the negatives but try to see them as they truly are. For examples, if you weret trying t lose weight, you might picture those moments of weakness when you smell warm cookies, and you devide to eat one (or three).

Mental contrasting is also credited for improving the ability to interact positively with strangers, negotiate deals, speak in public, manage time, improve communication and perform a range of other skills. Oettingen wrote, "The conjoint elaboration of the future and the present reality makes both simultaneously accessible and links them together in the sense that the reality stands in the way of realizing the desired future" (Coyle, 2018, p. 182).

Coyle (2018) further explains that teams, who have effectively established purpose, operate via a signaling mechanism, which consists of five types. Table 9 displays the corresponding information.

Table 9

Signaling Mechanisms for Teams who have Effectively Established Purpose

<u>Types of Signals</u>	<u>Successful</u>	<u>Unsuccessful</u>
Framing	Successful teams conceptualized MICS as a learning experience that would benefit patients and the hospital.	Unsuccessful teams conceptualized MICS as an add-on to existing practices.

Roles	Successful teams were explicitly told by the team leader why their individual and collective skills were important for the team's success, and why it was important for them to perform as a team.	Unsuccessful teams were not
Rehearsal	Successful teams did not elaborate dry runs of the procedure, preparing in detail, explaining the new protocols, and talking about communication	Unsuccessful teams took minimal steps to prepare
Explicit encouragement to speak up	Successful teams were told by team leaders to speak up if they saw a problem; they were actively coached through the feedback process.	The leaders of unsuccessful teams did little coaching, and as a result team member were hesitant to speak up
Active Reflection	Between surgeries, successful teams went over performance, discussed future cases, and suggested improvements. For example, the team leader at	Unsuccessful teams tended not to do this.

	<p>Mountain Medical wore a head-mounted camera during survey to help facilitate discussion and feedback.</p>	
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It is important to notice which factors are not on the list: experience, surgeon status, and organization support. These qualities mattered far less than the simple, steady pulse of real-time signals that channeled attention towards the larger goal (Coyle, 2018). Nevertheless, they all performed the same vital function which is to inundate the environment with narrative connectors between what they were doing now and what it meant” (Coyle, 2018). Establishing purposes in a creative group is not about generating moments of brilliance yielding breakthroughs but rather building systems that can agitate a plethora of ideas in order to birth the right choices.

Specific to Change in Education

As we continue to delve into this area of change directly relatable to education, we must acknowledge that human organizations are not like mechanisms (Robinson, K. & Aronica, L. (2015). A mechanism is defined as a system of parts working together in a machine. Our educational system is comprised of people, not machines. Human organizations are more like organisms with each possessing its own distinct personality. Ken Robinson shares a distinction between habits and habitats that correspond to the specific change or lack of change in our educational institutions. In an earnest effort to change education, we must analyze the two concepts and determine how they affect each other. A habit is viewed as a settled or regular tendency or practice, particularly one that is extremely difficult to give up. All educational

institutions advertently and inadvertently establish routines and procedures which are needed. Consequently, the challenge arises when procedures become permanent, and the school community disconnects from its authentic purpose. Winston Churchill once exclaimed, “We shape our buildings, and afterward our buildings shape us.” One vital element we should take into consideration related to transforming our educational system is the challenging of the accepted behavior in our school’s community.

Habitats is inclusive of the physical environment of our educational institutions. When considering a system change, the physical environment of a school affects not only how it feels but also how it actually works. Upon entering any school, there is an immediate experience of vibrancy or mundaneness. The tones and features of the physical environment exceed cosmetics. In *The Third Teacher*, Bruce Mau and a team of international architects and designers analyze the intimate and powerful relational components between how students learn and the spaces in which they do it. They display how a school’s physical environment envelopes the philosophy of the educational institution (Robinson, K. & Aronica, L., 2015).

A system’s change, in some capacity is predicated on the creativity of the leader. “The role of a creative leader is not to have all the ideas; it is to encourage a culture where everyone has them. From this perspective, the main role of a school’s principal is not *command and control*, it is *climate control* (Robinson, K. & Aronica, L. (2015).

Paraprofessionals

The literature regarding paraprofessionals has grown immensely since the mid 1990’s in the following ways. Firstly, literature is increasing our understanding of the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals (Carroll, 2001; Minondo, Meyer, & Xin, 2001; Pickett &

Gerlach, 1997). Secondly, literature is helping to mold the appropriate supervision and development constructs for paraprofessionals (French, 1997; Wadsworth & Knight, 1996; York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke, & Ghere, 2005). Thirdly, as with anything in education, adequate is necessary for the ongoingness of any role. The literature has assisted with determining paraprofessional support for students (Freschi, 1999; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 1999; Mueller & Murphy, 2001). Lastly, the literature is helping to prepare licensed staff with suitable supervision practices of paraprofessionals (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001). Unfortunately, research gaps still persist relative to these areas: (1) the effectiveness of using paraprofessionals to improve student outcomes, (2) the ways in which paraprofessionals are best hired, assigned, and supervised (Blalock, 1991; Giangreco, Edlman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001) and (3) the effects of turnover.

If we pivot towards special education paraprofessionals, there is more attainable information regarding two primary questions. (1) What is the impact of professional turnover on districts, schools, teams and students? (2) What strategies do districts and schools use to attract and retain a quality paraprofessional workforce? It is estimated that approximately 290,000 special education paraprofessionals are employed in schools, with many playing an increasingly prominent role in the instruction of students with disabilities (Likins, 2002). (Ghere, York—Barr). Almost exclusively, these schools assigned paraprofessionals to programs rather than to individuals students.

An article titled, *Paraprofessional Turnover and Retention in Inclusive Programs*, conducts a study relatable to paraprofessionals and their various constructs. In this study, there was specific criteria that included three districts. The criterion for deciding on three districts was the identification of both an elementary and secondary special education teacher in each respective

district who satisfy the following criteria. (1) was viewed as effectively directing programs that supported students with disabilities in general education classrooms for most or all the school day. (2) directed the work of a least two paraprofessionals. There was a total of 53 identified informants agreed to participate in the study. There were six special educators, ranging in experience from 3 to 25 years, and 27 special education paraprofessionals ranging in experience from less than 1 year to more than 18 years of experience; nine special education administrators; seven principals; and four special education building coordinators or lead teachers. The orientation component consisted of all three districts providing a 3-to-4-hour mandatory district-level orientation that focused on general policies and procedures. It is unknown if paraprofessional turnover and retention were discussed during the mandatory district-level trainings, nevertheless, these items were detailed in other portions of the article. There were several reasons for paraprofessional turnover and retention. The main reasons were low wages and weak benefits (Ghere, York-Barr, 2007).

Perception Data

The concept perception yields context such as observation and opinion. Bernhardt (2018) defines perceptions in the following ways. Please see table 10 for detailed information.

Table 10

Definitions of Perceptions

A view, judgement or appraisal formed in the mind of a particular matter.
A belief stronger than impression and less strong than positive knowledge
A generally held view

A formal expression of judgment or advice
A judgement one holds as true.

Perceptions data are essential to and for the continuance of school improvement primarily due to its unique ability to answer the question, how do we do business? Additionally, perceptions can show where transformations are occurring in the school relatable to all involved persons with a special emphasis on paraprofessionals, janitorial staff and front office personnel (Bernhardt, 2018). "Common approaches to understanding perceptions in schools include the use of the interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and self-assessment tools" (Bernhardt, 2018). Interviews with individuals have the ability to provide for an in-depth understanding of an array of topics and content. In essence, the strength of perception data is rooted in this statement. We do not act nor behave differently from what we value, believe or perceive (Bernhardt, 2018).

Summary

As we continue to show the importance of inclusivity regarding non-certificated or less powerful members in our organizations, Daniel Coyle makes a staggering observation while conducting research. Often, the most unheralded persons are those who serve as the nuclei for success. For example, Thomas Keller, a chef who run French Laundry, Per Se, and other world-class restaurants, has become habitual with publicly paying homage to the dishwashers, often highlighting the fact that the performance of the restaurant is predicated on the persons who execute the humblest tasks. Urban Meyer, who coached Ohio State football to a national championship in 2015, used this same method at the team's post-title celebration at Ohio Stadium, which was attended by tens of thousands of student and fans. Everyone presumed he

would begin the celebration by introducing the star players who had led the team of success. Instead, Meyer introduced an unheralded player named Nik Sarac, a reserve defensive back who, at the beginning of the season, had voluntarily given up his scholarship so that Meyer could give it to a player who could help the team more. Meyer spotlighted Sarac for the same reason Keller spotlighted the dishwashers—Here is the unheralded person who makes our success possible (Coyle, 2018).

The literature review highlighted researches in the field that who directly or indirectly impact or have the potential to influence school culture in some capacity. The review also shows that there appear to be some educational gaps when considering non-certificated groups such as front office personnel or janitorial staff and their perspectives and/or voices associated to the construct of school culture. The subsequent chapters will outline the plan to create platforms to capture these unheard narratives and what emergent themes populated after analyzing the data.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This notion of change can be daunting. Furthermore, to change an institution's culture, one must be willing to challenge and nudge the components that frame the institution's personality. The overarching objective of this study was to create a space to purposefully capture the perspectives, point of views, and even ideologies of non-certificated personnel relatable to school culture. Information collected, analyzed, and aggregated from participants provided insight pertaining to mindsets of critical individuals who influence the student learning experience. This chapter provides a detailed blueprint directly associated to the qualitative action research design generated and conducted within this study.

Restatement of the Problem, Purpose, and Research Questions

We have yet to capture the voice, the point of view or the mindset of crucial players in the school culture who have the potential to affect the student learning experience and students' well-being. The three key positions focused on for this study are office staff personnel, the custodial staff, and paraprofessionals. Non-certificated personnel's perspectives related to school culture have yet to be fully captured. Neglecting these narratives potentially carries partial implications for school culture. Currently, these unheard talents and voices are not leveraged in the space referred to as school culture. As we strive to erect this new culture from non-certificated personnel, it is important to note that the effectiveness of a new culture is predicated on the strength of the people behind the change and the strength of the pre-existing culture (Gruenert and Whitaker, 2015). Keeping that in mind, how then can we effectively leverage these voices, point of views and mindsets to strengthen the school culture and learning

experience for all students? The concept of culture has the unique ability to represent the unwritten purpose of the school, yielding the rationale of why students, faculty and staff are present (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). If culture conveys the unwritten purpose of our educational institutions, yet culture is only established by certificated personnel, this suggests that our purpose is at best, fragmented and partial. As it relates to current contributing perspectives and voices that help generate the concept of school culture, are non-certificated persons not valuable, useful, sensible, intellectual, or meaningful enough to be considered as stakeholders in our educational institutions? Is it possible to develop an authentic, thorough set of norms when there are key people who were overlooked or deliberately neglected? There is a very unique concept framed as "funds of knowledge." This is based on a simple premise that suggests that people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge (Gonzalez, G., & Moll, L.C., & Amanti, C., 2005). If these constructs associated to the 'funds of knowledge' are valid, we deliberately omitting critical personnel who possess 'funds of knowledge. Let us consider the following research question:

1. What is the current mindset of non-certificated personnel—office personnel, substitute teachers, custodial staff, and paraprofessionals—regarding school culture in an at-risk urban elementary school?

Research Design and Procedures

This action research study utilized an exploratory qualitative inquiry case study and research design that sought to unveil multiple perspectives related to culture in an urban at-risk, elementary setting. When operating within the auspices of qualitative constructs, there are at least seven forms of knowledge-generating qualitative inquiry contributions. Table 11 details the information (Patton, 2015).

Table 11

7 Forms of Knowledge-Generating Qualitative Inquiry Contributions

1. Illuminating Meanings	Qualitative inquiry studies, documents, analyzes and interprets how human beings construct and attach meanings to their experiences.
2. Studying how things work	Program evaluations study what participants in programs experience, the outcomes of those experiences, and how program experiences lead to program outcomes.
3. Capturing stories to understand people's perspectives and experiences	An in-depth case study tells the story of a person, group, organization or community.
4. Elucidating how systems function and their consequences for people's lives	Systems involve complex interdependent dimensions that interact in ways that affect the people in those systems.
5. Understanding context: how and why it matters	Context refers to what's going on around the people, groups, organizations, communities or systems of interest.
6. Identifying unanticipated consequences	Leaders, planners, social innovators, manager, politicians, change agents, community organizers, evaluators, just to name a few, strive to attain their intended goals
7. Making case comparisons to discover important patterns and themes across cases	Comparisons involve analyzing both similarities and differences.

There is special emphasis on construct number three—capturing stories to understand people's perspectives—that directly aligns with the type of exploratory qualitative contribution used for the study. The sequence begins with some baseline information, which means that participants had to satisfy the following characteristics. Firstly, they had to be a non-certificated person, particularly in operating in the areas of front office personnel, paraprofessional, or janitorial staff. Secondly, personnel had to occupy positions at urban, at-risk, elementary schools. In sum, the narrative, which is well documented and well told opens the windows into the world of the case(s) studied (Patton, 2015).

