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## A study of the influence of leadership competencies on a school culture organization

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES ON A SCHOOL  
CULTURE ORGANIZATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Veronica Glover

February, 2015

Nancy Harding Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: Daniel Pierce, the love of my life, for being my support and my rock; Isaac Glover and Isabella Glover, my son and daughter, for being my purpose in life; to my mom, Sandra Grace, for being my example and for instilling the values of education within me; to my sister, Michele Grace, for being my friend and confidant; and lastly to my dad, Frank Grace, though you are not here to see this accomplishment I know that my drive and ambition are from you and I am forever thankful.

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To my family: Thank you for your love and your faith in me.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine teachers' perceptions of an association between principal leadership and their leadership competencies on a schools' culture. This paper explored teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and the health of the school culture. In a Southern California school district 835 teachers were e-mailed 2 surveys for a quantitative study, 68 participants completed the surveys. The first survey focused on teachers' perceptions of principal leadership competencies, which were identified in the literature. The other survey from Dr. Christopher Wagner (2006) focused on the health of the school culture. The survey included 4 teacher demographic variables: years of experience, gender, years at current school, and age. This study found a significant connection between teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and school culture using a Pearson correlation test. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge for education, and this paper focuses on teachers' perceptions of principal leadership.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

A principals' leadership has a profound impact on the school site organization (Boyd et al., 2011). The competencies that a leader encompasses are fundamental to understanding a school organization (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). Principal leadership, culture, and teachers' perceptions, are central to fathom the intricacies of a school site.

Education is a significant public matter, for years people have been studying the plethora of methods to deliver the finest public education. Many foundations have been established to research the most effective ways to create a valuable educational system. When education is efficacious, measurable implications are available for the school site (Deal & Peterson, 2009; DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007). Education is a concept, and it is also meaningful to study the school site to better comprehend education.

School culture is important when researching education (Deal & Peterson, 2009). School culture could be introduced with the leadership of the school (Karakose, 2008). It is leadership and culture that create an environment for student learning (Mitgang, 2012). The student-learning environment is best cultivated through a healthy school culture (Wagner, 2006). The school site is built on a foundation of its members, which encompasses its school culture.

In the educational school sites many groups of people are a part of the organization who share beliefs and values, all contributing to the construction of the school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The school culture is impactful on the groups and individuals that associate within the school site. Studying these individuals and the culture is central to understanding education. The perceived leader in the school site is the principal who oversees the interactions

of the school. This school leader has an immense amount of power and influence (Malloy & Allen, 2007). The power and influence has an effect on the school's culture.

The United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan expressed his deep concern for the United States educational system and the possibilities for this country (Connelly, 2010). He said that there should be a focus on improving education and a new vision must be identified. The skills adults should have are not present; this is an effect of poor education. The educational crisis that is present should be studied and understood. This crisis may be best addressed by evaluating the leadership at the school sites. Evaluating leadership at school sites is helpful in understanding the culture present (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005).

President Barack Obama initiated the Race to the Top initiative in 2009 to encourage schools to perform at higher levels (Knoller, 2010). The president identified a need in education and offered federal monies to those schools that follow the measures for improving the educational standards and solving the troubles in education (Knoller, 2010). This was one of Obama's first plans in office because he felt that there was a need to improve education, this need is intended to be met by offering incentives to schools based on their performance (Knoller, 2010). With this identified need for reform there have been recent proposals to further improve education in the United States.

The newest reform to improve education is the adoption of the Common Core Standards. These standards were designed to improve academic success in schools by creating a set of abilities that each state must teach to (Layton, 2013). These standards will be tested nationally during the 2014-2015 school year and schools are currently teaching to these standards in preparation for the testing (Layton, 2013). Some individual states plan to use these testing measures to assess teaching and its effectiveness (Layton, 2013).



In the wave of new initiatives and reforms in education, many organizations are developing plans to amend a troubled educational system. Using research and data, compiled figures are being analyzed to determine the best routes for achieving greater success in America's public school system. This paper shows one of the avenues to school success rates that involve the practices of principal leadership and school culture at the school sites.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The reviewed literature on principal leadership influence on school culture establishes that there is a connection between principal leadership and school site culture. The conceptual framework is centered on four theorists that contribute to the understanding of the purpose of this study: Schein (2004) and culture; and Deal and Peterson (2009) and Christopher Wagner (2006), school culture and leadership. Edgar Schein (2004) researched culture and its impacts on an organization. The work of Schein helps develop a basis for understanding culture and its impact on organizations.

The work of Deal and Peterson (2009) is to study school sites to understand the best practices that are current in these sites. Their focus is on leadership, along with school site culture, and organizational interactions. Their contribution to this study is focused on how leaders can support and improve a school culture. This study is just one aspect of the framework that encapsulates this literature. The framework is centered on the problem of understanding the connection between principal leadership and school culture.

The fourth theorist studied is Dr. Christopher Wagner who is a part of the Center for Improving School Culture and the International School Culture Research College (Wagner, 2006). Dr. Wagner is a part of the Center and travels to schools all around the country helping schools identify the health of their cultures and the impact on the school site. His purpose is

showing the immense impact of school culture on the school site itself. His literature and survey tools are useful in understanding that school culture is important at a school site. This study takes the research from leadership at schools from Deal and Peterson (2009) and applies it to the knowledge of culture from Schein (2004) and utilizes the identification of a healthy school culture as identified by Dr. Wagner. Dr. Wagner utilizes the School Culture Triage Survey. This survey assesses organizations to determine the need for mending the culture. This study will take that survey and use it concurrently with the study of principal leadership. Using the research of principal leadership competencies and school culture, this study will determine if there is a connection between the two subjects.

**Positive school culture.** Principal leadership competencies affect school culture in a positive way. As previously expounded, culture consists of values and beliefs within an organization (Schein, 2004). It culminates groups of people who share assumptions, as they are present and developed over time. School culture is understood as the thoughts and beliefs that culminate a school site; it is important and has significance on its organizational members (Price, 2012). A principal influences positive school culture through leadership (Habegger, 2012; Wasickso, 2007).

Positive school cultures are those that are influenced by a principal whose job is to be a supporter for a very understanding school atmosphere (Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckennooghe, & Aelterman, 2008). The positive support of a principal weighs heavily on teachers' connection to the school (Petty, Fitchell, & O'Connor, 2012). This atmosphere is influenced by the principal and weighs heavily on the overall performance of the organization. The principal has the ability to support the teachers and staff by the factors of watching and giving responses to staff members (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). Teachers and staff members should work together to create

this support (Ziegler & Ramage, 2013). Being supportive as a principal is also positively influenced by allowing teachers to have more independence (Hoerr, 2013). The principal can support by supporting the teachers' abilities to teach and giving the teacher individuality (Hoerr, 2013). This ability to support is one of many factors important to a school culture.

### **Statement of the Problem**

School sites are expected to embrace efficient cultures that foster success. The specific competencies needed to become an effective leader who influences school culture are not usually taught in schools. These leadership competencies are those that are learned by the leader and developed as the leader increases effectiveness. It is important to study the research that provides leadership competencies needed to influence school culture. The problem is based on the interpretation of a need to provide stronger analysis of the literature and to add to the current research about school culture and leadership competency influence. Dr. Christopher Wagner's studies reveal that a healthy organization includes "Tangible support from leaders at the school and district levels" (Wagner, 2006). The support from the principal leader at the school site was the main focus of the study. The problem is linked to the purpose of the study in the reality of a need for improvement in education. The problem is the leadership abilities that are inherent in principal leaders and their aptitudes, which foster a positive culture at the school site. The problem is driven by research and interpreted by the need to further the study of educational practices in principal leadership.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study is for the research surveys, along with the review of literature to show relation in the influence of leadership and leadership competencies on a school culture organization. The leadership focus assists in determining what specific leadership

competencies affect school cultures. Leadership in a school culture is existent throughout a school site. Acknowledging that the presence of leaders in the classroom, in the office, and in the groups that exist in a school site, the leadership focus of this study is on principal leadership.

The method of analysis is quantitative, using survey data to ascertain (a) if any relationships exist between leadership competencies and school culture; (b) teachers' perceptions and school culture; and (c) a combination of school culture and principal competencies perceived by teachers on four demographic variables.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?

H<sub>0</sub>1. There is no correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

H<sub>A</sub>1. There is a significant correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

RQ2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, what is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?

H<sub>0</sub>2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, there is no correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

H<sub>A</sub>2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, there is a significant correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

### **Limitations**

The study has specific limitations that are presented. The study is centrally located in Southern California in a school district. The focus is on four of the high schools and seven of the middle schools that are in this district. The limitation is related to the proximity of the study and the participants in this proximity. The study is focused solely on the perceptions of teachers. The

primary focus of teachers' perceptions excludes the beliefs and values of other staff members that are at the school site.

The study being performed is limited to a 1- to 2-month time frame, depending on teachers' responses and data collection. The potential for more data could be presented if given 12 months or longer to gather more data. The data may not be representative of the entire population of teachers' perceptions of principal leadership. There may have been teachers who did not have time to participate or chose not to participate. There is a potential risk of a nonresponsive error of the quantitative data. This bias presents limitations to the data and the findings. Also, the participants' responses will be restricted to the personal experiences of the school sites.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations of the study are interpreted by the findings. The findings are not true for all people at all times because they focus on a specific area of Southern California. The findings are not true for all people because they are limited to the teachers that choose to respond to the survey.

### **Assumptions**

With this study there is an assumption that a relationship exists among principal leadership competencies and school culture. The leader is assumed to have an impactful influence on a school culture organization. There is the assumption that teachers will answer honestly when being surveyed on principal leadership. As an observer in the field, the researcher will have assumptions about how the teachers will respond to the questions and competencies. This assumption about responses is a way that the researcher tries to understand how people behave and why they behave that way (Bryant, 2004). To better understand assumptions, it is

best explained that nearly all of the research studies performed will be based on assumptions (Bryant, 2004). The assumptions brought to this study, are those that attempt to explain teachers' perceptions about culture. The assumption is that teachers' perceptions reveal that principal leadership is an important role in defining and creating a school culture that is positive and supports the teachers and the school staff.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. *Culture*: The personality of a group of people that presents itself in an organization in its values, beliefs, and assumptions, is its culture (Schein, 2004).
2. *Positive*: A perspective that carries itself in one's disposition or outlook on a particular person or organization (Wasickso, 2007).
3. *Competencies*: The specific abilities or capabilities a person or people possess (Gulcan, 2012).
4. *Leadership*: A skill that a person embraces that inspires others to act in a particular way (Cashman, 2008).
5. *School*: An organization that was enacted to provide educational instruction to pupils ("Definition of a School-Content," 2013, p. 1).
6. *Principal*: A person in a school organization who holds a position of leadership and must ensure adequate education for all students in a school site while adhering to school district and state policies ("School Principal", 1997, p. 1).
7. *School district*: A governing body that oversees operations of school sites in a particular region for sufficient and fair education while obeying state and local guidelines.

8. *Perceptions*: Views or opinions of specific individuals or groups (Russell, Williams, & Gleason-Gomez, 2010).
9. *Organization*: A group of people within a certain area that associate together for personal or business motives (Schein, 2004).
10. *Satisfaction*: A feeling of happiness or contentment in a person or organization (Boyd et al., 2011).
11. *Retention*: Maintaining or holding a certain position (Boyd et al., 2011).
12. *Influence*: Inspiration or impact of a specific idea or concept (Cashman, 2008).
13. *Disposition*: Temperament or mood that is present in a person or organization (Wasickso, 2007)
14. *Vision*: An image or idea that is presented to one's self or to others (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Mitgang, 2012).
15. *Trust*: Depending on some other person's capability or strong points (Trust, n.d.).
16. *Feedback*: Advantageous knowledge or analysis that people may offer to other people to make stronger or better work etc. (Feedback, n.d.).
17. *Common Core Standards*: A set of standards that show the abilities that each state must teach in their classrooms that are connected to a common set of core standards to have consistency throughout (Layton, 2013).