Qualitative inquiry embraces collecting quotes from individuals, authenticating them, and anticipating what they mean. There are three primary kinds of qualitative data—interviews, observations and fieldwork and documents. Interviews include asking a series of open-ended questions and probing that yields in depth responses regarding people’s perceptions, experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. My study included generating memos from information collected after executing two cycles of coding. The memos were then given to the participants for review. At this juncture, they could affirm or make necessary adjustments as needed which has the potential to produce other emergent themes. Observations and fieldwork involve capturing the description of activities, behaviors, actions, conversations, interpersonal interactions, organizational or community processes or any other aspect of observable human experience (Patton, 2015). Conversations was the primary method for data collections for my study.

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material that make the world visible” (Creswell, 2013, pg. 43). As the researcher aspires to bring strength to non-certificated personnel, the prescription for making the world more visible will gain momentum yielding a more transparent depiction of the concept of culture in our educational institutions. Qualitative research is conducted when there is an overt effort to empower individuals to share their stories, provide a platform to hear their narratives and to minimize the power relationships that tend to exist between a researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Exploratory

The study is an exploratory qualitative research project. An exploratory study is primarily conducted for the following reasons: the development of topics, the development of themes and

for any type of potential subsequent follow-ups regarding questionnaires, additional coding opportunities and member checks. (Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln, 1993). For the exploratory qualitative case study, the initial steps involve interviewing specific candidates who fit the demographic of the study. The next phase highly involves the exploratory construct which produces potential themes about perspectives related to school culture from non-certificated personnel—front office staff, paraprofessionals, and janitorial staff—who all serve in at risk, elementary schools located in the middle Tennessee area. Although exploratory qualitative research worked best for my research project, there are some resistances erected by other researchers.

There are resistances to qualitative research. The academic and disciplinary resistances to qualitative research illustrate the political influences which affect the disciplines of qualitative research. The challenges to qualitative research are many. Politicians and hard scientists refer to qualitative researchers as journalists or “soft” scientists. They deem qualitative researchers work as unscientific and only exploratory, or subjective. This type of work is referred to as criticism and not theory. These political and procedural resistances mirror an uneasy awareness that the interpretive customs of qualitative research commit one to a critique of the positivist or post positivist project. Consequently, the positivist resistance to qualitative research goes beyond the “ever-present desire to maintain a distinction between hard science and soft scholarship” (Carey, 1989, p. 99). (The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

Hypothesis Generation and Theory Development

Even though descriptive case studies, also sometimes referred to as the exploratory use of case studies (Yin, 2014), are not completely barren of theoretical ideas and concepts, case study designs can be specifically focused on hypothesis generation or theory development

(George & Bennett, 2004; Mahoney, 2007), There are several different purposeful case selection strategies that possess different terminology. For example, Yin (2014) discusses critical, unusual, common, and revelatory case selection strategies; Flyvbjerg (2011) uses the terms extreme, deviant, critical, and maximum variation; Patton (2015) lists over 40(!) types of purposeful strategies; Gerring (2007) explains diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, crucial, and several other selection options. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) articulate that the determination for correct labels concerning strategies used is not that significant. On the contrary, it is more critical to ensure that the researcher grasps and comprehends the logic of purposeful selection for the use of an exploratory case study. (The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

Naturalistic Inquiry

Lincoln (1985) conveys that “naturalistic inquiry is an approach to understanding the social world in which the researcher observes, describes and interprets the experiences and actions of specific people and groups in societal and cultural context.” Naturalistic inquiry designs are valuable for exploratory research, specifically when applicable theoretical frameworks do not exist, lacks best fit, or are unavailable. This is also useful when there is limited information known about the particular group of people being investigated. There are several characteristics associated to naturalistic research. This type of research involves the study of a self-identified group who are aware of boundaries that set them apart from others. The objective is not to find a model case that applies and generalizes all findings to persons who occupy similar roles; on the contrary, it is to birth or ripen interpretations and local theories that afford and or promote deep insights into the human experience. The following are widely

considered indicators of merit in the design of naturalistic inquiry projects. Table 12 details this information (Lincoln, 1985).

Table 12

Merit Indicators in the Design of Naturalistic Inquiry Projects

Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good qualitative studies are time consuming. • Researchers must become well acquainted with field site and inhabitants. • Researchers must immerse in data analysis process
Transparency and Rigor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers must put themselves in the text, describing specifics about every component of the study
Reflexivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturalistic inquirers do not seek to attain objectivity, but must find ways to articulate and manage their subjective experiences • Positional reflexivity: researcher must attend to their personal experiences and describe how their own personal characteristics contribute to their interactions. • Textual reflexivity: involves skeptical, self-critical consideration of how authors

	employ language to construct their representations of the social world.
Comprehensiveness and Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick descriptions are typical of qualitative, ethnographic descriptions. • Effective reports incorporate multiple perspectives
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • researchers are expected to describe the steps taken to verify findings and interpretations • Triangulation, member checking and auditing used for verification
Claims and Warrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • naturalistic researchers ensure that their conclusion is supported by empirical evidence.
Attention to Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • researchers should describe the steps taken to protect participants from harm and discuss any ethical issues that arouse during the course of the study
Fair Return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming, not only for the researchers but also for participants. Researcher must examine what benefits participants will gain as a result of the work

	and design their studies to ensure reciprocity.
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good studies call for well-written and compelling research reports.
Veracity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings the setting and its residents to life • reading who have worked or lived in similar settings find the report credible because it reflects aspect of their won experiences
Illumination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeds mere description to offer new insights in to social an psychological phenomena. • Readers should learn something new and important about the social world and the people studies.

Naturalistic inquiry has the unique ability to provide insights that deepen our understanding of the human experience and generate new theoretical insights. For researchers, the process of performing qualitative research extends and intensifies the senses and provides interesting and rewarding experiences as relationships are formed with the participants from whom and with whom one learns. (Lincoln, 1985).

Informational Redundancy/Theoretical Saturation

Patton (2002) and Sandelowski (1995) are persons who have done research pertaining to the concepts of Informational Redundancy and Theoretical Saturation. Although often meshed as

one concept, these constructs are different. Information Redundancy and Theoretical Saturation is explained and/or defined the following way. Once you have reached the point when no more new information is being extracted or no new themes are emerging, Informational Redundancy or Saturation has manifested itself. Patton (2002) suggests that informational redundancy happens when no new information is available from newly sampled elements and the information provided yields redundancy. On the contrary, Sandelowski (1995) explains informational redundancy as the point when a researcher has seen and heard the same thing repeatedly. To determine if either construct is occurring would be to imply that data collection and analysis are coinciding.

When considering qualitative research, one's sample size is imperative and could augment data. Should your sampling frame be too narrow, you run the risk of reaching saturation or information redundancy prematurely, neglecting the richness needed to deem one's study effective. Sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too small that it becomes extremely difficult to achieve saturation. Nevertheless, the sample size should not be too large that it becomes too challenging to undertake a deep, case-orientated analysis (Sandelowski, 1995).

Context and Sample

This study took place in the Highland Hills Public School System district, which is the second largest school district in the state of Tennessee and the 45th largest school district in the nation. This educational organization prepares approximately 90,000 students to prosper in higher education, work and life. The large entity covers a substantial amount of terrain. It is evident due to this large district operating approximately 170 schools across a 520 square mile service area. The Highland Hills Public School system is nationally recognized for the following contributions to education: effective urban school reform, its commitment to social and

emotional learning (SEL) and increasing academic achievement. The Highland Hills Public School System is an urban district who specializes in delivering a great public education to every student, every day, per their mission statement. Their vision exclaims that the, Highland Hills Public Schools will be the fastest-improving urban school system in America, ensuring that every student becomes a life-long learner prepared for success in college, career and life.

The Highland Hills Public School System is split into 4 quadrants—northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast. The Northwest Quadrant is comprised of schools that fall geographically in the Northwest area. There are three traditional high schools in the Northwest region—Fairview High School, Carter Creek High School, and Vine Hill High School. Fairview’s cluster is comprised of four elementary schools, three middle schools, one charter and five none zoned schools. The Carter Creek cluster has five elementary schools, two middle schools, four charter schools and eight non-zoned schools. Lastly, the Vine Hill cluster, which is the largest, has seven elementary schools, four middle schools and three charter schools. It is important to note that all schools from the Carter Creek quadrant meets the defining elements of “urban” and “at risk.” All participants in the exploratory qualitative case study operate in an at-risk, urban elementary school within the Carter Creek quadrant.

Participants in this study all serve in the northwest quadrant in the capacity of an office personnel, custodial personnel, or a paraprofessional. Purposeful sampling is what was used to determine best fit for the exploratory qualitative research project. Creswell (2013) conveys that when the researcher considers participants in the sample, all of the individuals need to have something valuable to share about their lived experiences. The concept of purposeful sampling is utilized in qualitative research which indicates that the inquirer selects personnel and locations

for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem in the study.

The researcher presented the action research idea to purposefully sampled group and asked each of them to voluntarily participate. All 14 consented to participate. The table below includes demographical information relatable to the participants. Table 12 displays information about the participants.

Bernhardt recommends that one first should check for existing tools. “There just might be questionnaires already create that could be used, as is, or adapted for your purposes and uses. Always start with something existing if it meets your purpose. Creating a questionnaire from scratch is difficult and time consuming to do well” (Bernhardt, 2018, pg. 45). Gruenert and Whitaker, authors of ‘School Culture Rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it’ had an already assembled school culture survey. The school culture survey is an instrument intended to be dispensed to teachers in a school building to get a sense of how much their culture is actually collaborative. In an effort to make the survey more suitable for the researchers study, it was dismantled then reassembled. Using a basic labeling tiered system, each question was labeled with a check minus, a check, or a check plus. The check minus signified that the question was not worthy of being kept. The check meant that the question was average and worthy considering. The check plus indicated that the question was strong, applicable and worded in a fashion that could extract the most potent content. Please see the Appendix for a chart showing exactness.

Participants

Table 13

Demographics of Participants

Name	Gender	Years of Experience	Title
Iris Brown	F	5	Office Staff/Bookkeeper
Zelda Brown	F	8	Office Staff/Bookkeeper
Frances Brown	F	20+	Office Staff/Bookkeeper
Ophelia Brown	F	20+	Office Staff/Secretary
Grace Brown	F	4	Office Staff/Secretary
Emma Brown	F	17	Office Staff/Bookkeeper
Victory Brown	M	12	Paraprofessional
Vicki Brown	F	10	Paraprofessional
Yanna Brown	F	10+	Paraprofessional
Chris Brown	M	10	Custodian
Albert Brown	M	20+	Custodian
Brian Brown	M	3	Custodian
Debra Brown	F	8	Custodian
Jon Brown	M	3	Custodian

Data Collection Procedures

During the inception of the study, the researcher corresponded with all 24 participants using at least one of the following modes—e-mail, zoom, phone call, text message or in person. Following are steps that were taken to initiate the study:

1. Participants were given a copy of all necessary IRB paperwork, including informed consent forms.
2. Participants completed a school climate survey.
3. Time and place were solidified for interviews.

The main objective for administering the school climate survey was to tap into the psyche of the participants in hopes of gaining perspectives of their current ideologies related to school culture. The school climate questionnaire is included in Appendix B. The survey data was recorded on the researcher's password protected computer and coded by the researcher within three days. The researcher's aim was to gather the perception data in an effort to capture voices of non-certificated personnel—front office staff, paraprofessionals and janitorial staff—who all serve in at risk, urban elementary schools in the middle Tennessee area.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analytic process progresses from reading and documenting to evaluating and interpreting the data. The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information; seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study and then assigning a label to the code (Creswell, 2013). Prior to completing coding efforts, one page memos were generated from the interviews. Afterwards, they were given to the participants and this process served as member checks. This strengthened the study by allowing participants to see if the constructed memos matched what they conveyed during the interviews. There were 4 participants who wanted to remove mentioned items for fear of their identity being exposed. The researcher did adhere to the request of the 4 participants.

The first cycle of coding was in vivo coding in which terms and concepts were drawn from the words of the participants themselves. In Vivo Coding, sometimes translated as literal or

inductive coding, captures an array of behaviors or processes which will clearly explain to the analyst how the basic problem of the actors is resolved or processed and help participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself (Saldana, 2016). Survey responses, interview transcripts, observation data, and descriptions and analytic memos were all recorded chronologically by participants into Microsoft Word documents. Within the documents, the researcher generated in vivo codes which were color-coded by participant. In the second cycle of coding, the researcher used pattern coding which groups initial codes into a smaller number of categories. Pattern coding is a way of grouping those summaries into smaller number of categories or concepts. Pattern codes identify an emergent theme and pull together substantial amounts of material from cycle one coding to make robust units of analysis (Saldana, 2016). The researcher used Microsoft Word documents containing the chronological in vivo codes to create pattern codes for the purpose of deciphering participants' perceptions and actions throughout the study.

Summary

This action research study was designed to capture, utilize, and enhance the narratives from non-certificated personnel who have worked relentlessly alongside certificated personnel to ensure that the educational experience is maximized for our learners. Harry F. Wolcott's exclaims, "only understanding matters. We must not just transform our data; we must transcend them." While this quote contains powerful statements about understanding, before any of these understandings can occur, we must first, acquire. All participants— office staff, substitute teachers, custodial staff, and paraprofessionals—operate within the constructs of urban elementary school settings. The qualitative research design gathered data from interviews and surveys. An analysis of the data will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV:
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study generated perspectives from non-certificated personnel (front office personnel, paraprofessionals, and janitorial staff) whom all serve in an urban, at-risk setting and asked questions directly and indirectly related to school culture/school environment. There was a total of 18 questions posed during the interviewing process.

Table 14, Category I questions, deal primarily with the concept of school climate/atmosphere/culture. These particular questions were organically phrased to extract as much as possible regarding the school climate/atmosphere/culture domain. The nature of the study is to create platforms for non-certificated persons voices and perspectives to be heard pertaining to school culture.

Table 14

(Category I) Questions 1, 2 and 3 from Original Interview Questions.

1. When you hear the term 'school culture' what comes to mind?
2. How would you describe a positive school culture or atmosphere?
3. Describe what you feel and or experience when enter your school building.

Table 15, Category II questions, organically produces concepts about the notion of belonging and/or inclusivity.

Table 15

(Category II) Questions 5, 6, 10, 11 from Original Interview Questions.

5. How often are you included in staff, faculty meetings?
6. How often are you included on school-wide emails/email distributions?
10. Are you a part of any committees or leadership teams? Please explain your answer.
11. Are you included or involved in any planning for school events? Please explain your answer.

Table 16, category III questions, posed concepts about how non-certificated personnel felt their contributions added value or improvement to the school.

Table 16

(Category III) Questions 7 and 13 from Original Interview Questions.

7. How does or how can your role contribute to the improvement of the school environment/culture?
13. How do you feel your roles and responsibilities are relatable to student success?

Table 17, category IV questions, was relatable to respect and their relational components amongst families, teachers, school building leaders and non-certificated personnel.

Table 17

(Category IV) Questions 14, 15 and 16 from the Original Interview Questions.

14. Do you feel respected by the students, families, faculty and administration?
15. In your view, do teachers and parents here have common expectations for student performance? Please explain.
16. In your view, do parents here trust teacher's professional judgement? Please explain.

Table 18, category V questions, asked about the strengths and stretches of their particular school and what could be improved.

Table 18

(Category V) Question 18 from the Original Interview Questions.

18. What are the strengths of this school culture? What could be improved?
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Each category garnered different key trends. Category one—school climate/school atmosphere—was extracted from questions 1, 2 and 3. Category two—connectivity/sense of belonging to the school—was pulled from questions 5, 6, 10 and 11. Category three—contributions to the school environment—was extracted from questions 7 and 13. Category 4—respect—was pulled from questions 14, 15 and 16. Lastly, category 5—strengths/stretchers of the school—was taken from question 18. Table 14 provides the questions connected to category I.

Uniquely and unplanned, there were five emergent themes birthed from the original 18 interview questions. They are: School Climate/School Atmosphere, Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school, Contributions to the school environment, Respect, and Strengths and Stretches of the school. Table 19 details emergent themes produced from the interview questions.

Table 19

Emergent Themes from Interview Questions

Audience	Front Office Personnel	Paraprofessionals	Custodial Staff
School Climate/School Atmosphere	Transformative Transparency, Balanced Cohesiveness, Positivity Embracive	Differences establish culture Positive Interactions/ Countenances Validation	Morals and Values, Positives Dispositions Cohesiveness
Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school	Lacking Belonging (Not a part of Leadership Teams)	Disjoint No sense of belonging	Disconnection Lacks inclusivity Need based belonging
Contributions to the school environment	Tone Setters, Positivity Servant minded ensures success	Teacher Workload Reduction Need 'Meeter'	Tone Setting, Cleanliness Providing a clean, healthy environment
Respect	Respected, but lack of validation	Respected and Valued	Inconsistent messaging/communication Lack of realism

	Involvement, perspective, communication Authentic cohesiveness		Professionalism diluted by parental perspective
Strengths and Stretches of the school	Strengthening and streamlining communication	Harmony—Puzzle Piece Placement Invalidated Staff	Positive relationships Team building opportunities

Table 1 provides a comprehensive view of the audience or persons interviewed which included front office staff, paraprofessionals, and custodial staff. Additionally, the table includes the five emergent themes—school climate/school atmosphere, connectivity/sense of belonging to the school, contributions to the school environment, respect, and strengths/stretchers of the school—organically produced from the original 18 questions.

Analysis of Findings—Research Memos

Saldana (2016) conveys that analytic memos are comparable to researcher journal entries or blogs—a place to “dump your brain” about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by creating iterative process that involves thinking, writing and thinking some more. “Memos are sites of conversation with ourselves about our data” (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). “Memos are about creating an intellectual workplace for the researcher” (Thornbeg & Charmaz, 2014, pg. 163). One slant regarding this process was the memoing that occurred was not from the researcher but captured from the participants.

The researcher first recruited participants who aligned with the specific demographic needed to execute the exploratory, qualitative research project. Secondly, interviews were conducted. Thirdly, the transcribing of interviews occurred. Next, two rounds of coding took place. Afterwards, the creation of research memos for each interview based on information extracted from the coding occurred. The memos were then shared with the participants to have them complete not only the member check but also to increase the researcher's trustworthiness. Additionally, this process could potentially solicit one more round of input and or insight from participants. Lastly, emergent data will then be analyzed and included in subsequent chapters.

Paraprofessionals

A paraprofessional, as defined by dictionary.com, is an individual to whom a particular aspect of a professional task is delegated but who is not licensed to practice as a fully qualified professional. This exploratory qualitative study interviewed three paraprofessionals who serve in the elementary sector at urban schools in the middle Tennessee area. Paraprofessionals spend just as much, if not more time with students as licensed teachers, consequently, their voice and neither is their perspective captured nor highly considered as it relates to school culture. Paraprofessionals are critical to schools and assist in making classrooms more inclusive. Additionally, they provide another layer of support, not only to and for the entire classroom or one-on-one support, but to the entire school. A statement captured by an unknown author conveys the following about a paraprofessional. It states, a paraprofessional provides a shoulder to lean on, a voice to inspire, an ear to listen, a hand to hold, and a heart to care. From my experience, these attributes best encapsulate the heart of a paraprofessional.

Yanna Brown

Yanna Brown operates in the capacity of a paraprofessional. Some of the specific responsibilities of a paraprofessional include but are not limited to the following:

- assisting teacher with lessons and daily classroom activities
- assisting teacher with paperwork such as reports
- communicate with children and help them understand lessons
- prepare the classroom setting to promote a healthy learning environment
- ensure classroom safety standards are always met
- monitor children with particular attention to those with special needs
- engage with children to enhance learning
- Perform clerical tasks as required

She has occupied this position for approximately 7 years and works extremely hard all-the-while taking pride in her work. She works at an urban, at-risk elementary school in the middle Tennessee area.

Yanna Brown thinks about school culture through the lens of socio-economic statuses. She thinks of this notion of concentrated poverty in our schools today. When she looks around the school, she notices students who are depressed and although students may be laughing, many of the students are discouraged. If our school atmosphere were more positive, teachers and students would feel safe, wanted and valued despite their socio-economic status. Ms. Brown stated that she earnestly believes that ‘all students want to learn.’ Teachers should learn to nurture the students more and let them know that “other than their parents, someone other than them can nurture them and make them feel good, and give them encouragement.”

The notion of being disconnected from several operations surfaced during the interview. Yanna Brown is never included in staff/faculty meetings. She considered the disconnect to be restrictive. Since the paraprofessionals work so closely with the certified teachers, it is crucial to include paraprofessionals to hear and receive what they have to contribute regarding certain situations. Nevertheless, Yanna is included on school-wide emails which helps her to feel attached in some capacity. She is not included on any committees or leadership teams and neither is she involved in any student event planning.

Ms. Brown's role as a paraprofessional contributes to the improvement of the school environment by directly and indirectly supporting the classroom teacher. Paraprofessionals can add a component of balance to the educational atmosphere. Many times, the paraprofessionals can provide the necessary one-on-one time, tutelage and attention to students who might otherwise get overlooked.

As the interview reached the end, one final question was posed related to strengths and stretches of a positive school culture. Ms. Brown conveyed that the strengths of a positive school culture is having strong, positive teachers and very strong, communicable administrators. Yanna expresses that she feels "teachers are giving it everything they have." Some areas that would strengthen the school culture would be to provide some initial or additional training relatable to social conditions such as poverty in urban areas.

Vicki Brown

Vicki Brown, a paraprofessional in an urban school district in the middle Tennessee region, possesses a great deal of excitement and dedication towards providing direct and indirect support to her collaborating teacher(s) and anyone else who may need assistance. With

approximately ten years of experience, Ms. Vicki Brown has learned how to function with both finesse and fidelity in this unique role.

When discussing the term school culture, the following concepts surfaced. Ms. Vicki stated that school culture is the “whole school.” Furthermore, she proceeded to say that our differences also contribute greatly to a school’s culture. Although differences may be present, a positive school culture still involves robust amounts of empowerment and encouragement to and for all involved personnel. In positive school atmospheres, Vicki conveys “just everybody having a smile on their face and being happy, and you know, just being happy to be here to be with kids.” She goes on to share what she experiences upon entering the school building. “I feel at home. I feel like this is where I belong,” Vicki exclaims.

The next strand of questioning focuses on one's connectivity and other things directly and indirectly related to the school. When considering invitations to staff and/or faculty meetings, Vicki expressed that invitations were never extended to attend these meetings. Although, she presumably thought that these meetings were somewhat of an open invitation, the invites were more “directed towards the certificated staff.” As it relates to communication and messaging, “as a para, emails come a lot. Some of the stuff might be good to know.” As the interview proceeded, she was asked if she was a member of any committee or leadership teams. She expressed that she is not a part of committees or leadership teams. “A lot of them are more directed towards the teachers.” Vicki Brown is also not included nor involved in any planning for schools’ events but she would gladly accept the invitation.

One's contributions or the lack thereof can vastly impact one's view on school culture and the overall connectivity. Ms. Vicki Brown feels like her role as a paraprofessional is essentially to help students. Paraprofessionals are with students all day excluding lunch. Because so much

time is spent with the students, strong relational constructs are formed. This “helps them and gives them another person to be on their side.” Ms. Vicki goes on to express how she feels her role is relatable to student success. “We are here just to be an extra support for the student. So, wherever the student is, we need to meet them where they are and help push them to the appropriate level.”

The last emergent theme pertaining to school culture is associated to the concept of respect. The question was posed, do you feel respected by students, families, faculty and the administrative team? Her response was overwhelmingly positive for all personnel except families. With families, when something occurs, the “family is siding with the student.” From this point, most if not all dialogue is happening between the teacher and the family. “The para doesn’t really have that communication with the family.” She continued to say that it almost always felt like the classroom dynamic consisted of the teacher and a helper versus the teacher and a paraprofessional. In the absence of the teacher, things sometimes became such a “power struggle” between the families and the paraprofessional. “When the main teacher was out, the families acted as if we had no clue what we were talking about.” Ms. Vicki Brown suggested that some of the lack of respect could be remedied simply by modifying the way paraprofessionals are introduced during open house. Instead of “being introduced to the families as the ‘this is our other teacher in the room’ verses ‘this is the para pro or the assistant.’”

Overall, Ms. Vicki Brown thinks that, her school sees the child from the perspective of what they can first, then what would we like for them to be able to accomplish before being promoted. She is adamant that the character of her school is one that is inviting to both the family and the students. Our school is a very ‘homey’ place.

Victor Brown

Victor Brown serves as a paraprofessional in an urban, at-risk elementary school in the middle Tennessee area. He has been in this position for approximately ten years and works with a great deal of integrity, commitment, and compassion.

Victor's perspective regarding school culture involves the overall wellness of what is going on around him at the school. When there is positive energy and good collaboration with staff, faculty, and students you will have a positive school culture. He further explains that a positive school culture is present when everyone "is interacting with each other and everything is going according to the way it needs to go, as far as interventions with students, with the teacher, principal and staff."

As it relates to school and culture connectivity, Victor feels very linked. He is included in both staff and faculty meetings and school wide emails on a regular basis. He is a part of committees and/or leadership teams. There is currently a fitness program that is administered through the physical education department that promotes healthy living by eating appropriately and daily exercise. Additionally, he is also a member of the school care team and the school deployment.

He conveyed that he feels respected by students, families, and faculty members. Being an older gentleman, he almost feels and operates like a 'grandfather' to the students. The students are extremely interested in what he has to say. The families of the students feel confident and comfortable enough to converse about things. Victor shared that if he does not know the answer, he will lead the families to someone who does. He feels respected by all faculty members.

Because he works as a paraprofessional, he is exposed to all grade levels in the building which provides first-hand experience with teachers and how they respect him.

As the interview came to an end, Victor Brown discussed the notion of school culture being compared to that of a puzzle. Everybody contains a certain piece of the puzzle. It becomes very important that each person knows what to do with their particular puzzle piece. If you possess a ‘corner’ puzzle piece, placing the ‘corner’ piece in the center is not going to work. Mr. Brown states, “we all know our responsibilities, and that’s why it all works because everyone is doing their part.”

Custodial Staff

A custodian, defined by Cambridge, is a person with responsibility for protecting or taking care of something or keeping something in good condition. A janitor, defined by Cambridge, is a person employed to take care of a large building, such as a school, and who deals with the cleaning, repairing and other things related to upkeep. There were five janitors interviewed who all serve at urban, elementary schools in the middle Tennessee area. Based on information gathered during the interviews, both terms—custodian and janitor—are suitable for the type of work executed daily by these individuals.