### **Significance of Study**

A study of school site culture and principal leadership is important for several reasons. First, understanding that beliefs and values present in an organization institute a culture, this may help school sites reveal underlying assumptions and beliefs that are valuable to the school. Second, this study may provide some information that could be useful to districts that want to

determine the competencies needed by a principal leader to inspire a school site. Third, researchers have studied leadership competencies needed in school sites, which are generalized to most all organizations. This study will be focused in Southern California and offer different perspectives of research and data analysis. Fourth, this study may contribute to future research of school culture and principal leadership. This study may generate valuable results that assist in establishing the principal leadership competencies that are most influential in a school site organization.

The United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan gave a speech at the National Association of Secondary School Principals National Conference, and he discussed the focus of his next term in office, which will be school leadership (U.S. Department of Education, 2013c). The secretary believes that school leadership by principals should be the main focus of study for the effects on a school site, and more money should be allotted to preparing the principals to lead schools along with emphasizing the importance of the position of principal. His focus is to improve the leaders in the school sites, which are the principals. He will be dedicated on researching and observing approaches and procedures to bolster an improved education system. Duncan's position as the main advocate for education in the United States only reinforces the position that principal leadership is an area that should be studied and researched to help improve school sites. It is beneficial to study improvement measures that would help create a better learning environment for students and produce more educationally adept people in society.

The Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, understands the value in principal leadership and spent a week with department officials observing the work that principals do in school sites (U.S. Department of Education, 2013b). During this time the officials were identifying the numerous ways a principal influences a school site. Duncan referred to principals as the "nation's school



leaders” (para. 4) and expressed his beliefs of the power they have to make quality education attainable. This leadership recognition further states the importance of studying school leadership and finding what competencies a leader in a school setting best employs.

In further understanding of the importance of leadership, Education Secretary Arne Duncan has enacted the “Principal Ambassador Fellows (PAFs) program” (U.S. Department of Education Arne,” 2013a, para. 3). To further explain, Arne stated:

Launched last February, the PAF program was created in recognition of the vital role principals play in every aspect of a school’s success—from instruction to the school environment to staff performance—and to better connect their expertise and talent with education policymakers. (para. 5)

The program moreover expresses the significance of principal leadership in schools, and the acknowledgement of policy makers in identifying the principals’ significance. Duncan states the role of principals as the cornerstone in understanding school triumphs (U.S. Department of Education 2013a). This keystone idea is understood by researching principals and understanding the effects that they may have on a school and its culture.

Each state is measured by its performance on a scale and ranked as whole in comparison with other states. The states are given a grade and percentage based on how well they perform. *Education Week*, a publication that provides the latest news and information regarding education, published the report card for the United States. According to the report for the United States educational numbers, the average for the country is 76.9% C+, and the overall grade for California is a 75.5% C (“Quality Counts,” 2014). If this data was being used on a transcript for students, it would be a passing grade for the U.S. average and the state of California, but it is not being used for passing purposes only for measurement. This measurement shows that California

does have a substantial need to look into its educational processes to improve the grade that the state is being given. Although the grade is used in schools for passing purposes, states are not required to simply pass their students but to prepare them for furthering education and careers. With this being understood, states need to improve the level of education being offered and especially California. The state alone does not meet the national average in its report card.

The study presented investigates the culture of schools and the implications of leadership to determine the best competencies of leaders that influence the school culture. Overall the performance of a school is important and its culture and leadership are two areas, which provide insight into the school site itself.

### **Overview of Methodology**

The study has been piloted with its surveys to subject matter experts (teachers) at the investigator's present school site. A Quantitative approach is used to examine principal leadership competencies with The Competency Approach survey tool created by the researcher to examine leadership competencies that imitates The Trait Approach design (Northouse, 2010). The School Culture Triage Survey (Wagner, 2006) is used to determine the health of the school culture and connection to principal leadership. The methodology is used to determine the relationship between principal leadership and school culture health as determined by Dr. Wagner's cultural survey.

### **Summary**

School culture and principal leadership competencies are two important areas to understand in the area of education. Teachers' perceptions of this may be useful in determining a relation between a positive school culture and leadership. The introduction of this study gives the basic outline of the study, with first introducing the topic of education. The introduction also

displays the concepts covered along with the research questions and the definition of terms. The hypotheses generated are based on a review of the literature. The limitations and delimitations presented in the study are identified because they may impact the study and its results. The significance of the study expounds the reasoning for studying this topic and its implications on future researchers.

### **Organization of Research Study**

Chapter one has presented the introduction with an explanation of the significance of this study and its implications on education. Chapter 2 will present a Review of Literature pertaining to the study and will identify leadership competencies from the literature. The Methodology will be further elucidated in Chapter 3. The results will be displayed and illuminated in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will include a summary of the findings, conclusions from the findings, and a discussion along with information for further studies.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### Introduction

The purpose of this review of literature is to examine the affect of leadership competencies on teachers' perceptions of school culture. This review has five parts. First, culture is reviewed; it is vital to study culture to understand its characteristics and affects in order to understand school culture and organization. Second, the complexity of school culture is presented. It is useful to identify the contributing factors that make up the identity of a school as an organization. The third area examined is leadership, specifically the role of principal and the corresponding competencies. The fourth part of study will explore leadership competencies and principal leadership competencies and the effects they produce on the culture. This area of the study will look at how the school culture is affected by leadership. The fifth area of study is teachers' perceptions of school culture and principals' leadership and how it impacts their daily lives. In addition to teachers' perceptions there will also be an examination of political influences on principal leadership.

This literature review will examine the underlying effects that leadership, specifically principal leadership, has on teachers' perceptions of a school culture organization. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the understanding of the impact of principal leadership on a school culture organization. Precisely it will explore the leadership competencies that contribute to a positive school culture as perceived by teachers.

### Culture

**Defining culture.** It is a formidable task to define a term that has been researched and analyzed over the years, as society becomes more aware of the presence of displayed behaviors within a group. Many theorists have sought to identify particular characteristics to define what a

culture is. Schein (2004), who wrote *Educational Culture and Leadership*, studies culture and its effects on an organization. He wrote:

The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

The preceding definition further illuminates the behavior of a group, as one that shares similar suppositions. The principles of culture are learned within the group and are inherited by new members as the assimilation development cultivates (Schein, 2004). These principles are part of the cultural distinctiveness of an organization (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Culture is not only a practice of understanding how to learn the problem solving processes, but the different beliefs and behaviors those members within the group exhibit (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

**Elements of culture.** With deeper investigation into culture, one may discover that certain behaviors are commonly shared in a group of people. The behaviors may grow over time to exhibit specific beliefs among an organization that are shared to neophytes (Bolman & Deal, 2008). An organization's specific beliefs and values are those that members may have brought into the organization, or they may have been developed as time was spent immersed in the culture (Schein, 2004). To get to a group's core beliefs is to understand these beliefs and values, which are fostered in an organization. With society being highly diversified, it is important to learn these behaviors and beliefs that present themselves within a culture (Senge, 2006).

One idea that is used to understand culture in an organization Schein (2004) coined is the genes of the culture. According to Schein, just as every individual is made up of specific genes

that define and identify that person; an organization has specific genes. This concept of organizational genes may help the researchers pinpoint the complexity of culture. Schein uses this idea to describe the way the members of an organization function together. Recognizing the factors and beliefs that present themselves in a culture, is one way that an organization can be aware of its cultural genes. When studying a culture it may be recognized that culture embodies the underappreciated morals that define and organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). With these characteristics present, it makes it clearer to understand the culture of an organization. All of these genes that provide characterization help clarify the reasons people act certain ways (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013).

Culture is not only a framework of human interactions, but also a conceptual personality (Schein, 2004). Groups that are aware of their shared beliefs and commonalities may identify with each other (Bolman & Deal, 2008). An organization has this disposition as well; it may be referred to as the organization's culture (Schein, 2004). A person identifies with a certain set of characteristics and mannerisms that make up his or her identity. When these mannerisms are presented in a group setting, they may be the defining characteristics that the group relates to (Hofstede et al., 2010). The personality of a group is then explained by the genes that have been threaded throughout the organization as integration into the culture deepens (Schein, 2004). In addition to studying the identity of culture, it is important to study the importance of culture.

Culture is important because of its influence on an organization. As the study of culture extends, Kotter (2012) analyzes the cultures of organizations and the influences of culture on an organization. As Kotter explained, culture is essential because it may impact the performance of an organization. Therefore, those who study culture may want to identify what aspects of culture exist, and the influence that these aspects have on the behavior of its members (Hofstede et al.,

2010; Schein, 2004). People interact in groups and identify with the differences and similarities of others; these interactions are part of the cultural influence (Deal & Peterson, 2009). As time progresses, these members may begin to resemble each other and develop similar characteristics that help define the culture (Schein, 2004). The cultural characteristics are influential and are an important part of the organization.

**Teachers in a school organization.** An important group of members in a school site are its teachers. According to an article in the *Educational Leadership* journal, teachers have many responsibilities, which contribute to the framework of the school and the students' involvement in the organization (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Some of the responsibilities in a school may be to: provide knowledge to students, guide, encourage, learn, and simplify learning. With all of these responsibilities, it is important for there to be clear leadership in the school site that supports the teachers (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The teachers are leaders in their classrooms with students but also assigned leaders for the school site as an organization who provide leadership.

It is important to study culture and understand how culture influences an organization. Cameron and Quinn (2011), two theorists who study organizational culture, explain the overwhelming influence that culture has on an organization and its output. They studied the areas of organizations and the possible identifying characteristics of cultures. Many different people exist within an organization, and with this come different kinds of cultures that emerge and develop. The effect is related to the operational workings of an organization. Culture explains the way people work and the reason that people work (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The culture of an organization carries certain dispositions and reveals specific traits of its members within the organization. The members are characterized by the values and assumptions that they display within the organization (Sackmann, 1992). As stated previously, these

characteristics are important because they determine the way an organization operates (Buchanan, 2012). Many people study culture to better understand an organization and clarify expectations and roles (Muhammad, 2009). These roles and expectations are used to further study the factors of influence. Therefore culture may evoke a sense of the personality of an organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). These influencing genes are present in any culture, including the school culture. The school culture is an area of culture that is part of an organization that is made up of several silos that each classroom shares that is part of the larger organization.

### **School Culture**

An important organizational culture that impacts the daily lives of many adults and children is the school culture (Zhu, Devos, & Li, 2011). In this section, culture refers to the values and beliefs present in a school. The California Department of Education (CDE) Web site gives information about most of the educational terminology in education today. It is useful to identify the CDE definition of school (“Definition of a School,” 2013):

The term “school” is used to refer to all educational institutions having the following characteristics: 1) One or more teachers to give instruction; 2) An assigned administrator; 3) Based in one or more buildings; and 4) Enrolled or prospectively enrolled students. (p. 1).

A school is a place of learning for students and a place for teachers to educate. When identifying with a school, it is important to first recognize the culture that the school encompasses. School culture is studied to better understand the beliefs and values that embody a school site and incorporate its members. School culture can be thought of as the adhesive that holds a school together (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Muhammad (2009), who wrote *Transforming*



*School Culture How to Overcome Staff Division*, succinctly explained that many factors that contribute to a school culture; some of them include behavioral sciences and historical study of goods and services. Although this explanation is very concise, it encapsulates the significance of culture on many levels of meaning. Many levels of meaning and people are impacted by school culture (Zhu et al., 2011). Along with meaning, school culture can be assessed for its health and need for improvement.