Brian Brown

Brian Brown, who serves as a custodian answered most questions with confidence. Brian Brown’s perspective regarding school culture directly related to the type of personnel who works inside of the actual school building. When describing a positive school culture or atmosphere, Mr. Seats conveys that if you have kids who love school and kids who love teachers, positivity exudes from your school walls. As he discussed what he feels when entering the school building,

an instant shift in countenance occurred. A smile slowly manifested, and he exclaimed that he felt a sense of happiness. Mr. Brian Brown did not know the school's mission statement and there appeared to be a great deal of discontinuity and exclusion from staff/faculty meetings school-wide e-mail correspondence. On the contrary, he feels his role as a janitor contributes to the overall improvement of the school environment/culture by being a positive presence, particularly in this instance considering Brian Brown's stature and ethnicity, and by providing input. There are occurrences when Mr. Seats can get a child to comply and abide quicker than the classroom teacher is able to, more interestingly, he stated that some of the students look-up to him more than their own parents. It is delightful to know that he feels treated positively, welcomed, and supported at the school he serves. Another intriguing component is Brian is often invited to the classroom environment for reasons outside of his job description. Most of the visits include helping to regulate or deescalate learners who are elevated. Brian also serves as a football coach in the community; thus, relational constructs are established and provide leverage to operate in this vein.

Although Brian serves in leadership roles at the school, he is not officially a part of any committees or leadership teams. Due to the nature of his job description, he is many times included or involved in planning for school events by making sure configurations are in place. Because the attitudes of office staff, paraprofessionals and custodial staff are positive and 'wonderful' to him, executing is more enjoyable.

He mentioned the disconnect between parent and teacher expectations. He feels that some parents really do not care about their children's educational pursuit. Many parents just want the children 'out of the house' for the 'eight' hours during the day which gives the parents/guardians breaks from their children. Similarly, he exclaims that some teachers care very little about their

students and are only present to collect a check. He expresses that some parents refuse to trust a teacher's professional judgement. He has seen that parents side with their children before actually obtaining all information. It becomes dangerous to operate out of partiality.

Building level leaders do respect and value teacher ideas. He has witnessed challenges between students and teachers. Building level leaders always listen to the concerns and follow-up and follow through with fidelity and fairness.

Overall, he expresses that his school has exceptionally strong teachers, but the school would greatly benefit from an increase in male role models and teachers.

Jon Brown

Jon Brown serves as a custodian in an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. He has operated in this capacity for approximately three years. He possesses a significant amount of information regarding his role primarily because he works what is referred to as a swing schedule. There are certain days when he occupies the first shift which runs from 6am-2pm. On the contrary, there are other days when he works second shift which typically runs from 2pm-10pm.

Jon Brown had a very interesting perspective pertaining to the concept of school culture. He expressed “in order to get respect, you must give it.” This phrase is familiar but presented with a new perspective. Jon suggests that all janitors should be addressed by their last name coupled with a positive countenance including a smile. He goes on to further explain that when he is treated with respect operation at maximum output becomes relatively easy. He actually enjoys creating and establishing clean spaces for faculty, staff, and students, although mostly faculty and some staff members come across as condescending and oftentimes talk ‘at’ Jon

verses communicating with Jon. Because of this, he prefers to work on the second shift mainly because building level personnel are absent.

He discussed how he felt disconnected from the business component and/or operation of the school. A phrase captured by Jon states, “we all just have to come together.” This is difficult to do when there is no e-mail communication nor is he invited to faculty/staff meetings. He proceeds to discuss how treatment of janitors is predicated on their assumed age. For example, janitors who are older—late 30’s, early 40’s—are typically treated with much respect. In opposition, janitors who are younger—early to mid 20’s—are treated like ‘nobody’s.’ When asked about the attitudes of support personnel which includes front office personnel, paraprofessionals, and custodial staff, they all are overall, very friendly and keep smiles on their faces.

Establishing and maintaining a clean environment is the main connectivity to student success. Jon Brown conveys that, “you can’t concentrate in a dirty environment.” Keeping a clean environment, displaying positive dispositions operating as a united front would help to strengthen our schools which ultimately enhances school culture.

Albert Brown

Albert Brown serves as a custodian in an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. Mr. Brown serves as a lead custodian and has been at his particular school for 10 years. Mr. Brown’s perspective is extremely versatile seeing that he operates in the capacity of lead. Although the second shift is what Albert works, being a lead grants access to information prior to other custodial staff.

When you consider the concept of ‘school culture’, Charles Young suggests that much of how school culture is established is predicated on what a principal dispenses concerning attitude, energy, and witness. A positive school culture or atmosphere includes everyone’s voice. Everyone gets listened to regardless of the position. Albert articulates that, “everybody gets their input cause if you let everybody get their input, at least you know they have expressed their opinion and that goes along way.”

There is a sense of inclusivity relatable to staff/faculty meetings, school wide correspondence and planning school events or events taking place at the school. It is extremely critical to inform the lead custodian of everything associated with the school.

The custodial role is essential to and for the vitality of our educational institution. When educators enter school buildings and the edifice is immaculate, a positive tone is set. This allows school staff to start each day with a sense of freshness.

He is treated, welcomed and supported exceptionally well—“A plus treatment.” Because he is treated well, executing his job function with fidelity is not so cumbersome or becomes less ‘chore-like.’ A clean environment gets a better performance from kids. Once the learners start making the connection between clean buildings and responsible persons, mutual respect starts to form which then allows teacher to leverage Mr. Brown as positive reinforcement. If our learners are being overly messy, Albert can stop by the class to express his disdain for keeping an unkempt building.

Albert Brown expressed why he thought the school operated so smoothly. In all of his 10 years occupying this role and working with a plethora of administrative teams, he articulates that the current administrative team works and runs like a well-oiled machine. The only stretch

provided for strengthening the entire faculty and staff was potentially adding or increasing frequent team-building exercises.

Dedra Brown

Dedra Brown serves as a custodian in an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. She has operated in this capacity for approximately three years, however she has over ten years of experience of janitorial work. Dedra works what is referred to as a swing shift which signifies that she works some first shift time intervals and some second shift time intervals. This gives her a unique perspective regarding the differences and similarities between the first shift dynamics and the second shift dynamics.

Dedra Brown associates school culture with one's personal morals and values. She describes a positive school culture as being one where everybody gets along, and everybody positively communicates on a regular basis. Excitement fills her being as she enters the school building. Additionally, she feels safe. As it relates to knowing the school mission statement and the concept of inclusivity, there appeared to be a tremendous disconnect.

She adds to the improvement of the school environment by ensuring that the building is thoroughly cleaned and even providing cleaning supplies, as much as possible, when requested. Dedra feels she is 'treated good, fair and respected' by most. Sadly, there are some individuals who do not show appreciation nor use simple manners such as thank you.

Ms. Brown has recognized that there is a distinct difference between the parents' expectations and the students' expectations. She passionately shares that 'some parents are against the teacher.' It does not matter what the teacher is trying to convey to the parent, the

parent will continue to say that their child 'ain't wrong.' There rarely seems to be a win-win outcome which ultimately results in everyone failing.

Overall, Debra Brown articulates that she works at a 'strong' school and that the teachers really do take the time to sit and work with the learners. She also adds the administrative team is phenomenal. She loves the way the administrators 'talk to the kids' and how the administrators truly try to gain an understanding of the parents. Debra added that she would like to see more talent shows, pep rallies and family nights. This would help to continue to strengthen the school culture.

Chris Brown

Chris Brown serves as a custodian in an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. With two years of janitorial experience, he brings a sense of professionalism and excitement to the field. He primarily occupies the first shift schedule, which puts him in direct contact with school building personnel on a regular basis.

Mr. Brown's perspective concerning the concept of school culture is interesting yet plausible. He suggests that school culture is directly associated with strong leadership, fairness and student equity. When these components are present, all involved persons have a common goal to work collaboratively to assist both the learners and the educators with all tasks through a positive lens. Always dispense positivity. Because positivity seems to permeate the workspace, he feels great when entering his school building. He feels a sense of appreciation and belonging.

Contributions made by Chris relatable to the improvement of the school environment/culture are skills to 'keep germs down' by taking the necessary steps to ensure all areas are sanitized on a regular basis. Mr. Brown takes pride in his work. He expresses, "I always

think you should work with pride.” Because of this integrity, he is treated with the utmost respect and completely involved and included in everything going on at the school.

Chris Brown feels his role is best relatable to student success firstly by keeping a clean environment. Another important aspect mentioned is he adds positive reinforcement to the students he sees on a regular basis. As opposed to fussing or getting on the children, he does his best to encourage and inject positivity.

Mr. Chris Brown states that some of the greatest things about his school is the way that teachers work relentlessly to ensure student success. He gleans from how the educators overexert just to make sure students are successful. This encourages him to work more diligently to establish and maintain a clean, safe, germ-free domain.

Front Office Personnel

Front office staff consists of secretaries and school bookkeepers. School secretaries are very important personnel to know and to get acquainted with at the school. From experience, front office staff operate much like the nucleus of the building. Something else significant to discuss is, front office personnel are the first faces that anyone entering the school building will see, therefore, their energy, attitude and dispositions contribute profoundly to the perception of the school. Six front office staff persons were interviewed for the exploratory qualitative research project, all of whom serve at urban, elementary schools. Please see the table below to identify which interviewees are secretary’s verses which interviewees are bookkeepers. Table 20 provides detailed table differentiating between Bookkeepers and Secretaries.

Table 20

Differentiating between who Occupies Bookkeeper Positions vs. Secretary Positions

Emma Brown	Front Office Personnel	Bookkeeper
Ophelia Brown	Front Office Personnel	Secretary
Frances Brown	Front Office Personnel	Bookkeeper
Grace Brown	Front Office Personnel	Secretary
Zelda Brown	Front Office Personnel	Bookkeeper
Iris Brown	Front Office Personnel	Bookkeeper

Grace Brown

Grace Brown serves as a front office personnel at an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. She has occupied this position a little over one year. Prior to becoming front office personnel, Grace worked as a paraprofessional for several years in the school system.

Grace conveys the following message about school culture and its meaning. Employees or anybody directly or indirectly associated with the school or workplace influence school culture in some capacity. Furthermore, how these persons feel in that particular environment and how they are treated is also linked to and with school culture. Grace describes a positive school culture or atmosphere as one that promotes that feeling that it is ok to communicate without having to feel having to feel as if you are ‘walking on eggshells.’

When Grace enters the school building, she senses warmness. “Everybody feels friend and genuine,” Grace exclaimed. Even when things get a little elevated, one must learn to

navigate through that and learn to not take things so personal. She encourages others not to base emotions from what other people are doing, saying or feeling.

Grace exhibits this notion of ‘withitness’ pertaining to being completely tapped in to the school culture. She knew the mission statement and recognized and could explain with exceptional clarity ways that her role contributes to the school environment. She articulates that she is one of first faces and sometimes the only face that any person visiting the school will and more importantly remember. She discusses the importance of always having an appropriate demeanor. Being a front office worker forces one to be a conduit for tons of pertinent information. Despite the demands of the job she enjoys it and feels very appreciated and valued.

When it came to discussing the attitudes and behaviors of support personnel, the consensus was positivity coupled with strong relational components. Areas to target were excessive amounts of venting which soon grants you the title of a complainer. The second area deserving of some attention would be to help to establish more clearer boundaries. There is a lot of ‘lane switching’ that happens which confuses the students. There was a story shared that exhibited some of the lane switching that morphed into something relatively catastrophic simply because the learners did not know which directive to follow.

Overall, she finds a great deal of solace at her school. While there are many outstanding things occurring at her school, the one to strengthen the school culture is cleaning up communication procedures. Grace shared that “a lot of people tend to go to others about problems or things or conflicts instead of the person that they should take certain messages to.” Consistent, pointed, tailored communication is the remedy for enhancing school culture. This change can happen but buy-in is the prerequisite for this effective school level change.

Frances Brown

Frances Brown serves as a front office personnel, more accurately in the domain of bookkeeping at an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. She has worked in this similar capacity for over 20 years. She appears to be bright and meticulous concerning her work.

Frances Brown states that school culture deals with the atmosphere of the school and how well the involved personnel—faculty, staff, and the learners—get along with one another. A positive school culture is viewed as one where ‘everybody got along all the time.’ In a perfect positive school culture, there would be no issues. Everyone would enter happy, fed, ready to teach, free from all issues. Frances does love her job and when she enters the school building, she feels a sense of love and warmth.

Because she occupies the role of a bookkeeper, school functions rarely move forward without involving Emma Brown. She contributes to the improvement of the school environment by making sure that teachers and students have the materials that they need to get their jobs done. It is critical that “teachers receive the proper funding for material.” Although others consider Emma as firm, stern and unwavering, she is treated with the utmost dignity and respect. She conveys that everyone seemingly is welcoming. She is a part of the leadership teams and involved in planning school events. Ultimately, the financial decision-making process falls within Emma’s job description.

In conclusion, when considering the overall structure and strengths of Emma’s school culture, she relates it to that of a family unit. There are many students who live in close proximity to the school and many of the families know each other exceptionally well. Thus, the

family feel is already established in some regards. When considering the faculty and staff, everyone primarily treats each other with respect. She exclaims, “We may not all get along, we might not even like everybody, but at the end of the day, we respect each other.”

Emma Brown

Emma Brown serves as a front office personnel, more accurately in the domain of bookkeeping at an urban at-risk elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area. Emma has 18 years of working with the school system. She started as a part-time paraprofessional but for the last 10 plus years, she has worked as a bookkeeper.

When mentioning the term school culture, Emma stated that connection comes to her mind. Without positive connections with other persons or even lacking the ability to positively connect with yourself, school culture, at best is weak.

Because she deals with the financial components, inclusivity reigns. She feels her role as a front office personnel is ‘heavy’ and loaded. She exclaims, “if it wasn’t for the secretary or if it wasn’t for the front office staff what would the schools do?” Another aspect of the role that contributes to the improvement of the school environment and culture is you operate from a controlled perspective. There are never days that are the same, therefore, knowing what to expect has its challenges. Emma replies, stay controlled for you are the face of the school.

Emma discussed how she is invited to the classroom environment for reasons outside of the job description only when that particular classroom teacher is absent and a substitute can’t be confirmed.

Because Emma is a bookkeeper, she is a part of the school leadership team and highly involved in the planning of school events. Anything spending she does has to be directly related

to the learners. She takes her role very seriously and wants to make sure that the funds given to each child is being used in the most appropriate fashion.

One of the most jarring components shares information about building leaders actually devaluing teacher ideas. Emma conveys the following, “I have seen leaders use their power in the wrong way and it ended up doing a school a lot of harm.” This was all predicated on the fact that the building level leader did not ‘like’ certain persons in their school building.

In sum, Emma’s school prevails solely based on operating as a family. With family you have up times and you have down times but you remember the common denominator, our learners. She feels that faculty and staff go above and beyond to ensure that their students and families are equipped for success.

Iris Brown

Iris Brown works as a front-office personal at an urban, at-risk elementary in the middle Tennessee area. She has occupied this position for approximately three years and based on her perspective, she brings a great deal of positivity to the workplace.

When the concept of school culture was mentioned, Ms. Brown considered a number of constructs. Some of those were genders, race and poverty. She described a positive school culture or atmosphere as one where all involved persons make an earnest effort to ensure that all of students are on one accord and possess all the necessary tools in order to be successful. She feels that part of the reason why her school is successful is because of the positive atmosphere that is felt when you enter the school building. Iris Brown exclaims, “we’re all scrambling with the pandemic situation, but for the most part with the new staff and brand new environment,

everything is going pretty smoothly so I would think that everything right now is positive and everybody is reassuring that everybody is trying to be on accord.”

Iris’ connectivity to the school seems to be strong. She is included in all faculty and staff meetings. Additionally, she is included in all school-wide emails. Although she is not on any committees this academic year, last year she was a part of several committees and the leadership team. “Because I am the financial person, I was included to make sure that we had enough funds in accounts.”

As it relates to Iris’ contributions to the improvement of the school environment, her role is extremely critical. She is responsible for making sure that everyone gets paid. She makes suggestions to the principal and assistant principal regarding teacher incentives. Simply posing questions helps to tailor contributions. “At the beginning of the year and at the end of the year I ask teacher what do they need?” Because she takes the time to ask simple questions, respect is present and reciprocated.

Ms. Brown feels respected by students, families, faculty, staff and administration. Unfortunately, she does feel that there is always a mutual respect and common expectations between teacher and parents. Some parents are in total agreement with their teachers, but you have those parents who feel their children need special treatment. In most observed cases, the teacher is typically fair and correct.

Overall, Iris’ perspective is that there is a cohesiveness that seals the culture of the school. She conveys that one of the school’s biggest strength is this notion of intentionally functioning as a unit—a family unit. With any family, there are going to be some disagreements, but the mission is you must work it out in order to make it work.

Ophelia Brown

This vibrant, exciting, and robust interview with Ms. Ophelia Brown, who serves as a front office personnel, was eye-opening and filled with tons of pertinent information regarding constructs relatable to school culture. With more than twenty years of experience, she has worked in several capacities at the school level. Some of her occupied positions have been general school assistant, library clerk, computer lab administrator and records keeper. She is very knowledgeable and expresses a great deal of passion concerning her work.

When mentioning the construct of school culture, Ms. Ophelia immediately started talking about this notion of balance. In order for a school culture to be positive, strong and effective, Ophelia Brown exclaims, “everyone must be on the same level.” She further explains the importance of being “good to each other” and how that can really help to mold and promote a positive atmosphere. One main attribute to and for a positive school culture is the outpouring of love. She expressed that she feels the love when she enters the school building. Her school is a wonderful place. “A place I love to come every day.”

The next series of questions intended to capture perspectives related to how connected one feels toward the school building, staff, students, parents and all other involved personnel. Ophelia Brown is frequently included in staff meetings and school wide communications. While she loves to serve, she is not a part of any committees or leadership teams. Because Ms. Brown has a servant mindset, she is included in the planning of school events. She expresses that ‘anytime there is any type of afterschool event, we are always included and of course we volunteer and we help out.’

One's contributions is an important factor in determining connectivity to the school. Before one can establish purpose, one must first answer the question, 'What are we passionate about?' Ms. Ophelia is very passionate about her work. She feels her role as front office personnel can help generate a good school environment. She conveys that she doesn't mind helping anyone or anybody even if it falls outside of her job domain. She goes on to say that because she is treated very well and always feels welcomed and supported at this school, going above and beyond is seamless and non-cumbersome. Her role as a front office staff is to provide, share and spread positivity. "One thing I do feel, I felt that when a child walks through that door and they hear a good morning and a smile that start their day off the right way." We may never fully understand the power of a good morning or the power of a smile.

The next series of questions deal with respect for all involved persons. Ms. Brown does feel respected by the students, family, and faculty and definitely by the administrative team. As it relates to mutual respect between teachers and parents, Ms. Ophelia shares that empathetic educators will never have mutual respect problems. Empathetic educators acknowledge that every day is 'new.'

Overall, the school culture is strong because every day, everybody comes together as one and you must work in and with teams in order to be successful. She shares that there is power in 'one.' Any person who uses the phrase, 'it's not one of my kids' is a major part of why a culture functions poorly.

Zelda Brown

Zelda Brown has worked as a front office staff for approximately five years. Ms. Brown is responsible for overseeing the school's financial obligations at an urban, at-risk elementary

school located in the middle Tennessee area. Zelda possesses one of the most pleasant dispositions and works passionately to ensure that funds are adequately allocated to directly support student success.

Ms. Zelda Brown conveys that when she thinks about the term ‘school culture’ she immediately thinks about the things that actually occur in the school building and within the school day. She further expresses that transparency from all involved personnel helps to establish what type of school culture is needed to be successful. A positive school culture is best exhibited when teachers, and principals possess positive attitudes and have positive perspectives.

Zelda explains that there is a strong sense of connectivity between her and the school. She is included in many meetings because she is the bookkeeper thus orchestrating all financial school level transactions. Although a bookkeeper by title, Zelda considers herself just a ‘helper.’ Zelda articulates, “I help out in many areas, not just bookkeeping so if anyone needs help in any situation, I’m always there.” She is a part of various school committees and helps to plan events, particularly the financial components.

Respect is something very important to Ms. Brown. She does feel respected by students most of the time. When she does not feel a sense of respect, Zelda gives the ‘momma’ look and that usually resets and realigns student behavior producing respect. There is a high level of respect between Zelda and the families. She attributes this to simply knowing how to converse appropriately with other adults. Treating people how you would like to be treated still works! Zelda feels respected by all faculty members and by the administrative team. One concern erected was, overall there was not mutual respect between parents and teachers concerning common expectations. The primary cause for this friction or disrespect is due the lack of parental engagement which signals a huge disconnect.

In conclusion, having good teachers and generating a good, positive environment to ensure everyone's collaborating effectively is what it takes to have a positive, operative school culture.

Crossover

This section takes the emergent themes, the final cycle of coding and participants and condenses all information into one chart yielding a comprehensive data set. Please see Table 20 for the crossover.

Table 20

Emergent Themes from Interview Questions

Audience	Front Office Personnel	Paraprofessionals	Custodial Staff
School Climate/School Atmosphere	Transformative Transparency, Balanced Cohesiveness, Positivity Embracive	Differences establish culture Positive Interactions/ Countenances Validation	Morals and Values, Positives Dispositions Cohesiveness
Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school	Lacking Belonging (Not a part of Leadership Teams)	Disjoint No sense of belonging	Disconnection Lacks inclusivity Need based belonging

Contributions to the school environment	Tone Setters, Positivity Servant minded ensures success	Teacher Workload Reduction Need ‘Meeter’	Tone Setting, Cleanliness Providing a clean, healthy environment
Respect	Respected, but lack of validation Involvement, perspective, communication Authentic cohesiveness	Respected and Valued	Inconsistent messaging/communication Lack of realism Professionalism diluted by parental perspective
Strengths and Stretches of the school	Strengthening and streamlining communication	Harmony—Puzzle Piece Placement Invalidated Staff	Positive relationships Team building opportunities

“If we want to know what students, staff, and parents perceive about the learning environment, we need to ask them” (Bernhardt, pg. 42, 2018). While this quote possesses some truth, it is not inclusive of all essential groups who make-up a school building. Support personnel is missing. If you desire to know what paraprofessionals, janitorial staff and front office personnel perceive about the learning environment, we need to ask them.

Summary of Findings (Emergent Themes)

The exploratory, qualitative study was designed to capture and determine the current perspective of non-certificated personnel—paraprofessionals, custodial staff and front office personnel—regarding school culture in an at-risk urban elementary school. Todd Whitaker, author of *Shifting the Monkey* articulates that you should treat everyone well. (Whitaker, 2012 pg. 83). Are non-certificated persons not viable enough to be considered as stakeholders? Furthermore, is it possible to develop an authentic, thorough set of norms or definition of school culture when there are key people who were not considered or overlooked deliberately?

The purpose and use for the questionnaire was clear and very pointed. Once the purpose of the questionnaire and how the results were planned to be used was established, it was time to determine who would be recipients of the survey. Because there were specific roles to be captured, this process was seamless.

There were a total of 14 persons interviewed—3 paraprofessionals, 6 front office staff, 5 custodians. The following themes emerged after applying two cycles of coding. The next three tables (tables 21-23) display the emergent themes erected from each participant, by title.

Table 21

Paraprofessional Emergent Themes

Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessional	Victor Brown	Positive energy, effective collaboration, Positive interaction, Unity, unified for children
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		<p>Sense of connectivity, School event planning—disjoint</p> <p>Secondary personnel mentality, Able to provide differentiated instruction</p> <p>Relational Components, Respect, Communication enhances expectation,</p> <p>Harmony—Puzzle Piece Illustration</p>
Paraprofessional	Vicki Brown	<p>Whole School, Differences shape cultures, empowerment, encouragement, positive countenances, Great sense of comforts, Validation</p> <p>Disconnect, Non-relevant communication, disconnect, disconnect,</p> <p>Relational Components, Resourceful, Need ‘meeter’</p> <p>Respected by students, Title butting, Comradery, Inconsistent, lack of parental accountability, Contrasting narratives, the start signals duration and finish</p>

		Play what's provided
Paraprofessional	Yanna Brown	<p>Socioeconomic status, Safety, positive,</p> <p>Disconnection, Included (emails), disconnection, disconnection,</p> <p>Teacher Workload Reduction,</p> <p>Mutual respect, valuable, Limited understanding yields friction</p> <p>Active Listeners, Displaying Compassion</p>

Custodians

Table 22

Custodians Emergent Themes

Custodian	Dedra Brown	<p>Morals, Values, Comradery, effective communication, excited, safe</p> <p>Disconnected/Disconnection, Disconnection, Funds of Knowledge, Funds of Knowledge</p>
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		<p>Cleanliness, Positive Conversation, Reciprocated authentic appreciation (from students)</p> <p>Inconsistent communication, messaging, student word trumping teacher word (parents believe students), The lack of realism,</p> <p>Relationships</p>
Custodian	Jon Brown	<p>Respect, Positive Countenance/Dispositions, Cleanliness</p> <p>Disjoint, Disconnected, only punitive meetings, Lacks inclusivity, Disconnected, Disconnected</p> <p>Power of authentic collaboration, Providing a clean environment</p> <p>Inconsistent communication/messaging, lack of understanding</p> <p>Positive Countenance</p>
Custodian	Brian Brown	<p>Type of school, culture determined by who's employed at the school, students who love school and teachers, Cohesiveness</p>

		<p>Disconnected, Disconnected, Disconnected, ensuring cleanliness, appropriate set-up</p> <p>Perspective, input, Clean Healthy Environment</p> <p>Respected, Engaged Parenting, Parents Listen to the Teacher,</p> <p>Good Teachers</p>
Custodian	Albert Brown	<p>Principal Lead/Led, Funds of Knowledge, Active Listening,</p> <p>Inviting and welcoming, Consistent Communication/Messaging, Notion of need, Valuing voice and opinion,</p> <p>Tone setting/setter, Cleanliness and Structurally</p> <p>Respected yields respect, respect begets respect, Teacher's aren't magicians, Professionalism diluted by parental perspective</p>

		Well-oiled machine—Team
Custodian	Chris Brown	<p>Student equity, consistent positivity, wanted, valued, appreciated</p> <p>Disconnected, Funds of knowledge, Disconnected, Configuration Specialist</p> <p>Cleanliness, working with integrity, positive reinforcement</p> <p>Respect experienced, Availability, present</p> <p>Teach and impart at any cost</p>