### **School Culture Elements**

Dr. Christopher Wagner of the Center for Improving School Culture and [schoolculture.net](http://schoolculture.net), has joined with several educational researchers to determine the best way to measure and fix the culture of a school (“History of the Center,” 2012). This organization believes that culture is important in a school culture for the overall production and success of a school organization. School culture is so strong and significant that with the research of organizations, many avenues are investigated to improve the culture. The school culture must first be understood and assessed. Wagner (2006) developed the School Culture Triage Survey to determine the health of a school culture.

Wagner’s (2006) research measures a school culture on three compartments being presented in the environment. The three elements are: (a) Professional collaboration, (b) Affiliative and collegial relationships, (c) Efficacy or self-determination (Wagner, 2006). These concepts will serve as the conceptual framework of this study to explore teachers’ perceptions of school culture. The first of these elements of school culture is the “professional collaboration” (p. 42). This area examines the way groups of people in the school site come together to solve problems, work on projects, or practice daily activities. This type of cooperation in a school site is important when measuring a school site and its effectiveness and successes.

The second area of culture to be explored is “affiliative and collegial relationships” (Wagner, 2006, p. 42). This discusses how well school members interact and care for each other and also how they feel regarded. This aspect of culture examines the human influence of interactions on a school site culture. With the variety of people in any given site, many backgrounds are dependent upon one another for success. When these varying cultures are supportive of one another, Wagner’s research shows that the overall school culture may be healthy.

The final area of school culture that will be examined is “efficacy or self-determination” (Wagner, 2006, p. 42). This area examines the motives of the employees and their sense of worth in the organization. Having a sense of worth to an organization is not only important for terms of understanding culture but also for retaining members of an organization and determining what factors of a cultural organization are important.

**Affiliative collegiality.** Clearly, a school culture is multifaceted. Culture is intricately webbed in a school site, which makes it intricate (Zhu et al., 2011). The school’s culture is related to the interactions and associations of members that make up the school organization (Buchanan, 2012). Clearly expressed, it is not merely a definition but a set of affects that influence interactions. Collegiality occurs in multiple settings within a school site (Deal & Peterson, 2009). For example, the interactions in the teacher’s lounge, lunch area, the teaching practices, and the implementation of the professional development trainings are all impacted by culture. As convolutedly as school culture is explained, it is expressed in the preceding explanation about how culture exists in everyday interactions and its affects on every part of the school. The interactions could be an informal way to collaborate. Culture is visible throughout the school in many different areas.

***Professional exchange of ideas.*** Deal and Peterson (2009) explain: “Schools that value collegiality and collaboration offer a better opportunity for the social and professional exchange of ideas, the enhancement and spread of effective practices, and widespread problem solving” (p. 13). Groups in schools are existent to the cultural organization and influence the school culture. Interactions in school sites may also separate into factions that affect culture (Muhammad, 2009), and are deeply woven into the existence of the organization (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Deal and Peterson (2009), explain these clans as ones formed through relationships over time that deeply bind members of an organization. These clans are formed by the lives that they shape and they offer a strong binding connection between its members. Not only are these clans important to recognize but they are also rooted into a profounder part of comprehending a school (Eller & Eller, 2009). These groups are formed many ways, and the disposition of these groups greatly influences school culture. A “ritual” for a school group could be meeting for lunch and conversation which could be an important way to connect to a school site (Deal and Peterson, 2009, p. 93). If a school is going to thrive, it must be built on a culture that is positive for better overall performance (Massey, 2013). A way that a school interacts in groups is in the lunchroom.

***Informal exchange of ideas.*** Culture can be visible in many interactions in the school site. One place that the culture of a school can be visible is in the lunchroom interactions among teachers (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Teachers enter the room to order lunch, while openly chatting about various things such as student behavior or educational happenings with other staff members present. This lunchroom discussion is a way that teachers interact and discuss the occurrences of the day. These discussions reflect cultural aspects and may not easily be diagnosed or observed. Deal and Peterson (2009) call this “The symbolism of storytelling” (p. 42). Stories told or talks about the subject matter in the classroom, are ways that new members

may be may be influenced by the viewpoints or assumptions of others. The interactions, either positive or negative, have an impact on the school culture (Muhammad, 2009). These interactions can contribute novel ideas to the school site. It is important for school sites to identify the impacts of culture within the school, such as student and teacher interaction that may be visible in everyday interactions for support of culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

***Classroom culture.*** Teachers contribute to the culture of the school by what they do in the classroom (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The specific ways that teachers connect to students through lesson planning and direct teaching and their disciplines practices impact the school culture. Different teaching methods may also impact the school culture. Some teachers that provide detailed power point lessons, others use more visual media such as: drawings and plot diagrams. These differing ways of teaching are linked to the personality or disposition of the teacher and directly connect to the overall culture of the school (Price, 2012). The distinctive ways a teacher may teach are related to his or her individuality within a school (Olsen, 2008). The individuality that is evident has a direct impact on the school culture as it relates to beliefs and values (Sackmann, 1992). Teachers are one way that culture connects people to a school, and groups are another way. Along with teachers, professional development trainings are a way to connect teachers to the culture.

***Collaboration through professional development.*** The professional development trainings that are required by educators to either further education, or learn about the newest standards influence the school's culture. These are times set aside that offers teachers the opportunity to collaborate within a school day or after school; they are important because they encourage community (Deal & Peterson, 2009). All of these interactions form traditions and rituals, which are important for recognition and collaboration. When teachers collaborate at these

meetings, the interactions may be viewed as positive or negative. These reactions are then incorporated into the school's culture (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004). The commitment that teachers have to the success of students is fused into the properties that affect the school culture (Muhammad, 2009). Professional development meetings are intended to offer mechanisms of support for the teacher to impact student success. However, they are a catalyst for the teachers to collaborate. If the meeting is not deemed useful, the teachers may spend the allotted time venting negatively about the problems that they encountered during the week (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Teachers want to feel they are productive, so the professional development meetings that are used for collaboration are most affective when they are filled with information that aligns with the intended agenda. These types of regular meetings at professional development trainings also have an impact on the school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

The professional development meetings are also used for collaboration within like groups in an organization. These groups collaborate to discuss classroom techniques and lesson planning. The professional meetings are referred to as "professional learning communities." These meetings could be to discuss strategies, like "professional learning communities" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 65) used in schools for collaboration. The professional learning communities are given to have allotted time to work together and plan as a team to form a "sense of community" (p. 27).

The meetings are just one technique to influence culture, and specific groups are within a school are another. It is not only essential to understand school culture and the groups that are incorporated into that culture, but also the facets of school culture as an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Teachers in professional collaboration feel involved in a "shared meaning" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 69) like to help in decision making and collaborating.

### **School Culture Implications on Academics**

School culture may also impact the academics of the school. In a study of 29 Texas schools, researchers Macneil, Prater, and Busch (2009) looked at different category types of schools and their climates using an Organizational Health Inventory survey. Their purpose was to show if there is a difference between different school categories and their climates. The results showed that a school's culture could have a positive or negative effect on success. Schools with more solid cultures that leaders understood, have better scores and increased teacher satisfaction. This study shows the impact that school culture has on the performance of a school site. The importance of culture and its many facets are portrayed in the results of the schools' academics.

Reflections of greatness are mapped in a school that promotes knowledge through its culture (Certo & Fox, 2002). It is good for schools to embrace the culture and cultivate an environment that thrives on the development of student's minds. The cultural environment impacts teachers' teaching and students learning (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). This environment can be positively embraced and directly reflect positive teaching for students. When students are met with a good learning environment, the school's academic performance thrives.

### **School as a Cultural Organization**

**Organization defined.** Culture and school culture are concepts that have been examined and explained to understand the inner workings of an organization. Another way to examine the impact of leadership on a school is to look at schools as organizations. Bolman and Deal (2008) explain that organizations have their own set of values and that these values are what culminate the group into an organization.

**Self-Determination/efficacy.** School as an organization is conceptually understood to capture the values and beliefs of the school site members and has the important task of

instruction for the students (Saphier, King, & D'Auria, 2006; Spiro, 2013). Organizational culture as it applies to the school, is a concept that identifies what motivates educators and what drives the success of the school (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Our nation's future depends on the success of our students and the choices that they make when they leave the school organization. The school organization is one that encourages its members to do well.

The organization of a school can be seen as a business of educating students (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Everyone in the school organization has the significant role of helping students attain the knowledge needed to succeed (Purinton, 2013). This role is to fix problems and expect the changes in order to help prevent a problem (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Effective organizations have members who desire to do their best work and are knowledge driven and desire to be there (Kaplan, 2011). Each member has an obligation to assist in the contribution to success; the contributions will be their best when members' perceptions of the organization are positive. The perspective of a member is a reflection of how he or she feels towards the organization. This perspective is mirrored onto other members of the culture. School members should respect each other and value each other's input and position as an "appreciation of others" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 187). The true perspective of each member of a school organization is a process by which everyone performs a job that complements the success of the students. In this type of organization, leaders contribute efforts to stimulate the potential of the members of the school organization (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). The potential of the school organization is its ability to educate students (Purinton, 2013). The potential of a school organization may be enhanced when leaders contribute to the culture with positive efforts and actions. The school as a culture should agree about decisions and goals of the school, as a sense of cohesion (Wagner, 2006).

## Leadership

The study of leadership is crucial in analyzing organizational culture. As Cashman (2008) expressed, leadership is trustworthy power that stimulates worth in other people. Leaders have ideals or beliefs that are part of the individual leader's cultural background (Schein, 2004). When the leader becomes part of an organization these beliefs and values may present themselves to organizational members (Senge, 2006). Additionally, a leader is connected to the cultural manifestations of an organization (Schneider et al., 2013). When a leader is genuine in his or her influence, then the organization will benefit from the vibrant relationship, which is why it is important to study leadership and its influence within an organization (Llopis, 2013). It is imperative for a leader to be cognizant of the role he or she possesses and the influence that they have within an organization.

The influences of a leader in an organization are based on the principles that the leader possesses, so it is important that a leader is cognizant of his or her principles (Eich, 2012). Goleman (2004) discusses his theory of Emotional Intelligence and the basis of its components. He explains that being cognizant of the impact of one's emotional state on others is important because leaders who understand this display true leadership. The values that affect an organization are the leader's viewpoints; the leader may have viewpoints that are expressed in ways that may be encouraging (Collins, 2011). These ways could be through interactions the leader engages in at the organization. Each leader's outlook may positively or negatively affect an organization. The influences of a leader's outlook are important to understand for affecting the organization (Cashman, 2008). The leader's cognizance of his or her personal viewpoints is a key to accomplishing organization success (Myatt, 2012). This leadership outlook will also define the role that a leader reflects toward the organization (Senge, 2006).



A leader's role may be further highlighted as one with many roles practiced by the leader of the organization (Kaplan, 2011). All of these roles are equally important and influential on the culture of the organization. In every organization a leader drives the inner workings of the enterprise (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). The leader is responsible for maintaining organization efficiency and success through his or her roles. The leader must also have a responsibility of being united with the organization and its culture that provides influence and encourages the organization to its fulfillment of needs (Kuhlmann, 2010). The direct influence of culture is important to grasp for understanding of influence and culture (Karakose, 2008).

The leader is one person of influence within an organization, but other leaders are present who lead departments, areas, and different disciplines that participate in the success of the organization. To explain further, every organization has a titled leader but these other leaders help contribute to an organization's culture and influence (Covey, 2008). The other leaders who work in different areas of an organization in leadership positions influence others by their duties that are performed at the organization like providing support to other members, this further details the impact of many influential people. When there is a greater leader that impacts the differing positions in an organization, then the business will show significant accomplishments as well (J. C. Maxwell, 2013). Leaders are central to an organization because they show others how to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The role of importance and influence in a leader is a characteristic that affects the organization.

It is important to understand that when one is a leader that their leadership encompasses many different parts of their individual characteristics. According to Cashman (2008), an important positive characteristic of a leader is to be mindful. Research shows that when leaders are conscious of their actions and the impacts they have on others this is efficacious to the

organization and its culture. As a leader, it is imperative to know the impact that one has on others (Kuhlmann, 2010). What a leader says or does impacts others in the organization. For example, a leader may say something that offends a person and this could harm the relationship between that person and the organization. Ruiz (2001) explains in his book *The Four Agreements*, it is of the utmost importance to practice being flawless with what you say to others. Words have a significant impression and reaction on the relationships built with others and it is important for a leader to be aware of this (J. C. Maxwell, 2013). If a leader's behavior is representative of an organization, then he or she must be flawless with the words spoken in order to maintain the integrity of leadership in the organization. It is the responsibility of the leader to understand that everything that is said must be out of the result of thoughtful choices understanding their impact on the others.

Along with a thoughtful leadership, a leader has a responsibility to an organization to inspire individuals to achieve distinction (Eich, 2012). With the inspiration of a strong leader, organizations have the power to achieve magnificent things (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Wagner, 2006). If a leader is not inspiring to others, then the organization may be cheated out of the recognition it could otherwise achieve. People want to feel that they have significance and worth in their lives (Frankl, 2006). Clearly, leaders have the responsibility to ensure that the organization is performing at its best (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; ten Burggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, & Slegers, 2012). Knowing and understand the positive aspects of success by modeling, speaking, and inspiring are just a few ways to define a positive leader. These words refer to a leader at a school site as well.

**Leadership in schools.** Leadership has a great impact on the positive functioning of a school site. Covey (2008) discusses the impact that leadership has on a school site. Leaders are

present everywhere in a school's functioning and have impactful results on a school (Goulet, Jefferson, & Szwed, 2012). An example of the varying leaders may be: the principal, teacher, secretary, or student at the school site. A principal is the designated leader of the school site to ensure that the principles and values are correctly applied for student achievements (ten Bruggencate et al., 2012). The teacher is a leader in the classroom and has a great affect on the student's view of the school culture. The secretary leads the office to manage meetings, and various other important aspects that pertain to the inner workings of the school. These are just a few examples of leaders because many people contribute to the leadership of a school. It is also important to understand that leadership encompasses an entire organization.

The concept of leadership has more meaning than just a title. It has an importance to the culture; meaning is shown to members of the organization by leadership. Leadership is beneficial to a school culture when the whole organization is working together sharing meaning. Leadership and meaning is also about acceptance of the school and its leader, when a school accepts the leader the culture is more positive. Deal and Peterson (2009) study school culture and share the basic traditions from which the schools were built. It is important that leaders understand the meaning that is created in the school with the students and the application to culture (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013).

Leadership affects everyone in school; the students in the classroom are impacted, along with the teachers and their self-assurance (Engels et al., 2008). When students are dropped off at schools, parents must know that their children are learning and growing at the school organization (Deal & Peterson, 2009). All of the preceding examples further explain the reasoning that started the public school system. A school is part of a meaningful community and every person has an impact on the upbringing of the pupils in a learning environment.

Along with meaning, dreams and visions connect each person to the organization.

Whether it is a story of a child's parent who did not have the chance at an education, or the student who did not know that he or she was good enough to succeed but dreamed it could be possible. All of these connections tie in to the culture of the school (Deal & Peterson, 2009). This culture is important and must be understood by the leader of the school and his or her impact of dreams and visions (The New Teacher Project, 2012; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). In addition to the dreams and vision of the leader and organization members, there is community involvement.

### **Principal**

**Principal defined.** A principal has the important task of caring for a school site to ensure its success on many levels (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Each state has its own definition for this title. The term principal as defined by edjoin.org, a Web site provided for educators in the state of California to search for employment explains the job functions of a principal: "Under supervision of the Superintendent, shall be responsible for the operation of a specific school consistent with District policy, goals, and objectives" ("School Principal," 1997, p. 1). Clearly stated, a principal is accountable for ensuring that a school is operating with the policies and perspectives of the district. This description is basic and refers to the needs of the school site not particularly the needs of each individual member. A quality principal leader has positive outcomes for a school site (Certo & Fox, 2002). The task of caring for each member is understood further when examining the roles of the principal (Roekel, 2008). A principal promotes the spirit of the culture of the school (Hollomon, Rouse, & Farrington, 2007; Sprio, 2013).

Another role that a principal holds is to ensure the satisfaction of the members of the organization through teaching. A principal has a role that is important to the organization to

teach others (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009; Prytula, Noonan, & Hellsten, 2013). The principal teaches others how to embrace the school spirit. This principal has the responsibility of leading the organization as a whole by this teaching. The role of principal leadership uses teaching by displaying his or her influence.

**Principal as a school leader.** The term principal is used to define a person who runs the inner workings of a school however; a principal is also a leader of the school (Fullan, 2002). Many times a principal's job is focused on managing people when the most important job that he or she has is to be a leader to the school. Schools need principals as leaders to encourage the successes and achievements of the school sites. It is important for principals to identify with being leaders of learning and understand this responsibility (Purinton, 2013). When principals are able to understand the role as a school leader, this influence has an impact of improvement on the school as a whole (Lambert, 2006).

**Principal as a leader of influence.** The principal serves as a leader of a school and the leadership role is important in inspiring others. The influence of a principal is vast and extends beyond the office and onto the school grounds (Balyer, 2012; Jackson & Marriott, 2012). A principal has the responsibility to align the organization with the objectives of the school site (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Principals are known to be the reason that a school is effective in its operations (Branch et al., 2013). With this knowledge of impact, it is important that a principal is efficient and leads the school with positive practices (Boyd et al., 2010; Hughes 2012; Macneil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

**Positivity.** Positivity is reflected in the entire organization and is an important quality in a school principal. This may be done in many ways, but positivity is an important way to influence an organization. Understanding one's feelings and passions is a form of knowing yourself and

this is a powerful characteristic in a school principal (Gardner, 2004). It is the principal's duty to establish the quality of the school site (Holloman et al., 2007; Mitgang, 2012). Influence extends to all areas of the school (Supovitz et al., 2010).

Modeling positivity is an important role for an improved educational institute (Maxwell, 2013). Exhibiting leadership as a principal is important because others will observe the interactions and values that the leader reflects (Llopis, 2013, Feb. 2). When principals show others by their actions, the organization may change their performances (Lambert, 2006). A principal serves as the leader of a school site. As leaders they must reflect the behavior they want to see in staff members (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). It is important for leaders to see the impression that they leave on others in the organization on a daily basis (Gulcan, 2012; Kaplan, 2011).

Principals should behave in ways that they want to see in others. If a principal wants an organization to be happy, this leader must also show happiness in daily interactions and conversations (Lambert, 2006). If the principal as a leader wants an organization to be compliant with school rules, then this leader must also be compliant with school rules. A principal as the leader of an organization will reflect, by role modeling, the personal values that are important (Schein, 2004). Exhibiting ways how others should act is a concept that is essential when understanding the roles of a principal. A principal who is competent with certain characteristics or roles of leadership benefits the culture of an organization (Gulcan, 2012).

### **Leadership Competencies of Principals**

The leadership competencies that a principal possesses are important to understand and have a positive influence on school culture (DeVita et al., 2007). A competency is a trait or characteristic that a person possesses which is visible in his or her interactions and general

personality. Some believe that they may be taught, and others believe they are inherent in a person (Doh, 2003; Purinton, 2013). The competencies researched are those that are visible in a leader, they are not solely concentrated on those that are learned or inherent, but those that are present. The competencies below were found in literature to affect positively a cultural organization: (a) Positive disposition, (b) Supports social relationships, (c) Cultivate a shared belonging, (d) Focus of vision, (e) Enhance trust, and (f) Offer/accept feedback. These competencies provide a framework for understanding the leadership of a school culture organization. They are the conceptual framework that will be used to examine teachers' perceptions of the affects of leadership on school culture.

**Positive disposition.** A positive disposition has been shown to be effective in leadership (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013). Principals should reflect appreciating others in their leadership capabilities. According to Rath and Clifton (2007) in studies of positivity, leaders who are positive and share this positive disposition with others have greater results on organizational success. Rath and Clifton conducted several studies that determined the affects of positivity on organizations and satisfaction. They examined 15 million companies all over the world through surveys to see the positive impacts on organizations. The results of these studies indicate that a positive disposition has an important impact on organizations by its leaders. Principal leaders would be beneficial in modeling this positivity. Rath and Clifton explained that through the research of these people and their companies, leaders could impact the productivity of an organization through positivity.

Positive feelings include the feeling of appreciation of others. People want to be appreciated and valued for their efforts especially in a school site (Sahin, 2004). Appreciation is contagious and affects others (Emmons, 2008). In a school organization, teachers have constant

contact with the students. The principal leader can directly influence the teachers in the classroom with positive disposition, this in turn, will positively impact the students. A good leader is efficacious, which comes with positivity (Wasickso, 2007). If the principal is showing positivity to teachers, this will reflect on the students.

Positivity is important in schools (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). Appreciation is the inspiration that generates worth in an organization (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013; Cashman, 2008). Studies show that people want to be valued and appreciate the connectivity to an organization (Hughes, 2012; Umlas, 2013). Hughes (2012) studied 789 public school teachers; she surveyed teachers to see the impacts of several variables on teacher retention. One variable was teacher efficacy. These participants revealed that it is important to improve cooperation levels of the school organization and the more satisfaction of teachers, the more they wanted to continue teaching, which leads to teachers' retention in school sites. Umlas (2013), researches leadership in her book *Grateful Leadership*. She studies the ways leaders can better lead organizations. This can be done with recognizing and interacting from the leader. Principals should be competent in leading schools with positivity to succeed (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). When a teacher is recognized for the efforts made in an organization, there could be higher levels of satisfaction are higher. Appreciation and positivity bring energy to an organization. School sites are benefited with the energy that comes from positivity. According to Emmons (2008), individuals are happier and have an overall positive disposition when they feel appreciative (Umlas, 2013). The principal who exhibits a positive disposition while leading the school arouses this appreciative feeling shown to teachers.

Effective principals are aware of the ways to encourage people to feel positive in their work (Eller & Eller, 2009). Happiness is shared in many ways by a variety of people (Achor,



2010; Umlas, 2013). Principals have the power to influence the positive interactions in a school site culture with happiness that is shared (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Principals who have positive interactions with teachers promote a better working atmosphere (Hughes, 2012). This power is transmitted throughout the organization and has an impact on the overall disposition of the school (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The principals who deliver results of positivity are important to an organization because they support the teacher satisfaction and belonging (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004; Boyd et al., 2011).

**Cultivate a shared belonging.** A shared belonging is a needed principal leadership competency, which has been shown to improve culture. The teacher should share in participation leadership with the principal for better connection (Margolis, 2008). When a principal is making key decisions that affect the entire organization, it is important to take the input from other members (Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002). Teachers want to be involved and feel good about the school site (Margolis, 2008). Teachers are directly connected with students on a daily basis, it is important for a principal to acknowledge their individual input on changes in school policies so that they are connected and belong to the organization. Connection is important for culture (Sergiovanni, 2004). The principal can elicit this connection.

When a principal allows teachers to help the school when needed, it will connect the teachers with the culture (Lattimer, 2007). Some teachers want to be given the prospect to make decisions, especially ones that affect them. For instance, if a school is adopting a new motto, the principal may ask for collaboration of staff members in voting on the new school motto. When the principal establishes the voting, this holds people accountable for the contribution that they have made. Teachers contributing to the choices of the school help to retain teachers (Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008). When attrition rates are higher this shows in some ways that teachers

are happy. In a study about Teacher Preparation Programs, an investigator researched one participant “Sarah” to see why she chose to leave the teaching profession (Lloyd, 2012). Through interview, the investigator found reasoning to explain her choice to leave the teaching profession as a newer teacher (Lloyd, 2012). Results from the interviews showed that the teacher felt that she did not want to stay at the school because she was not connected or did not feel like she belonged (Lloyd, 2012). As mentioned above, when members of a school organization are satisfied and connected from principal encouragement, this promotes a positive school culture, which elicits overall better achievement from shared belonging.