Front Office Personnel

Table 23

Front Office Personnel Emergent Themes

Front Office Personnel	Grace Brown	Perceptions about treatment, Freely Communicate— Comfortability, Embractive/Warm/Genuine
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		<p>Infrequently, Regular good communication, lack inclusivity</p> <p>Setting tone, positivity, resourceful, withitness, authentic relationships</p> <p>Lack of validation, inconsistent respect,</p> <p>Finding solutions, troubleshooting</p>
Front Office Personnel	Emma Brown	<p>Connectivity, Connection—positive transferable energy, Enjoyable</p> <p>Rarely included, Weekly correspondence (email distributions), Leadership Team- Financial Advisor, Financial Advising component</p> <p>Element of control—controller, Adequate appropriation of funds</p> <p>Inconsistent, Bridge building, cyclical effects, less parent/child focus, more student focus, toxic power</p>

		Cohesiveness—all things until success
Front Office Personnel	Frances Brown	<p>Environment, atmosphere, all needs met, love, warmth, family</p> <p>Inclusivity, Inclusivity, Inclusivity, Financial Decision making</p> <p>Equipping with tools, Providing access to educational material</p> <p>Respected, Predicated on family dynamic and structures, Support Teacher Decisions</p> <p>Authentic relational domain</p>
Front Office Personnel	Ophelia Brown	<p>Balanced, Outpouring of love, Joy</p> <p>Frequently, Frequently, No— increase opportunity, Inclusivity—willingness to aid</p> <p>Willing to help—positive environment—blessed, the power of a ‘good morning’ and a ‘smile.’</p>

		<p>Highly respected, Empathetic educators, every day is 'new', parents as role models,</p> <p>Power in team—oneness—cohesive front</p>
Front Office Personnel	Iris Brown	<p>Uncontrolled Constructs, oneness—cohesiveness—necessary resources, positive—balance</p> <p>Inclusivity, Inclusivity, No committees, Financial advisor—key holder</p> <p>Compensation, Servant minded ensures success</p> <p>Respected, perspective from unbelief from guardian, parental disbelief</p> <p>Cohesiveness—family—oneness</p>
Front Office Personnel	Zelda Brown	<p>Transparency—transformative, positivity yields healthy school environment, enjoyment</p> <p>Financial advisor, inclusivity, Medication distributor, Financial advisor</p>

		<p>Not bound by title—helper, Purchaser of necessities</p> <p>Respected, Positive correlation: increase in parent expectation and increase in teacher expectation, knowing your child vs. accepting their behavior</p> <p>Solid educators</p>
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Emergent Themes—Condensed

The tables below—table 24-26—display a condensed version of the findings. Firstly, the tables convey the specific questions that worked on conjunction with the particular areas of focus and or emphasis. Secondly, the tables display which specific group of participants were being interviewed. Lastly, the tables display pattern coding results from each particular group.

Table 24

Pattern Coding Results from Front Office Personnel

Front Office Personnel

Questions	Areas of Focus/Emphasis	Targeted Audience	Pattern Coding Results
1,2 and 3	School Climate/School Atmosphere	Front Office Personnel	Transformative Transparency, Balanced

			Cohesiveness, Positivity Embracive
5. 6. 10 and 11	Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school	Front Office Personnel	Lacking Belonging (Leadership Teams)
7 and 13	Contributions to the school environment	Front Office Personnel	Tone Setters, Positivity Servant minded ensures success
14, 15 and 16	Respect	Front Office Personnel	Respected, but lack of validation Involvement, perspective, communication
18	Strengths and Stretches of the school	Front Office Personnel	Authentic cohesiveness Strengthening and streamlining communication

Table 25

*Pattern Coding Results from Paraprofessionals***Paraprofessionals**

Questions	Areas of Focus/Emphasis	Targeted Audience	Pattern Coding Results
1,2 and 3	School Climate/School Atmosphere	Paraprofessional	Differences establish culture Positive Interactions/ Countenances Validation
5. 6. 10 and 11	Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school	Paraprofessional	Disjoint No sense of belonging
7 and 13	Contributions to the school environment	Paraprofessional	Teacher Workload Reduction Need Meeter
14,15 and 16	Respect	Paraprofessional	Respected and Valued
18	Strengths and Stretches of the school	Paraprofessional	Harmony—Puzzle Piece Placement Invalidated Staff

Table 26

Pattern Coding Results from Custodial Staff

Custodial Staff

Questions	Areas of Focus/Emphasis	Targeted Audience	Pattern Coding Results
1,2 and 3	School Climate/School Atmosphere	Custodial Staff	Morals and Values, Positives Dispositions Cohesiveness
5. 6. 10 and 11	Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school	Custodial Staff	Disconnection Lacks inclusivity Need based belonging
7 and 13	Contributions to the school environment	Custodial Staff	Tone Setting, Cleanliness Providing a clean, healthy environment
14,15 and 16	Respect	Custodial Staff	Inconsistent messaging/communication Lack of realism Professionalism diluted by parental perspective
18	Strengths and Stretches of the school	Custodial Staff	Positive relationships Team building opportunities

Conclusion

Certificated personnel have defined current research directly relatable to the infrastructure of school culture. Todd Whitaker (2015) poses the thought that if one wants to bust a school culture ask teachers why they like snow days (pg. 11). While there is some significance to this concept, it completely neglects non-certificated personnel's perspective. These unheard voices and perspectives are rich, relevant and provide a new sense of realism not yet unveiled nor magnified. There were five emergent themes from the interview questions. They were contributions to school environments, strengths and stretches of the school, respect, connectivity/sense of belonging to the school and school climate/school atmosphere/culture.

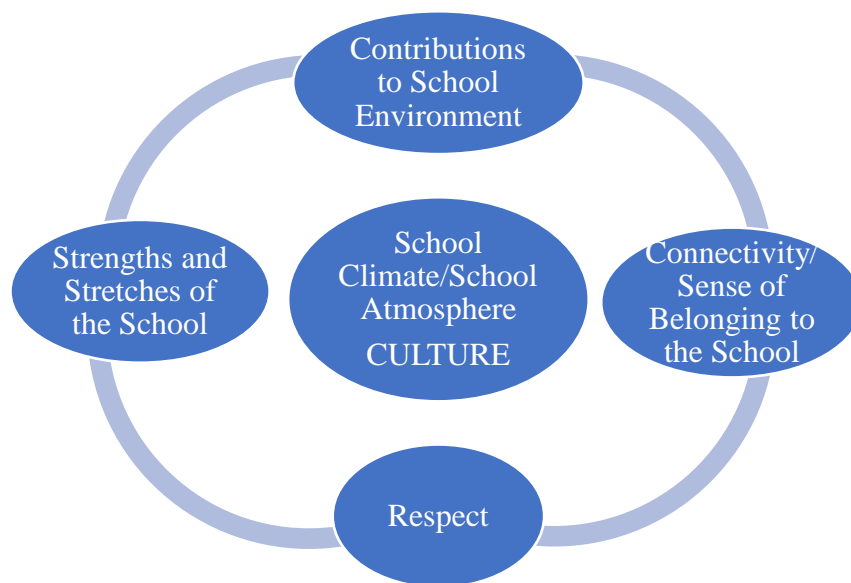
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The process of conducting, collecting, executing member checks and analyzing interviews has created a domain to and for the collection of themes that can reshape or shift mindsets to reconsider how the notion of school culture is perceived from traditionally unheard voices. During the collection procedures, non-certificated personnel—front office staff, custodial staff and janitorial staff—were asked an array of questions pertaining to their perspectives regarding school culture at urban, at-risk elementary schools. There were five areas of focus to emerge from the original 18 interview questions. They were: School Climate/School Atmosphere, Connectivity/Sense of belonging to the school, Contributions to the School Environment, Respect, and Strengths and Stretches of the school. Questions were framed in a manner to extract relevant perception information. Figure 1 shows themes immersed from interviews.

Figure 1

Themes Emerged from Interviews Questions



Research Questions

Creswell (2013) conveys that the intention of qualitative research questions is to taper the purpose to questions that will be addressed in the study. Research questions should be distinct and have the ability to provide an opportunity to encode and foreshadow an approach to inquiry. Research The core of this study centers around the following key school culture questions, all aimed at uncovering hidden yet important voices from non-certified staff and personnel.

1. What is the current mindset of non-certificated personnel—office personnel, substitute teachers, custodial staff and paraprofessionals—regarding school culture in an at-risk urban elementary school?

Driving the study to this single question will help the research capture these voices, analyze trends and patterns, and then recommend ways to move forward and leverage these voices for the betterment of the overall school experience for students.

Inclusivity/Belonging

Daniel Coyle, author of *The Culture Code: The secrets of highly successfully groups*, conveys that belonging cues are behaviors that create safe connectivity in groups. Questions 5, 6, 10, and 11 all were indirectly or directly associated to connectivity or a sense of belonging. Table 27 displays questions regarding belonging.

Table 27

Questions Pertaining to Inclusivity/Belonging

Question 5	How often are you included in staff and/or faculty meetings?
Question 6	How often are you included on school-wide emails or email distributions?
Question 10	Are you a part of any committees or leadership teams? Please explain your answer.
Question 11	Are you included or involved in any planning for school evenings? Please explain your answer.

The overwhelming majority of all interviewees felt some sense of disconnection or felt as if they lacked inclusivity. Jon Brown, a custodian, responded the following when asked if he is ever included in staff or faculty meetings. “Custodians was never in faculty meetings. None, whatsoever. Only meeting it was regarding what we messed up, that’s what the meeting is about.” Daniel Coyle proceeds to share that belonging clues possess three basic qualities: *energy*—they invest in the exchange that is occurring, *individualization*—they treat the person as unique and valued, *future orientation*—they signal the relationship will continue. When persons feel the only

time meetings occur is for punitive measures, an agitation to the three basic qualities occur, with a specific disruption to individualization.

Emma Brown, front office personnel, responds to the same question in this way. “Ok, by being an office staff person, I am rarely included in staff meeting because the times of the meeting the office still has to be watched, with the door and the phone.” Yanna Brown exclaims, “we are not included. I don’t know how often we have them, but I know that I haven’t been to but probably a couple, so I think we could do more, that paras are included, that we are important and we see a lot that goes on that teachers are so busy with 20 kids, that they don’t see.” Douglas Reeves, author of *From Leading to Succeeding: The Seven Elements of Effective Leadership in Education*, discusses the importance of leveraging leadership. Leaders have the potential to lose their leverage when they become reactionary or adopt the firefighter mentality rather than being instructional leaders. Although, instruction is not the nucleus of this narrative, proactivity relatable to problem solving can curtail or dilute punitive conversations.

Grace Brown, front office personnel, exhibits this notion of withitness pertaining to being completely tapped into to her school culture. She was able to recite the mission statement very quickly and without hesitation could convey ways, in which her role contributed to the school environment. As it relates to belonging, she discusses the significance of having an appropriate, positive demeanor at all times. Despite the demands of her job she “enjoys it and feels very appreciated and valued.

Common Goals and Common Vocabulary

Based on research associated to school culture, non-certificated personnel’s perspective has yet to be fully captured. This qualitative exploratory case study provides a platform for these

unheard narratives. It is important to note that non-certificated personal are actually speaking the same language as teachers, administrators and in some cases even the researchers who specialize in certain areas. Because there might be some variance or limitation pertaining to vernacular, it does not mean that this narrative is insignificant, nor does it mean the narrative should be dismissed. Vicki Brown, a paraprofessional, discusses how she is overwhelmed with a great sense of belonging, directly supporting Daniel Coyle's work in *The Culture Code*. When asked to describe what you feel and/or experience when you enter your school building, Vicki Brown shares that "I feel at home. I feel like this is where I belong. Everybody around me makes me feel like the job I do is worth something, and like I'm doing something that these kids are going to remember me by." Daniel Coyle (2018) shares that we require lots continuous signaling. Henceforth, belonging is really easy to destroy and extremely difficult to build. Vicki Brown's experience when entering the school building provides a sense of safety which cannot occur without the three basic qualities attached to belonging cues which are energy, individualization, and future orientation.

Grace Brown, a front office secretary, conveys the following regarding school culture. Anyone who directly or indirectly connected to the school or workplace influences culture is some way. Therefore, no one person is responsible for changing, altering or affecting culture. When asked Grace Brown to describe a positive school culture or atmosphere, she responds by saying a positive school culture or atmosphere is one that promotes "that feeling that it is ok to communicate without having to feel as if you are 'walking on eggshells.'" John Doerr (2018) articulates that when an organization is not yet ready to for total openness, total vulnerability and total accountability, culture work may be needed prior to the implementation of OKR's (objectives and key results).

Links to Highly Effective Schools Correlates

Lawrence W. Lezotte, who has over 20 years of research conducted specifically around effective schools, identified 7 correlates for effective schools. They are: instructional leadership, opportunity to learn-time on task, frequent monitoring of progress, home-school relations, climate of expectations, safe and orderly environment and clear and focused mission. The last set of correlates inspected were derived by the Baldrige Excellence Framework foundation. The following were acknowledged: leadership, customers, measurement knowledge/results management, customers, workforce, operations, and strategy (Lezotte & Baldrige). Most correlates surfaced many times while capturing perspectives from non-certificated personnel.

Positive home-school relations is a correlate that must be possessed in order for the concept of an effective school to be relevant. Subsequently, if home is discussed, then family must also be discussed which leads to the notion of family engagement. The Flamboyant Foundation (2018) expresses that there is a strong connection between family engagement and the community. We recognize that families are vital components that contribute to our learner's success. Family is defined as the collaboration between families and educators that accelerates student learning. A strong body of research shows that students do better in school and in life when their parents are engaged in their education. There is a strong positive correlation between academic success and family engagement (Flamboyant Foundation, 2018).

Vicki Brown, a paraprofessional, was asked do you feel respected by students, families, faculty and the administrative team? She provided an overwhelmingly positive response from all groups except families. She exclaims, that generally speaking, when something occurs with families the "family is siding with the student. The para doesn't really have that communication

with the family.” There is a strong positive correlation between weak home-school relational components and a weak school.

Another direct association to the literature—highly effective schools correlates—erected by a custodian, articulates the importance of a safe and orderly environment. Albert Brown, a custodian states that she is welcomed and supported exceptionally well—“A plus treatment.” Because he is treated so well, executing functions of this job is not so cumbersome. “A clean environment gets a better performance from the kids.” Once learners begin making the connection between clean buildings and a more comfortable workspace, it is possible that ‘school could improve.’”

Emma Brown, front office personnel, shares information from experience about how she has seen persons in power, abuse, manipulate and behave immaturely just to get rid of someone they did not like. She has witnessed administrators embarrass and devalue faculty and staff members too often. Additionally, Emma Brown exclaims, “I have seen leaders use their power in the wrong and it ended up doing the school a lot of harm.” She closes by saying, “what goes around comes around.” Those Administrators are no longer at the school. When considering the correlate that discusses the importance of having high expectations for success, Lezotte and Synder (2011) convey that the way a school leader behaves and operates impacts the climate and culture of the school and indirectly affects student learning. Furthermore, if the administration is toxic, that trait will soon infiltrate the entire building potentially leading to an ineffective educational institution. Jim Collins (2011) shares a quote from Moliere that states, “Most men die of their remedies, and not of their illnesses.” Based on Emma Brown’s account, the administrators die--left or removed from the position—not because they are physically sick, but because their ill remedies led to their demise.

Chris Brown who serves as a custodian captured another direct alignment to literature. Mr. Chris Brown's perspective concerning the concept of school culture is interesting yet plausible. When asked what comes to mind when you hear the term school culture, he suggests that school is directly associated with strong leadership, fairness and student equity. When these constructs are in place, all involved persons have a common goal to work collaboratively to assist both the learners and the educators with all tasks through a positive lens. Chris Brown's perspective pertaining to school culture marries the correlate discussing the importance and significance of positive instructional leadership. School administrators can no longer be the only leaders in highly complex institutions such as schools. The leadership domain shifts from administrators as leaders to instructional leaders which could be potentially be occupied by other school staff.

What School Leaders Can Do/Next Steps

Vicki Brown provided some suggestions for consideration in an effort to authenticate non-certificated persons. She encouraged the administrative team to be intentional about introducing and clearly articulating roles of non-certificated staff during open house, in a more grandiose way. It is important to reiterate the importance of introducing these personnel boldness and surety. When considering and introducing paraprofessionals, particularly, it is important to be cognizant of word choice. Vicki Brown suggested introducing paraprofessionals to families as 'the other teacher in the room' verses 'this is the para or the assistant.' When we understand how our own actions have the unique ability to create responsibilities, obligations and problems that everyone deals with on an everyday basis, we then can learn circumvent or sometimes avoid them and substitute more positive actions (Whitaker, 2012).

The following are recommendations for schools to consider while being intentional regarding inclusivity for non-certificated personnel with a particular emphasis on front office staff, custodial staff and paraprofessionals. Let's consider capitalizing on some low hanging fruit opportunities. Firstly, I recommend that specific, pointed and focused email distributions be generated for non-certificated personnel. This easily implemented plan invites non-certificated to a larger network of conversations and occurrences in the school. Secondly, schools should intentionally create space, spaces or specific slots for non-certificated personnel to join and occupy leadership teams, school improvement teams or any other teams making school-wide decisions. Additionally, non-certificated personnel should only fill those slots. Thirdly, with a particular emphasis on paraprofessionals, during open house, a member or members from the Administrative team should introduce all non-certificated personnel as being viable, imperative and a needed component the school's fabric. Removing certain jargon such as teacher's assistance or a classroom aids should also help to validate paraprofessional positions. Lastly, be sure to celebrate all non-certificated personnel during important family engagement/community building events. All of these efforts help to diminish the feeling of "who's in and who's out" which emerged within some of the interviews.

Perceptions of/by Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessional, Vicki Brown, suggests that until the perceptions of paraprofessionals are heightened and valued, non-certificated personnel may continue to be treated ignobly. When there is a challenge between a student and a family, most if not all dialogue is happening between the teacher and the family. She continued to say that, it almost always feels like the classroom dynamic consisted of the teacher and a helper verses the teacher and a professional. In the absence of the teacher, things often times become such a 'power struggle' between the

families and the paraprofessionals. Vicki Brown conveyed that, “when the main teacher was out, the families acted as if we had not clue what we were talking about.” Whitaker, once again, talks about the criticalness of treating everyone well.

Ophelia Brown, a front office staff who possesses more than 20 years of experience in this position, provides the followings perceptions of what impacts daily routines and procedures in one’s school building. When asked how you feel your roles and responsibilities are related to student success, she responds, “one thing I do feel, I feel when that child walks through that door and they hear a ‘good morning’ and they see ‘a smile’ that starts their day off.” She goes on to explain that she feels that one of her main responsibilities is to help create that ‘warm feeling’ needed for children as they enter our buildings daily and attempt to function with all kinds of heart-breaking baggage. Lastly, Ophelia Brown conveys the importance of educational institutions operating as a cohesive front—this is a strength of a positive school culture. She shares, which ties nicely to the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), that ‘you gotta learn to work in teams. You can’t be one of them people that says it’s no my business. You can’t do that. So, you just have to come together as a team and work together as a team and you can get it done.’”

Zelda Brown, front office personnel, talks about her perceptions on school culture and the school environment. She shares that she thinks of things “that happen in the school, things that goes around in the school or transparent things in the school or things that transform the school.” Two discoverable key ingredients must be present for school culture and/or the school environment to be salable. School culture and/or the school environment must first possess a level of ‘transparency.’ You cannot fix or leverage what is unknown. Secondly, school culture/school environment must be ‘transformative.’ The last things shared by Zelda Brown

regarding positive school culture or having a positive school atmosphere is that positivity yields a healthy school environment.

Celebrating the Contributions of Non-Certificated Staff

Yanna Brown, a paraprofessional explains that a limited understanding yields friction and discord. Paraprofessional, Victor Brown, shares that an increased communication enhances expectation. Grace Brown, front office personnel, discussed the importance of vulnerability/openness. She further tells us that employees or anyone else directly or indirectly associated to the school or workplace influence school culture in some capacity. Grace describes a positive school culture or atmosphere as one that promotes the feeling that it is ok to communicate without having to feel as if you are ‘walking on eggshells.’ Ken Robinson, author of *Creative Schools* articulates that it is vitally important to listen to what is important to the child. It is also equally important to ensure that there is a platform provided for non-certificated persons to share what is imperative to them. The lack of research focusing on non-certificated personnel as well as the results of this study beg the question: How often and intentional are schools about actively listening, honoring, and validating these voices as they relate to school culture?

When considering areas of strengths and stretches, paraprofessional, Vicki Brown discusses the importance of being and feeling validated. “We have to be careful about how we present the information, because they’ve already got in their minds that “they’re just support staff” they don’t have a degree, they don’t know what they’re talking about, but eight years as a paraprofessional, we know what we’re talking about.” Another paraprofessional, Grace Brown, struggles with feeling and being validated. “I might step into a classroom and a kindergartener

will say ‘you’re not a teacher.’ They kinda get in that little mindset and think you’re not an adult.”

John Doerr, author of *Measure What Matters*, captured a quote from Jeff Bezos that exclaims, “you need a culture that high-fives small and innovative ideas.” If the narrative of non-certificated staff remains small, we need to establish a culture that gives accolades to all involved persons.

Discussion

One significant strength of capturing more accurate perception data from non-certificated personnel was the execution of the follow-up member checks. Transcriptions were provided to each interviewee for review and potential modification with a one-week resubmission time restraint. There were no interviewees who wanted to add additional information; on the contrary, 3 out of the 14 interviewees wanted to subtract or remove some component of the content conveyed during the interviews. The rationale was fear that something would get back to their principals yielding punitive measures. As the researcher, I assured them once more, that everything was anonymous and pseudonyms would be used to further protect their identify. The information collected yielded themes and helped to further develop the conceptual/theoretical model, *The Fitzgerald Fuqua-F cubed*.



Figure 3. *The Fitzgerald Fuqua: F Cubed conceptual model for resolutions*

(F Cubed, Fitzgerald’s Fuqua) Conceptual/Theoretical Model

The school culture conversation continues, and Fitzgerald’s Fuqua—F cubed (Flee, Free, Fight)—has potential to further this much needed conversation. Fuqua is a surname that will assist in establishing positive cultural ideologies when confronted with challenges. Fuqua is a surname derived from a Franco-Germanic word meaning “guardian folk.” F cubed will serve as guidance or a guardian when used in the most appropriate fashion. Todd Whitaker (2012) conveys an idea that is thought provoking. He exclaims, “a key challenge in dealing with employees who do not perform properly is sorting out whether they are ignorant or insubordinate” (Whitaker, 2012, pg. 47). One of the key challenges to dealing with toxic personnel is dissecting and differentiating those who exhibit what appears to be ignorance verses those who behave under the auspices of insubordination. According to Whitaker, “Monkeys” are

the responsibilities, obligations and problems that confront on a daily basis. You can easily manage your share of normal monkeys, consequently, you can just as easily become inundated when you get stuck shouldering other people's inappropriate monkeys. When this occurs, Fitzgerald's Fuqua can be leveraged. Although the outcome is predicated on one's cost-benefit analysis of the scenario, this framework helps tailor one's thought process.

Flee deals primarily with the physicality of a situation. Todd Whitaker states that negative individuals have a tendency to thrive in environments that are oppositional (Whitaker, 2012, pg. 39). There are some situations that fleeing becomes the most intuitive and the most sensible decision to make. When excuses start to supersede solutions, you should start considering and generating a potential exit plan. Todd Whitaker makes the following suggestions. You should first analyze the problem by first determining whether the toxic person or persons are insubordinate or ignorant. Secondly, decide whether the toxic issue is a terminating episode or a reoccurring event. Start by approaching the toxic person or issue with concern and compassion verses anger or accusation as this tends to start to destroy the toxins. When dealing with a person or persons, this approach starts the detoxification process. At this junction, the individual must make a decision to continue be untruthful, confess, explain or figuratively start the process of back paddling in an attempt to locate an escape.

Free is associated with one's mental state. It is very possible to be present physically, but absent or free mentally. In my current role as a Classroom Management Specialist, I learned very quickly that if I were going to be effective and execute with fidelity, several things needed to be freed. For example, teachers who seemingly find negativity in everything use to occupy mental space that should have and could have been used for someone who was determined to find solutions. "It is virtually impossible to become proficient at a mental task without extended

practice (Willingham, 2009, pg. 107). Freeing yourself mentally sounds much more simplistic than it actually is. Willingham, a cognitive scientist, answers questions about how the mind works and what it means for the classroom and the work environment. One has to practice this ‘free’ mindset. Willingham provides two reasons why practicing is pertinent. One reason to practice is because it helps you to gain competence. The second reason to practice is simply because it helps you to improve. Although I agree with Willingham, the following caveat must be added. It would be advantageous to ensure the executed extended practice is positive and working towards something meaningful. As educators it would behoove us to create platforms that assist learners with becoming proficient at a mental task by guiding and tailoring the type of extended practice offered.

Fight is primarily associated or deeply rooted to one’s connectivity to purpose. There is a distinct difference between one’s occupation and one’s vocation. Occupation is defined as a job or profession or an activity in which one engages (dictionary.com). Contrarily, vocation deals with a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation or a type of work that you feel you are suited to doing and to which you give much of your time and energy—calling (Cambridge dictionary). The more important the scenario is to you, the stronger the desire to hold on to it. You must possess the necessary boldness to fight the toxins. Nonetheless, even when fighting, we must control the innate desire to seek revenge particularity against those who have wronged us. It is not desirable nor beneficial for toxic persons to be upset. The outcome is for them to be good or to be gone. Fighting and fear are conflicting concepts. Dr. Spencer Johnson, the author of *Who Moved by Cheese*, discusses two types of fear. He exclaims that there is good fear and bad fear. There are times when you are afraid things are going to get worse if something is not done. This type of pressure has the unique ability to propel you into taking

some type of action. On the contrary, being paralyzed by fear so badly that it prevents you from doing anything can be detrimental. A question to ponder is, what would you do if you weren't afraid (Johnson, 1998, pg. 48). Don't allow fear to prevent you from fighting.

Implications

Numerous implications emerged from this exploratory, qualitative research study. The research includes following up on some previously published literature regarding the topics of Inclusivity/ Belonging, Common Goals/Common Vocabulary, Links to Highly Effective Schools Correlates, Perceptions of/by Paraprofessionals and Celebrating the Contributions of Non-Certificated Staff.. Additional implications include possible future practical application of *The Fitzgerald Fuqua: F Cubed* conceptual model for arriving at the most resolutions.