**Support social relationships.** A principal can help develop relationships to build social support and meaning. In addition to a sense of belonging, the principal leadership influences on social relationships (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). A principal can assist in the way a teacher looks at the profession through relationships that are strengthening for them. Principals can encourage these relationships through interactions and frequent communication. A principal can help people feel like they fit in an organization with communication (Habegger, 2008). This feeling is experienced when relationships foster the positive feelings necessary to remain in an organization.

A principal could encourage collaboration, not only does it foster relationships in the classroom, but it also helps teachers act as resources for each other. It is the responsibility of the principal to offer collaboration time and provide instances where teachers can form relationships (Mihans, 2008). These social relationships provide support to teachers (Baker-Doyle, 2010). Relationships are important to the identity of individuals in an organization (Cooperrider, Whitney, Stavros, & Fry, 2008).

**Collaboration.** Collaboration is a key to giving appropriate working conditions to

teachers, which affect their satisfaction and help develop relationships (Johnson et al., 2012). These working conditions are important for school culture. Principals can foster collaboration by promoting a positive school culture (Yager, Pedersen, & Yager, 2010). Teachers want to stay in schools with a positive culture, which in turn affects the attitudes and retention of principals (Habegger, 2008). To clearly explain the importance of collaboration, Massey's (2013) study *Leadership in Reading* explains that when collaboration and positivity come together, better results are possible for the whole organization including student success this is influenced by the principal. Quality in the learning environment is important because it connects with the basic reasoning behind education, which is learning. The principal leader who motivates collaboration promotes overall success in the organization (Picucci et al., 2002).

Collaboration occurs formally and informally. It is shown that learning among teachers can be done through collaboration and with storytelling (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Through research and study of teachers in organizations, collaborating techniques and activities can be done, such as storytelling. Teachers interacting with other teachers and staff members sharing stories and discussing educational topics provide meaning. When a principal encourages these exchanges, it helps these staff members create relationships where they share in providing meaning for each other in the organization (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004; Deal & Peterson, 2009). These relationships keep teachers happy and give them time to develop experiences to become connected (Olsen, 2008). The cooperation of school members socializing is important for the school (Purinton, 2013). This type of sharing is involved when principal leadership is understood and decisions are shared to collaborate the best results some of these results may be social benefits to the organizational members (Massey, 2013). These benefits are just one way collaboration can support social relationships by evaluating best results practices.

Principals who stimulate collaboration provide better success for the organization. Teachers need to feel that what they do gives meaning and this is built as relationships are built. Collaboration increases expectancy for success (Rourke & Boone, 2009). These collaborations will support the positive relationships with peers, which studies show, keeps teachers' attrition figures elevated (Certo & Fox, 2002). Collaboration and social situations will better give meaning to teachers because the interactions produce feelings in the members (Killeavy, 2006). Collaboration keeps teachers teaching and adds meaning, which is positive for school culture (Roekel, 2008). Another type of meaning for organizational members is their vision.

**Focus of vision.** The focus of vision for a school site is imperative because it establishes a course for its members. Vision gives an organization purpose (J. C. Maxwell, 2013). Having vision is an important characteristic of a principal (J. C. Maxwell, 2013; Mitgang, 2012). The clear path further gives teachers purpose and promotes a positive school culture. When a school site has a vision it provides aim for the members of an organization (Kotter, 2012). A principal has the power to create this vision. An effective principal leader helps to shape and control the vision for the school (Ritchie, 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The principal leader's ability to control the vision is imperative to the organization (Devita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007). The Wallace Foundation is a private charitable foundation dedicated to the studies of educational leadership. In a meeting of 425 participants who are leaders in the nation's education system there was discussion of reform and educational leadership. One such area mentioned was vision and a clear consensus of that vision. This vision is important for staff members in order to shape a positive path for the organization and the culture (Kelley et al., 2005). A positive school is dependent on the vision that is established by the leader and clearly given to the organization is a shared collaboration (Jerald,

2006). Another way to develop a course for the organization to follow is one that is based on trust; trust is also a way to enhance vision (Covey, Merrill, & Covey, 2008)

**Enhance trust.** Trust impacts many people in the school (Vodicka, 2006). A principal leader will benefit the school organization with the ability to exhibit trust. A simple concept of trust can have a profound impact on an organization. In the school system parents are trusting schools to teach children, principals are trusting teachers to educate, and teachers are trusting themselves in the ability to instruct students to learn (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). All of these levels of leadership and the principal's role as a leader revolve around the idea of trust (Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Handford and Leithwood discuss behaviors that contribute to trust. Those are "competence" (p. 201), "consistency and reliability" (p. 201), "openness" (p. 201), "respect" (p.201), and "integrity" (p. 201). The school site would benefit from higher levels of trust for everyone (Louis et al., 2010; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). The principal increases these levels by promoting positive relationships and repeating interactions, which allow members to feel, trusted and valued in a school site. People want to be around those that they trust (Myatt, 2012, April 4). The principal can promote this trust at the school site (Louis et al., 2010). When there is more trust that exists in an organization this creates greater success in the organization (Covey et al., 2008; Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Organizations must have trust because it is impactful (Mycoski, 2012). Teachers achieve more when they feel trusted and when they trust the organization that they work for (Price, 2012; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012). Higher achievement has a higher impact on the overall relationships and performance of the school; this is a result of trust.

Relationships will be enhanced through trust in the principal leader. John Maxwell (2013) in his book *How Successful People Lead* explains the benefits of trust and leadership. Principal

leadership promotes trust and better interactions with people. The more positive the interactions between people, the more the people will follow the leader (J. C. Maxwell, 2013). Principals who establish permission to lead will provide a better relationship and learning environment for the organization. Leaders have the potential to enhance trust through relationships and feedback (Covey et al., 2008). The principal leader must enhance the trust and encourage the better relationships.

**Offer/accept feedback.** With trust as an important principal leadership competency, feedback is also an important element that a leader should exhibit. Teachers provide quality education to the nation's youth; naturally they would want to have some type of feedback for their efforts. To better expound on this concept, Johnson et al. (2012) studied the effects of teacher job satisfaction and the effects and school context. There was a study done in the state of Massachusetts that sent a survey about teachers' satisfactions and what contributes to these satisfactions. The culture and principal leadership of a school site is important. These researchers concluded that successful principals foster a culture that cares for the needs of others and offers purposeful communication. These researchers further explain the effectiveness of feedback and the role of the principal to enact the feedback and make it consistent and significant. The feedback also addresses teachers' needs and creates an effective working environment. The principal is a leader and is an important factor in teacher effectiveness and satisfaction (Massey, 2013). Feedback is not only a positive word or comment on achievements, but also open communication that allow teachers and principals to interact regarding school operations, which affect organizational culture (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012).

Feedback also includes teachers and principals interacting and having the social comfort of sharing feedback about school processes (Kopkowski, 2008). Teachers feel that their work is

effective when they have a sense of influence about operational outcomes. Teachers may have this influence if principals interact with the teachers to ask them for their feedback on school processes. In essence, principal leadership is important in influence and sharing the role of leadership with others (Mitgang, 2012). When principals share leadership socially, it helps teachers feel valued.

*Feeling valued.* It is important for principals to help teachers to feel valued because it affects their relationship with the school site. In a study done by the TNTP research group, thousands of teachers and principals were studied to understand retention issues, results showed teachers feel valued when they are able to share in the decision making and feedback of the school site which also maintains teacher retention (The New Teacher Project, 2012). This is done by focusing on leading the teachers to feeling valued with quality work environments. The value leads to feelings of enjoyment and corresponds directly with the leadership competency-*disposition*. A positive attitude leads to positive results in the organization. Communication is a result of feedback and important. People need communication from a principal leader (Llopis, 2013, Feb. 2; Myatt, 2012). As a principal, it is important to give feedback so the communication is clear (Rourke & Boone, 2009).

### **The Effects of Principal Leadership Competencies**

The factors that stem from a positive school culture are important when understanding that school culture has a significant impact on the school (Spiro, 2013). It affects principals and their interactions with school site members and the environment (Wagner, 2006). Deal and Peterson (2009) research the importance of positive school culture and explain that a school's culture participates with those in the school site and require higher success expectancies out of the organization. The ideas of engaging and expectations are important to understand because the

positive culture has an effect on the overall operation of the school (Spiro, 2013). According to Deal and Peterson (2009), these are features of a positive school culture. This positive culture is important because it affects all aspects of the school including the students and parents of the organization (Price, 2012). Leaders help enhance a culture of positivity when they demonstrate the idea of worth in their employers (Umlas, 2013). When there is positivity in a setting it has a positive influence that affects those involved in the organization.

It is the principal who is in control of the school culture. In a study done of schools in Turkey, researchers found that principal leadership is a factor in positivity of the school site (Aslanargun, 2012). The study used a survey to identify school leaders and their efficacy. The teachers at public schools were given the survey to determine principal leadership. This impact is a great effect of leadership on school culture. More and more a positive culture is seen as important for a school site organization. If the leader is effective in the leadership, then the more positive results on the entire school culture and its organization.

Positivity in a culture might affect the overall success of that organization. Achor (2010) studies happiness and positivity along with positivity and its implications. He explains that everything can be more productive when our positivity and happiness are present. The higher the principal leadership influences the positivity, the more beneficial it is to the entire school site. When a leader focuses on the positive in a school culture benefits all of the groups that inhabit this culture. Many researchers discuss the effects of positivity and the implications on members of a group. It can be understood that groups are able to shine successfully when the culture is built on a strong foundation of positivity (Habegger, 2008). The elements of a school that provide the ability to succeed are important for growth. When a school site grows in positive



elements it not only benefits the individual members of the school site but also the entire organization as well this is enhanced with competent leadership (Louis et al., 2010).

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership**

Many different people make up the culture of a school, teachers' perceptions of principals may be important to identify when examining leadership in a school organization. The leadership that a principal creates affects the school culture thus impacting teachers (Certo & Fox, 2002; Price, 2012). Stability is created in an organization when people stay at their jobs. When teachers perceive principal leadership that promotes an environment that is embracing, they feel supported and successful outcomes are proliferated (Johnson et al., 2012).

Teachers' perceptions are a part of a culmination of cultures and perceptions that have come together within a school culture (Sackmann, 1992). A study done of 15 schools in Canada showed that teacher diversity in educational background, beliefs and values, along with age, gender, and social class all play a role in the perceptions teachers might have toward principal leadership (Lambert, 2006). However, despite the cultural differences, teachers' perceptions align closely in the perceived ideals that the principal leader encompasses. The study of these schools showed the importance of teachers' perceptions on the impact of principal leadership through modeling and school improvement efforts.

***Teachers' perceptions of school leadership.*** Teachers' perceptions of school leadership impacts several things that affect the culture. One of these is leadership (Moir, 2008). In a study of school culture of seven effective middle school principals, this showed teachers' perceptions have a significant impact on student and teacher interactions (Picucci et al., 2002). The study also showed that principals that create and sustain a positive school organization improve the overall performance of the school. This principal leadership is important because teachers share

their perceptions of principal leaders in their everyday interactions and performances. The manner that teachers perceive principals' leadership is a major factor that affects the school (Russell, Williams, & Gleason-Gomez, 2010). Perceptions of leadership skills show that principals impact teachers and the schools' success (Macneil et al., 2009). One important factor of leadership from teachers' perceptions is teacher satisfaction.

In an Australian study, researchers investigated stakeholders: teachers, students, and parents; and used interviews to discover the perceptions of these stakeholders' about efficient leadership in a school site (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012). Findings showed that teachers' perceived principal leadership as important and influential in a school. The perceptions of teachers help understand the importance of a principal leader. Teachers revealed, through interview, that principals are important to school success. The influence of a principal has great authority on a school site and how teachers act and interact, and it is important for a principal leader to be positive. In a study in Lebanon on principal leadership, teachers and principals were surveyed to determine leadership characteristics; teachers perceived that their feelings greatly impacted leadership (Ghamrawi, Shal, & Ghamrawi, 2013).

Teachers' perceptions reveal that principal leadership is important for school functioning. In a 15-school study in the U.S. and Canada, Lambert (2006) investigated principals to identify their own personal leadership and describe how they improved this leadership. Through speaking with teachers and understanding teachers' perceptions, they revealed that the principal leadership had an impact on the school functioning. Results showed that teachers worked best with principals in leadership to help the school function more efficiently. The research was focused on the perceptions of members in the educational environment and their perceptions of the leadership possibilities. Teacher satisfaction is another perception that may affect school culture.

## **Teacher Satisfaction as Related to School Culture**

Research suggests that a positive association with the principal positively impacts teacher satisfaction. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) surveyed more than 200 teachers and principals in public schools in California to identify problems associated with culture. The results of these studies contributed to the understanding what contributes to an effective school culture. Results showed that one of the four ways that impacted satisfaction with teachers' jobs was the association with the principal. According to these authors, the school site can benefit from the principal fostering relationships in the school. When the principal nurtures relationships with teachers, the teachers feel satisfied with their positions and ultimately want to invest time and effort into their work. School sites benefit because they have teachers who are happier to be in their positions with leaders who are driven to develop relationships. The school organization has a large impact on teacher satisfaction. When teachers feel positively supported by their principal, better outcomes are possible for the entire school site and may support job satisfaction (Certo & Fox, 2002; Johnson et al., 2012). Talking and interacting with communication has a positive effect on the culture (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

**Positive culture.** A study was done in Turkey of 308 teachers who were chosen at random to participate in a study of teachers' perceptions of "principal cultural leadership" (Karakose, 2008, p. 569). Using a cultural leadership analysis method in survey, the researcher found that principals impact school culture through their exercises. The results of this study showed that the principal has a significant impact on the strength of the school culture. If the principal does not model a positive culture, the teachers do not acknowledge the strength within the culture. This study focused on leadership affects on culture and the extent of principal

influences and found a correlation between the two. The results presented that teachers felt principals had a strong affect on school culture.

**Negative culture.** The principal that has a negative leadership style could affect the organization in an unconstructive way (Lambert, 2006). The unconstructive way a principal affects a school can directly impact teacher satisfaction. If a principal has a positive leadership style, then the organization may be positively affected (Cohen, Shapiro & Fisher, 2006; Rourke & Boone, 2009). When principal leadership positively affects an organization, a higher chance for teacher satisfaction is possible. When a negative leadership style is present, the levels of collaboration and community are greatly decreased (Rourke & Boone, 2009). Teachers need to be provided with a positive culture and a form of expression to communicate and positively impact the organization.

**Efficiency.** School efficiency impacts teacher satisfaction. In a study that focused on teacher perceptions on principal leadership, principals were shown to improve the school but when they were efficient (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). In studies performed in 31 elementary schools teachers were given the Leader Effectiveness Scale to determine their perspectives on principal leadership. Results showed principals relate to the school effectiveness and teachers' perceive that their interactions weigh heavily on the school environment. Talking and interacting with communication has a positive effect on the culture and on the teachers (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012). From the teachers' perspective, leadership skills are important to the school site (Kelley et al., 2005). The leadership skills affect teachers and their satisfaction. The leadership capabilities may also affect teacher retention.

**Feedback.** A leadership practice that affects teacher retention as studied by teacher perceptions is *feedback*. Principal feedback as perceived by teachers, gives meaning to stay in a

school site. According to a study done by the National Center for Education Statistics, teachers had a higher retention rate when they had feedback from a leader (Ingersoll et al., 2012). This feedback was important to teachers when asked what makes them stay at school site because of leadership support. Teachers feel that principal feedback directly affects their needed meaning for employment and contributes to satisfaction in the job (Johnson et al., 2012).

### **Connection of Leadership and Culture**

**Teacher retention and positive school culture.** Teacher retention is explained when the teacher is staying present in the school site and not transferring or resigning from the position. In studies of teachers' perceptions of school site cultures, leadership has an impact on teachers' retention. In a study of teacher shortages examined by Ingersoll and Smith (2003), a number of studies were researched by the National Center for Education Statistics. This research was done to examine the varying surveys and determine what keeps teachers retained in a school site. Results explained that teachers' perceptions of leadership in a school organization are important. Teachers want leadership that is caring and provides a better culture. Retention is improved when teachers have better leadership and unification in the school site. When teachers are retained, the school site is more positively impacted.

Teacher retention positively affects the school site. According to Cross (2011) who studied teacher retention, she used interviews of 243 new teachers to determine what keeps teachers satisfied to stay in their current positions. Using her phone interviews, results showed that teachers want to have meaning and be connected to an organization. Principals are the main contributors to teachers being retained at school sites. Leaders provide this connection and keep teachers retained at schools. Hahs-Vaughn and Scherff (2008) studied several staffing surveys given by the National Center for Education Statistics to find relations to teachers' attrition and

school site factors. It appears that principals who are determined to understand what factors contribute to attrition and retention are those who are able to have better retention in school sites. A National Education Association of teachers found that a strong leader is the significant reason teachers stay at their school sites (Roekel, 2008). The teachers are retained by the efforts of a leader and those leadership competencies.

School leaders are important for students and teachers (Boyd et al., 2010; Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) suggest that there is not a need to worry about teacher retention because it can be solved with just having an abundant supply of teachers. Although this seems like an interesting suggestion to an issue of retaining teachers, the idea to have a surplus of teachers still does not fix the affects of culture on teachers and retention. Principal leadership impacts the ways students act, because it impacts how teachers act (Louis et al., 2010).

Leadership is important for teacher retention (Mitgang, 2012). In a study done by the Wallace Foundation on principal leadership, researchers found that leadership is important for school achievement. The conclusion of the study expressed: “The principal is the single biggest determinant of whether teachers want to stay in their schools, which suggests that better leadership may be a highly cost-effective way to improve teaching and learning throughout schools” (p. 25). This study clearly expressed the importance of principal leadership on teacher retention and also school performance.

### **School Performance**

**Vision.** Vision contributes to school performance. Principals play an important role in the performance of schools (Mendels, 2012). Mendels, with the Wallace Foundation, looked at the five habits necessary for leadership, and one is vision (2012). Using research from the Wallace Foundation and a published perspective report looking at research and work done in the field,

Mendels investigated the many affects of having essential leadership habits. Through the perspective report by the Wallace Foundation, results showed that principals, who have a vision, could purposefully contribute to school performance successes; better leadership and vision lead to better learning in the classroom (Mendels, 2012). When teachers are happy, the school organization has better success. According to a leadership study in Chicago schools, six competencies affect the betterment of the school and one of those is vision (L.A. Maxwell, 2013). The principal leader competencies affected the school performance; the competency of vision plays a part in the schools' success. When a leader has a clear vision, the vision positively affects the teachers. In a study of school culture and student achievement, results showed that principals must understand culture and they have an influence on the performance of schools (McNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009).

**Accountability.** School leaders must take accountability for what happens at school (Purinton, 2013). According to a qualitative study done in Turkey with 30 selected teachers on leadership that examined teachers' perceptions of leaders and their influences, the principal has a direct influence on the performance in a school and its success (Balyer, 2012). The behaviors of the principal control the subtleties of the school, so a principal must be aware of his or her accountability. Through qualitative interviews, the investigator asked such questions as: "Does your school principal consider your needs before his own needs?" (p. 584). The results showed that principals should be held responsible for school successes and influences. It is important for leaders of schools to support and influence in a positive way. Schools are more successful with principals who take responsibility of their leadership and promote positive school cultures (Engels et al., 2008).

Principals have the responsibility to influence educational outcomes through the school culture, which is one of the ways they affect the school (Supovitz et al., 2010). As leaders, they have an important role in the success of the school and their accountability is crucial (Purinton, 2013). Principals have the power to influence the success of students by impacting school culture (Branch et al., 2013). Achievement is improved through efficient leaders who are aware of their leadership (Picucci, et al., 2002).

**Interpersonal skills.** The interpersonal skills of the leaders are impactful on the school. In a study in Lebanon using an Emotional Intelligence survey and an Educational Leadership survey, results showed that the leaders' dispositions were impactful (Ghamrawi et al., 2013). This study focused on principals and teachers and their interactions, it showed that teachers' perceptions were related to those of the principals' who had influence on the members of the organization. Rath and Clifton (2007) found that leaders who are aware of their abilities to change the organization in a positive way are able to do so with their relational skills and positive interactions. The organizational leaders that they studied had significant impact on their organizations through their ability to understand others and share positivity. These studies are important because principals' interpersonal skills in their leadership have the power to influence schools and their operations.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this review of literature was to examine leadership competencies and their affects on a school culture organization. This review first defined the term culture while explaining its importance and influence. Clearly stated, culture is the values and beliefs that are present in an organization (Schein, 2004). Culture is the framework for an organization and the personality of the human interactions that inhabit it. After a study of culture the literature was



focused on school culture. Deal and Peterson (2009) study school culture to evaluate its affects on organizations and the factors that influence culture. It is known as multifaceted and visible in the school site interactions.

Leadership is another point of study because of the influence and skills that are presented in leadership (Kaplan, 2011). Roles that leaders take in an organization contribute to its overall efficiency (Kaplan, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). A leader must be mindful and know the impact of his or her leadership (Cashman, 2008). The principal of a school has a leadership position that is to provide care at many levels (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The principal has influence, which affects the school site (Balyer, 2012; Jackson & Marriot, 2012).

The leadership competencies that a leader possesses have been shown to have an effect on a school organization. One important impactful effect of strong leadership is a positive school culture. In studies focused on school effectiveness, schools that showed positive traits were those with efficacious leadership (Habegger, 2008; Wasickso, 2007). These leadership competencies are better reviewed when offering a teachers' perspective; teachers are stakeholders in the school site organization. Teachers are the key forces of a school site and their perceptions of leadership prove to be valuable and contribute to efficacy (Certo & Fox, 2002; Moir, 2008).

Teachers' perceptions of principal leadership affect teacher satisfaction (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2004; Certo & Fox, 2002). Their perceptions also show that principal leadership affects teacher retention (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The literature also showed the perceptions of teachers revealed that principal leadership has influence on school culture and school performance (Cross, 2011; Mendels, 2012). These studies helped to identify teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and its effects on school culture, which proved substantial and impactful.

The literature suggests that leadership has a significant impact on school culture and the facets of a school organization. Six competencies are identified that a school leader may exhibit that promote a positive school culture. Leadership has affects on the school culture, teacher satisfaction, teacher retention, and school performance. All these leader aspects are important and support a leader in understanding power and influence. Power of a culture and organizational members may be truly wonderful and increase positivity, as the literature revealed. To benefit a school culture organization, principal leaders must be aware of their leadership competencies and the power they possess, and those effects on the school culture.

### **Summary of Review and Implications**

This review of literature examined the connection between leadership and culture in schools. In Chapter 1 there was a review of the specific areas that are examined nationally in terms of education. The topic of leadership has been studied for many years and will continue to be studied. Culture is another area of study for many researchers when analyzing schools and the elements of impact. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and conceptualizes it including the specific limitations and the hypothesis that is examined. Chapter 2 examines the research on culture and leadership in schools and provides an understanding of the significance of each. Chapter 3 will offer the methodology to analyze school sites by interpreting the leadership competencies of principal leaders as reviewed by the literature, along with the health of the school culture. The methodology will help to examine a connection between the two by first identifying, which leadership competencies are important as perceived by teachers, and which are present in current school sites. These leadership competencies will be measured with the health of the school culture to determine leadership affects on school culture. See Table 1 to identify the connection with the research questions and each specific question from the measurement tools.