Implications for Practice. Implications for future studies and practice for the *The Fitzgerald Fuqua: F Cubed* conceptual model for resolutions is to allow its use with any person who needs assistance with figuring out how to navigating challenging school culture situations while remaining validated. An immediate implication for practice could be to test the validity of the model with non-certificated personnel working in similar domains who's perceptions have yet to heard, captured nor recorded. The model helps to determine three different routes of thinking. Firstly, some situations require a boldness to stand up and fight for what is proper or to fight for what one may have a strong conviction for or to. Secondly, in order to continue and thrive in one's current space, some situations only require a freeing of the mind. It is very possible to operate and perform in a domain and be mentally detached. Lastly, there are scenarios that require a physical fleeing in order to maintain mental sanity or in an effort to remain physically healthy.

Dismantling Myths & Changing Minds

To obtain the mind-set of unstoppable learning is one of the main reasons why one should change. Sugatra Mitra is a Professor of Educational Technology at the University of New Castle in England. Sugatra Mitra discusses in a podcast that our educational system is outdated and ineffective. We are slowly heading to a place where the concept of knowing becomes obsolete. The construct of knowing is not as substantial as it once was. He states that, “everything that humanity has ever known is inside of their pockets.” Sugatra then goes on to express where the attention should be shifted— to encouragement. Encouragement is key. Learning should be saluted on a regular basis. He concludes by stating that school is a cloud and all stakeholders need to ensure that children have the unique ability to go on intellectual journeys.

His research over the past decades occurred in India and sets out to prove that learning does not have to be taught. A computer was strategically placed in a wall/hole in a very poor village filled with non-English speakers and no running water—the epitome of primitive living. Eventually, the indigenous people starting to get curious about this strange apparatus. Sugotta would have words appear on the monitor which captivated the viewers. Without a keyboard, these indigenous people started using character map to type. Character Map is a utility included with Microsoft Windows operating systems and is used to view the characters in any installed font, to check what keyboard input (Alt code) is used to enter those characters, and to copy characters to the clipboard in lieu of typing them. Critics challenged this and suggested that it was very possible for a software designer to show-up and teach people how to use the computer.

In an intentional effort to combat the critics, Sugatra repeated the same experiment in a much more rural area 300 miles away from the originally placed computer in a remote village. Students eventually learned how to use the computer without any supervision which supports the power of

discovery learning. It is especially important to note that computer was not programmed in their native language. This perpetuates the idea that learning is the product of educational self-organization which yields emergent learning. This experiment differentiated between making learning happen versus letting learning happen.

Discovery learning is a technique of inquiry-based learning and is considered a constructivist-based approach to education. It is also referred to as problem-based learning, experiential learning and 21st century learning. It is supported by the work of learning theorists and psychologists Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, and Seymour Papert. Jerome Bruner is often credited with originating discovery learning in the 1960s, but his ideas are very similar to those of earlier writers such as John Dewey. Bruner argues that "Practice in discovering for oneself teaches one to acquire information in a way that makes that information more readily viable in problem solving". This philosophy later became the discovery learning movement of the 1960s. The mantra of this philosophical movement suggests that people should "learn by doing" (Wikipedia).

Annie Murphy Paul provides powerful expressions about why it is important to change. She conveys that some of the most important learning actually occurs before we exit the womb which is referred to as fettle origins. Here are some interesting things that the fetus learns prior to exiting the wound. The fetus learns the women's heart rhythm, the women's breathing sequence, the women's swallowing, the women's digestive system, the women's symphony of organs, and the woman's voice. An interesting question to consider is learning in the womb measurable. Annie Murphy Paul exclaims that learning in the sense of the fettus' are becoming familiar with certain stimuli. Consider the mom's voice. It recognizes her voice and prefers to hear Momma's voice. Newborn babies cannot do much, but one thing they are really good at is sucking. The

fetus is being taught about what is safe and unsafe to eat. Perhaps one of the most staggering factors regarding fettle origins is that some of the babies included in this study recognized theme songs from soap operas watched everyday by the parent.

Allison Gobnick, a professor at Berkley, studies babies and young children. The former consensus states that young children were people with pieces missing. Let us consider a 15-month-old. The 15-month-old notices there is a little brick path. If the 15-month-old climbs, they will notice that they can get up the steps. Once up, they notice flowers. The 15-month-old then says ‘plane.’ The baby observes and experiments which is known as children’s exploratory play. Another notable experiment takes a little bit of food from bowl number one and bowl number two. Food is taken from bowl number one and an exaggerated version of a disgusted face is made. Food is taken from bowl number two and an intentional happy face is made. Provide the two bowls of food to the baby and ask the baby to give you some of what they like. The 15-month-old will give you the food associated to the happy face, which in this case was broccoli. Leo Tolstoy coins the following phrase, “everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

Future Study

In order to strengthen and layer the exploratory qualitative study, there is a need to execute a deep dive with a particular emphasis on the custodial staff. Generally speaking, front office staff and paraprofessionals have less roaming capability and less freedom to move throughout the entire school on regular basis. The custodial staff usually move more fluidly and regularly throughout the school buildings particularly since, they are not restricted by position to a certain of the building. It would interesting to see what perceptions would be birthed,

confirmed or opposed should more interviews be conducted with janitorial staffs who operate within the exact same restrictions.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

Limitations are interwoven within this study and the findings should be carefully interpreted. It is important to note that the study was conducted within a finite, limited domain of time. One semester does not provide the richest data. The study was conducted during a national pandemic, which presented challenges for data collection. CDC guidelines were followed to ensure the safety of all involved personnel. Additionally, the researcher had a working relationship with all involved subjects, which could potentially skew the findings. The researcher assumes participants were sincere and possessed authentic intentions. Lastly, there were a limited number of participants so it cannot yet be determined if saturation or informational redundancy was reached.

Limitations were present during the qualitative exploratory study. The number of participants were limited yielding limited results. More participants could have potentially led to new themes or more robust content. Other limitations that exist could be related to the time the study was conducted, as most of the non-certificated personnel was off of work due interviews being conducted during the summer months. The exploratory qualitative study took place during the global COVID-19 pandemic causing limitations with face-to-face contact with participants. Additionally, the CDC's guidelines for social distancing along with governmental mandates for school closures greatly affected personnel. Due to the pandemic, interviews were conducted through online platforms, text-based exchanges, email exchange through text-based or in-person while adhering to CDC mandates.

Other limitations deals with participants not being as forthcoming with information for fear of information getting back to superiors, which unfortunately could lead to punitive measures. Participants who withhold information could lead to a less rich and less authentic interview experience that ultimately leads to weaker, overall output.

Another limitation to consider is, participants were pulled from difference elementary schools within the same quadrant. Would it have been more beneficial to use front office staff, paraprofessionals and janitorial staff from the same building?

The Fitzgerald Fuqua: F Cubed conceptual model for resolutions is young conceptual model and has limitations. Because this construct was derived from the thought that non-certificated personnel have the potential to be empowered knowing they have a tangible tool to help mentally navigate when it is more beneficial to fight, free your mind or flee.

Conclusion

The exploratory qualitative research case study was designed to capture perspective and voice from non-certificated personnel—janitorial staff, front office personnel and paraprofessionals. These particular roles have generated narratives detailing their level of competency, their level of connectedness to their educational institutions and how they can contribute and potentially shift to the concept of school culture. Zelda Brown, who operates as a front office personnel, discusses how she is not ‘bound’ by her title. She possesses a spirit to help. She exclaims, “well, I help out in many areas, not just bookkeeping, so my roles if anyone needs help in any situation, I’m always there.”

The non-certificated persons highlighted in this exploratory qualitative study are aligning with the books and research so their perspectives need to be unleashed and interwoven in the fabric of school culture. Their narratives parallel to Daniel Coyle’s, *The Culture Code* by

discussing the importance of inclusivity and/or belonging. Their perspectives marry literature captured by John Doerr's *Measure What Matters* book by conveying that we must possess a culture that high-fives small and innovative ideas. Frances Brown, front office personnel, discusses the importance of effective, consistent communication in educational institutions. Antohony Muhammad (2018) shares that one key feature in transforming school culture is being able to skillfully communicate which supports France Brown's thinking regarding effective, consistence communication. Non-certificated persons addressed the need to have strong leadership. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) convey that when there is a leader but an absence of leadership, too many people who aren't equipped try to operate as leaders. Dedra Brown, a custodian, discusses how much harder she works when she feels authentically appreciated and when "students or adults say I'm doing a good job or when they say thank you." Ron Clark (2015) discusses how we should show appreciation. "He who doesn't thank for a little won't thank for a lot" (Clark, pg. 149, 2015). He who does not thank for a little, will not thank for a lot.



Figure 3. *The Fitzgerald Fuqua: F Cubed* conceptual model for resolutions learning

The Fitzgerald Fuqua: F Cubed conceptual model for resolutions is brand new and has limitations. Because this construct was derived from the thought that non-certificated personnel

have the potential to be empowered knowing they have a tangible tool to help mentally navigate when it is more beneficial to fight, free your mind or flee. The Fitzgerald Fuqua has the potential to further this much-needed conversation.

In Anthony Muhammad's book titled, *Overcoming the Achievement gap Trap*, he discusses a call for discomfort and how important it is to provide a voice for the voiceless. This exploratory qualitative study has evoked both premises in hopes that these unheard narratives would firstly, unveil the reality that non-certificated perspectives have gone unheard for an extended period of time and secondly, that this exploratory qualitative study has provided a voice for the voiceless. Jim Collins (2011) shares the following paradigm shift. He exclaims that although we do not have the capacity to predict the future, we are equipped and possess the necessary tools to create it. By creating spaces for non-certificated personnel to lift her voices and impart their perspectives, futures are being created. Willingham (2009) states that it is virtually impossible to become proficient at a mental task without extended practice. Let's start practicing generating spaces for non-certificated personnel so certificated personnel's mindset become proficient at listening, accepting and adhering to the voices of non-certificated personnel.

As this particular portion of the study comes to a close, we must to continue to strive to create intentional spaces for non-certificated personnel's—front office personnel, paraprofessionals and janitorial staff— voices to be heard and perspectives to be captured. Frederic Winslow Taylor, a mechanist who started his career in approximately 1875, is credited for inventing high speed steel cutting tools and is noted as the 'father' of scientific management. Scientific management is defined as a theory of management that analyzes and synthesizes workflows. Its main objective is improving economic efficiency, with a focus on labor

productivity. It was one of the earliest attempts to apply science to the engineering of processes to management (Wikipedia). When considering the role of Scientific Management in a setting that is growing productively, in essence, it requires a complete mental metamorphosis for any person working or actively engaged in any particular establishment or industry. This complete mental revolution focuses on duties of the organization toward its work, toward its employers and towards its employees. Additionally, it requires an equally important complete change in mind and perspective from those who occupy leadership roles such as team leads, department chairs, assistant principals, dean of students, deans of culture, deans of instructions, executive principals, lead principals and superintendents, board of directors and any other persons who are in positions of power (www.managementstudyhq.com).

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company and chief developer of the assembly line technique of mass production, used to express that he wanted his employees' hands, but not their minds which ultimately suggest that He wanted to remove all thinking from individuals working the assembly lines. Per Dr. M. Boyle, a Professor and former Dean at a University in the Middle Tennessee area, conveyed that Henry Ford and Fredric Taylor worked collaboratively on the Scientific Management Theory. This led to real problems. It is said that Ford had to hire 1000 workers just to keep 100 workers because the workers just hated the new system. Scientific management did not last long, but it is exactly the theory that underlies the “negative” concepts of this study. You have to engineer the business around the individual who works for you, rather than around the system you use” (Wagner, 2014). Have we learned our lesson approximately 100 years later? Maybe not fully, but we are making positive strides to change the trajectory in hopes of completing changing the narrative.

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Appendix A

The School Culture Survey:

Please indicate the degree to which each statement describes conditions in your school using the following scale:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Description:	1	2	3	4	5
1. Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information for classroom instruction.		√			
2. Leaders value teacher ideas.		√ +			
3. Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subject and grade levels.		√-			
4. Teachers trust each other.		√ +			
5. Teachers support the mission of the school.		√ +			
6. Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.		√ +			
7. Leaders in the school trust the professional judgements of teachers.		√ +			
8. Teachers spend considerable time planning together.		√			
9. Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.		√-			
10. Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.		√ +			
11. Leaders take time to praise teachers who are performing well.		√ +			
12. The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.		√ +			
13. Parents trust teacher's professional judgement.		√ +			

14. Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.		√-			
15. Teachers can take time to observe each other teach.		√-			
16. Professional development is valued by the faculty.		√			
17. Teachers ideas are valued by other teachers.		√-			
18. Leaders in this school facilitate teachers working together.		√			
19. Teachers understand the mission of the school.		√ +			
20. Teachers are kept informed about current issues in the school.		√-			
21. Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.		√			
22. Teacher involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.		√-			
23. Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.		√-			
24. Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.		√-			
25. Teachers work cooperatively in groups.		√-			
26. Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.		√-			
27. The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.		√ +			
28. Leaders support risk taking and innovations in teaching.		√			
29. Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.		√-			

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Description:	1	2	3	4	5
30. The faculty values school improvement.		√ +			
31. Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.		√			
32. Administrators protect instruction and planning time.		√ +			
33. Disagreements over instructional practice are voiced openly and discussed.		√			

34. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.		√			
35. Students generally take responsibility for their schooling, for example, being mentally engaged in class and completing homework assignments.		√ +			