Table 1

*Relationship of Research Questions and Measurement Tools*

Questions From Competency Approach Survey	Theory and Citations	Research Questions
<p>1. Positive Disposition: The principal leader reflects a positive attitude and evokes appreciation of staff. This may include encouragement and positive interactions.</p> <p>A. This competency is important in a principal leader.</p> <p>B. This is a competency of the current Principal at my school site.</p>	<p>Aydin, Sarier, &amp; Uysal, 2013; Wasickso, 2007; Daly &amp; Chrispeels, 2005</p>	<p>RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?</p>
<p>2. Cultivate a Shared Belonging: The principal offers others to share in leadership connecting staff to activities in the school.</p> <p>A. This competency is important in a principal leader.</p> <p>B. This is a competency of the current principal at my school site.</p>	<p>Deal and Peterson, 2009; Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, &amp; Sobel, 2002; Lattimer, 2007</p>	<p>RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?</p>
<p>3. Support Social Relationships: The principal helps to develop relationships among the staff with use of collaboration and frequent communication.</p> <p>A. This competency is important in a principal leader.</p> <p>B. This is a competency of the current principal at my school site.</p>	<p>VanMaele &amp; VanHoutte, 2012; Habegger, 2008; Mihans, 2008</p>	<p>RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?</p>
<p>4. Focus of Vision: The principal has clear focus on what is needed for a school site and what he or she believes is important.</p> <p>A. This competency is important in a principal leader.</p> <p>B. This is a competency of the current Principal of the current school site.</p>	<p>Massey, 2013; Mitgang, 2012</p>	<p>RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?</p>
<p>5. Enhance Trust: The principal leader trusts others and encourages trust in others. The principal fosters relationships built on trust.</p> <p>A. This competency is important in a principal leader.</p> <p>B. This is a competency of the current Principal at my school site.</p>	<p>Bryk &amp; Schneider, 2003; Handford &amp; Leithwood, 2013; Vodicka, 2006</p>	<p>RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?</p>

*(continued)*

Questions From Competency Approach Survey	Theory and Citations	Research Questions
6. Offer/Accept Feedback: The principal offers feedback to staff and also is open to accepting feedback from others. A. This competency is important in a principal leader. B. This is a competency of the current Principal at my school site.	Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Massey, 2013; Ingersoll, Merrit, & May, 2012.	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Questions From School Culture Triage Survey	Theory and Citations	Research Questions
Professional Collaboration: 1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Professional Collaboration: 2. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Professional Collaboration: 3. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used as collective units/ teams rather than as separate individuals.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Affiliative Collegiality: 1. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Affiliative Collegiality: 2. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each others' company.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Affiliative Collegiality: 3. Our school reflects a true "sense" of community.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009, Schein, 2004	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Affiliative Collegiality: 4. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?

*(continued)*

Questions From School Culture Triage Survey	Theory and Citations	Research Questions
Affiliative Collegiality: 5. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009;	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Affiliative Collegiality: 6. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations, including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment.	Wagner, 2006; Schein, 2004; Deal and Peterson, 2009	What contributes to effective school practices that influence culture?
Self-Determination/Efficacy: 1. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Self-Determination/ Efficacy: 2. School members are interdependent and value each other.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Self-Determination/Efficacy: 3. Members of our school community seek to define the problem rather than blame others.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Self-Determination/Efficacy: 4. The school staff is empowered to make decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?
Self-Determination/Efficacy: 5. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	Wagner, 2006; Deal and Peterson, 2009	RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

A school site is a place that prepares students to learn and grow into individuals with the knowledge needed to prosper in society. An important element for a school site is to foster positive school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009). This study explores the effects of principal leadership on a school site culture. Culture is examined because it is an important aspect of a school organization and its leadership (Zhu, Devos, & Li, 2011). Specifically this study will examine teachers' perceptions since teachers' perceptions of principal leadership are an important identifying factor of culture and its positivity (Certo & Fox, 2002). The methodology of this study will identify teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and cultural implications in a Quantitative Approach.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1. What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?

H<sub>0</sub>1. There is no correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

H<sub>A</sub>1. There is a significant correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

RQ2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, what is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?

H<sub>0</sub>2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, there is no correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

H<sub>A</sub>2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, there is a significant correlation between leadership competency and school culture.

## **Research Methodology**

The procedure used in this study will be a quantitative correlational design. It will incorporate quantitative data that will be examined to determine the validity of the proposed hypotheses. The research methodology will be implemented in two surveys. The surveys are a mix of two different forms of questions. The first survey is a quantitative study utilizing a trait approach (Northouse, 2010; Appendix A). This survey is used to determine the competencies of principal leadership; it is called the Competency Approach, developed by the researcher. The second survey will be a School Leader's Tool for assessing school culture (Wagner, 2006; Appendix B). This survey is given to determine the school culture and its status amongst school site members' interpretations (Wagner, 2006).

### **Measurement Tool I: The Competency Approach**

The Competency Approach imitates the Trait Approach, which has been published and is in various studies. The Trait Approach is used to determine the traits of a leader. It specifically focuses on the leader and the leader's ability to lead an organization (Northouse, 2010). This type of approach suggests that a leader's traits or competencies influence an organization. Stodgill (as cited in Northouse, 2010) used this type of survey to determine the type of leadership traits that a leader possessed. He found that leaders who possessed these traits also must have a relationship with the members to determine whether the traits were valid. The study will focus on competencies, replicating the design as the Trait Approach. In this paper the competencies studied in the literature review will be implemented in the survey to validate their functioning. The competencies used in this survey are listed in Appendix A, along with their references (Refer to Appendix A for the complete survey). The leadership competencies are measured in the Competency Approach and each researcher or sources is cited along with the competency.

Through research of relevant literature, these 6 competencies were significantly important in principal leaders and serve as an appropriate measuring tool for principal leadership.

### **Measurement Tool II: The School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS)**

The School Culture Triage Survey by Wagner (2006) is given to school sites by leaders to determine the health of a culture. This survey will be given to teachers following the leadership survey to help determine whether those teachers who perceived leadership as effective, also perceived the culture as positive or healthy. If the participants perceived the principal leadership as poor, then the culture would be considered unhealthy by the given survey per the hypothesis (Refer to Appendix B for the complete survey and scoring). This tool is used nationally by Wagner to determine the health of a school culture and its effectiveness. It has been permitted to use in this study by Wagner (Refer to Appendix C for approval letter).

### **Participants**

In the District that is being studied approximately 1,729 certified teachers are presently employed (Education Data Partnership, 2013a). Of the majority of race and ethnicity variables present in the teachers present reports show: 63% white ethnicity, 23.3% Hispanic or Latino, 6.9% Black or African American. The ethnicity of the teachers in the district and the number of teachers is a general representation of the participants in the study.

Participants will be recruited after the investigator has received approval by completing the Application to Conduct Research in the School District from the Department of Assessment and Evaluation (See Appendix D for approval letter). With approval, the principals of each school site will be sent an e-mail directly stating the importance of the study and approval information received from district to study at the school site (Refer to Appendix E for e-mail to principals). The e-mails will also include a copy of the district approval letter to conduct



research. After sending an e-mail to principals, the researcher will e-mail each teacher directly at the chosen school sites using the district server e-mail option, which allows senders to e-mail specific groups within each school site. A sample of this e-mail option is similar to: Bonteach, which means all Bonnie High School teachers. The teachers will be sent an e-mail to give initial contact about the study (Refer to Appendix F for initial contact letter). The e-mail will explain the study and will include a link to the Survey Monkey tool that is providing the anonymous survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JJXVRML> . Since the e-mail is sent to every teacher, and the link to the anonymous survey is in the e-mail it will not be linked to the surveyor directly. Two weeks after the initial e-mail, teachers will be sent a reminder e-mail to complete the survey or participate in the study (See Appendix G). Two weeks following the reminder e-mail there will be one final e-mail sent to ask participants to complete the survey, this will be the last form of contact (See Appendix H).

The participants' responses will be kept confidential to protect the anonymity of the participants. The survey tool, Survey Monkey is anonymous and does not directly link the personal information of the surveyed to the assessment only the demographic data. Each teacher will be read the: Consent with No Signature form and if they agree to terms (See Appendix I, for form), they will be directed to complete the survey. All data collected will be kept confidential and only results and data will be shared with the researcher and the dissertation committee as the research is gathered.

### **Context**

The context of this study is a school district located in Southern California. The first school was opened in 1895 ("History of Fontana," 2013). The school district was founded in the 1920s and became a unified district in 1956. In the city the average household revenue is

\$64,058 in 2007–2011 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). The percentage of English Learners (ELs) in the school district is 33% (Education Data Partnership, 2013b).

In the district 7 middle schools and 5 high schools are present. The study will focus on the 7 middle schools and 4 of the high schools; one high school will be excluded due to a personal connection with the school site and researcher. Each high school has one principal and a varied number of assistant principals depending on the number of students at the school. The middle schools have one principal each and specific assistant principals. The focus of this study will be examining the leadership of principals since they are the administrative leadership positions that hold teachers accountable.

### **Instrumentation**

**Quantitative.** The Competency Approach survey (Appendix A) will be given to approximately 835 teachers to assess the teachers' perceptions of principal leadership. The traits that a leader possesses will be referred to as *competencies*, these competencies are skills or abilities that the leader is holds and utilizes in the organization. Terms and statements determine what behaviors a principal occupies. The competencies, are listed below:

- Positive disposition (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005)
- Supports social relationships (Sergiovanni, 2004)
- Cultivate a shared belonging (Margolis, 2008)
- Focus of vision (Mitgang, 2012)
- Enhance trust (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010)
- Offer/accept feedback (Massey, 2013)

This survey will explore the leadership behaviors of a principal leader as perceived by the teachers. The survey gathers information on the leadership behaviors that coincide with the

practices that the current literature review determines is important. The data tool given is just one of the surveys researchers designed to determine competency.

The Competency Approach survey uses a Likert survey. This type of survey will first define the type of competency and then ask the observer to determine to what extent the leader possesses this competency. The first option was to determine how important the surveyor feels the given competency is (Importance Rating). The second option is to determine how to what degree the current principal leader displays the given competency (Competency Rating). The options are: 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*. In studying principal leadership, the literature showed six leadership competencies of principal leadership that impacted a school culture.

The scoring for this survey will be determined by the average amount of leadership competencies present in the current principal leader along with the importance of each competency as seen by the teachers' perceptions. The scores will be evaluated by the amount of importance each competency is given by the teacher, along with the frequency that the teacher sees this competency present in his or her current principal leader. For both scores, the six individual items will be averaged together to create scores that retain their original 5-point metric. This will help with the interpretation of the scores. In addition, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients will be calculated for both ratings (Importance and Competency) to determine the scales levels of internal reliability.

The second survey that will be used concurrently with the leadership survey is the School Culture Triage Survey will diagnose the health of a school site's culture (Wagner, 2006; Appendix B). This survey looks for specific behaviors:

- Professional collaboration
- Affiliative and collegial relationships
- Efficacy or self-determination (Wagner, 2006, p. 42).

The three behaviors are intending to measure the school culture and the positive connection with accomplishments in the school site (Wagner, 2006). The measurement tool aims to assess the health of the school site culture. This study will use 14 of the 17 statements in the survey. This survey uses a type of Likert scale that rates the consistency in which these statements are present in the school site. The survey gives the participant 5 choices: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Always or Almost Always* (Wagner, 2006). These options give the participant a chance to diagnose the current state of the culture according to the teachers' perceptions.

The survey collects data on the present position of the school culture. The items are averaged together to create scores that retain their original 5-point metric. This helps with the scores' interpretation. All items are averaged using a summated score that is easily interpreted.

### **Pilot Study**

In an effort to insure reliability the data collection instruments were piloted. The Leadership Competency Survey was given in a pilot study to five teachers at a school that will not be included in the main study. This pilot study was performed to ensure the reliability of the test and the time the test required. The teachers responded to the test and expressed a time of less than 10 minutes to complete, and the directions were clearly explained and the definitions were useful in clarifying the results.

The School Culture Triage Survey was piloted with five teachers in the school district in California at a school site that was not being studied. The survey took a maximum of 12 minutes

to complete and was fairly simple. This survey is important because it validates the connection between culture and leadership.

### **Reliability**

The School Culture Triage Survey is a reliable tool to use to diagnose culture. According to Ellen Delisio with *Education World*, Dr. Wagner's survey is used to help with school achievement when diagnosing the culture of a school site (2005). Piloting the other data collection tools indicates that each tool will be useful in determining the perceptions of teachers. Having a chance to assess teachers and determine the length of time and level of difficulty of each assessment was helpful in verifying reliability.

### **Validity**

Studies were used to find specific proficiencies of the measurement tools and indicated that they are valid. Research presented in the *Kentucky School Leader* explained: "The SCTSA has been used by more than 240 schools in Kentucky and about 6,100 throughout the United States and Canada" (Biggerstaff & Wagner, 2008, p. 16). A study, which recently used the School Culture Triage survey, was a university study in Turkey to examine teachers' perceptions of school culture (Gun & Caglayan, 2013). The results showed three qualities present in a school culture, which showed importance. Many valid researchers were used to determine the trends that are present and also the specific competencies. Wagner's (2006) tool is also used by school leaders and offers a school to diagnose the culture and its efficacy.

Wagner's (2006) tool is used to assess three types of behavior that contribute to a school culture. The three types of behavior are validated through various sources that research culture and its effects; see Table 2.

Table 2

*Wagner (2006) Behaviors and References*

Behaviors of Culture (Wagner, 2006, p. 42)	References from the literature to support Behaviors
Professional Collaboration Affiliative and collegial relationships	Schein, 2004; Buchanan, 2012; Hoerr, 2013 Price, 2012; Engels et al., 2008; Ziegler & Ramage, 2013
Efficacy or self-determination	DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Deal & Peterson, 2009; Muhammad, 2009

The Competency Approach and Culture Triage surveys will employ *face validity*, a term that explains the connection between the survey being used and the purposes of the study (Kumar, 2011).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

It is proposed that data collection will be done from August 2014 to September 2014. The surveys will be e-mailed to participants and given through Survey Monkey. There will be an e-mail sent to participants explaining the study and a link to Survey Monkey, an online data collection provider. This online process will keep track of the data and preserve the anonymity of the teachers' responses. Five high schools are present in the school district. Four of these schools' teachers will be surveyed. One school will be excluded because the researcher has a personal connection with the school. The research will also be done at the 7 middle schools in the district.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data will be initially tabulated using standard summary statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages). The primary independent variable for this study will be the teacher's perception of their principal's leadership competency while the primary dependent variable will be the teacher's perception of their school's culture. Four teacher demographic

variables will also be included (years of experience, gender, years at current school and age). Alpha level for this study will be set at  $p < .05$ .

Hypothesis 1 will be tested using Pearson product-moment correlation while Hypothesis 2 will be tested using a multiple regression model. To determine the needed sample size for a multiple regression model, the G\*Power 3.1 software program was used (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). With five predictors (leadership score along with four teacher demographic variables), based on a medium effect size ( $f^2 = .15$ ), an alpha level of  $\alpha = .05$ , the needed sample size to achieve sufficient power (.80) would be 92 respondents. Given that the participation request will be sent to 835 teachers, it is likely that this study will have sufficient power.

### **Summary**

This chapter articulated the methods for this study. The study will examine the hypotheses to determine the significant connections between principal leadership and school culture. Methodology utilized for this descriptive research study is designed to examine the perceptions of teachers about principal leadership. The overall purpose of this study is to add to the existing body of knowledge by focusing on the perceptions of teachers. This chapter presented the design of the study by describing its population, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

This study's purpose was to determine if there is a connection between principal leadership and school culture. It then ascertained demographic relationships pertaining to the study variables such as teachers' years of teaching, the years at the present school site, the gender of the participant, and the age. After Pepperdine's IRB approval process (See Appendix J), data collection began on August 6, 2014 with the first e-mail sent to the teacher participants (See Appendix F). The first round of data collection gathered several responses in Survey Monkey. The second round of data collection was on August 8, 2014, with a second e-mail to teacher participants (See Appendix G). The third round of data collection took place on August 25, 2014 with a final e-mail sent to teachers. A total of 835 teachers were e-mailed during this process and 83 teachers that began the surveys with a final number of 68 who completed the surveys.

### Demographics

Table 3 displays the frequency counts for selected variables (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). Study participants included 23 males (33.8%) and 45 females (66.2%). The average years of teaching among participants was 16 years ( $M = 15.69$ ,  $SD = 7.52$ ); with the minimum years of teaching was 2 years and the maximum was 40 years. The years of teaching experience ranged from 2–9 years (23.5%) to 30–40 years (5.9%). The years teachers were present in their current school sites averaged  $M = 9.07$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ; with the minimum years being 1 and the maximum 23. The years were grouped from 1–4 years (29.4%) to 11–23 years (39.7%). According to Table 5, the age of the participants ranged from 27–63 years ( $M = 45.93$ ,  $SD = 10.87$ ).

The school district studied has 1,729 teachers. There were 835 teachers who were asked to participate in the study. Of those teachers, 68 chose to complete the demographic questions



and surveys. Of the 68 participants, 34%, or 23, were males who completed the surveys. Of the 68 participants, 66%, or 45, were females who completed the surveys. There was no original data to specify how many total males and females were sent the surveys, so this data is viewed as it is.

With this information, the demographic results showed a variance between ages 27–63 years old. The ages were grouped into four categories: 27–39 years, 40–49 years, 50–59 years, and 60–63 years. The highest numbers of teachers were in the category with ages 27–39 years old at 34% and 23 teachers. The least amount of participants was in the last category with ages varying 60–63 years old with 17% and 12 participants. Despite the variance in participants the data offered a positive range of participants representing the general population.

Table 3

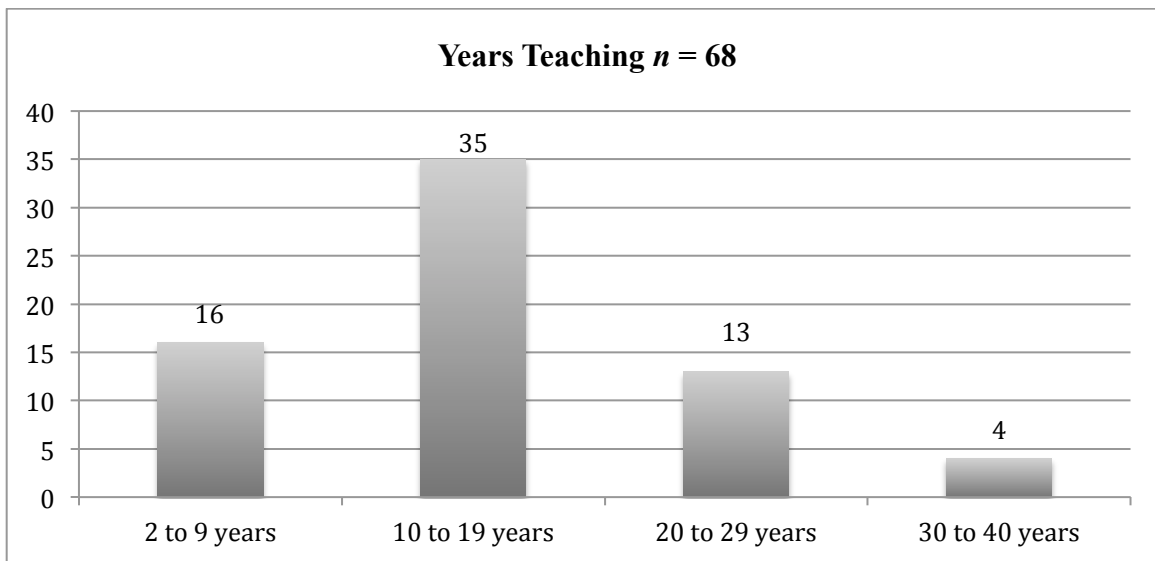
*Frequency Counts for Selected Variables*

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
	Male	23	33.8
	Female	45	66.2
Years of Teaching Experience <sup>a</sup>			
	2 to 9 years	16	23.5
	10 to 19 years	35	51.5
	20 to 29 years	13	19.1
	30 to 40 years	4	5.9
Years at School Site <sup>b</sup>			
	1 to 4 years	20	29.4
	5 to 9 years	21	30.9
	11 to 23 years	27	39.7
Age <sup>c</sup>			
	27 to 39 years	23	33.8
	40 to 49 years	17	25.0
	50 to 59 years	16	23.5
	60 to 63 years	12	17.6

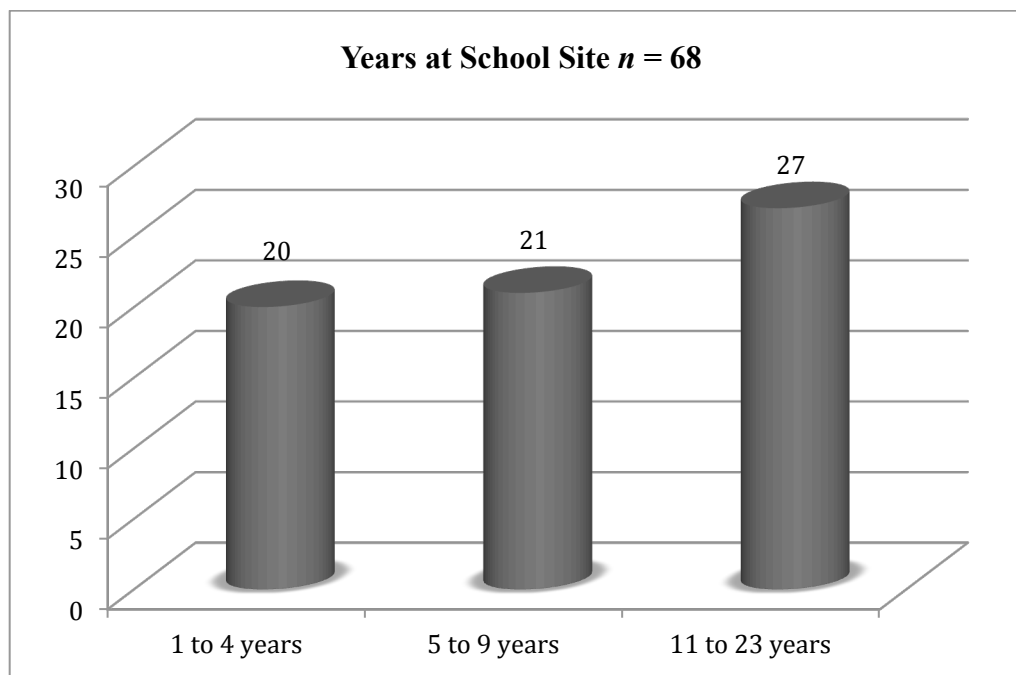
*Note.* (*N* = 68)

<sup>a</sup> Years Teaching: *M* = 15.69, *SD* = 7.52. <sup>b</sup> Years at School Site: *M* = 9.07, *SD* = 5.70.

<sup>c</sup> Age: *M* = 45.93, *SD* = 10.87.



*Figure 1.* Years of teaching.



*Figure 2.* Years at school site.

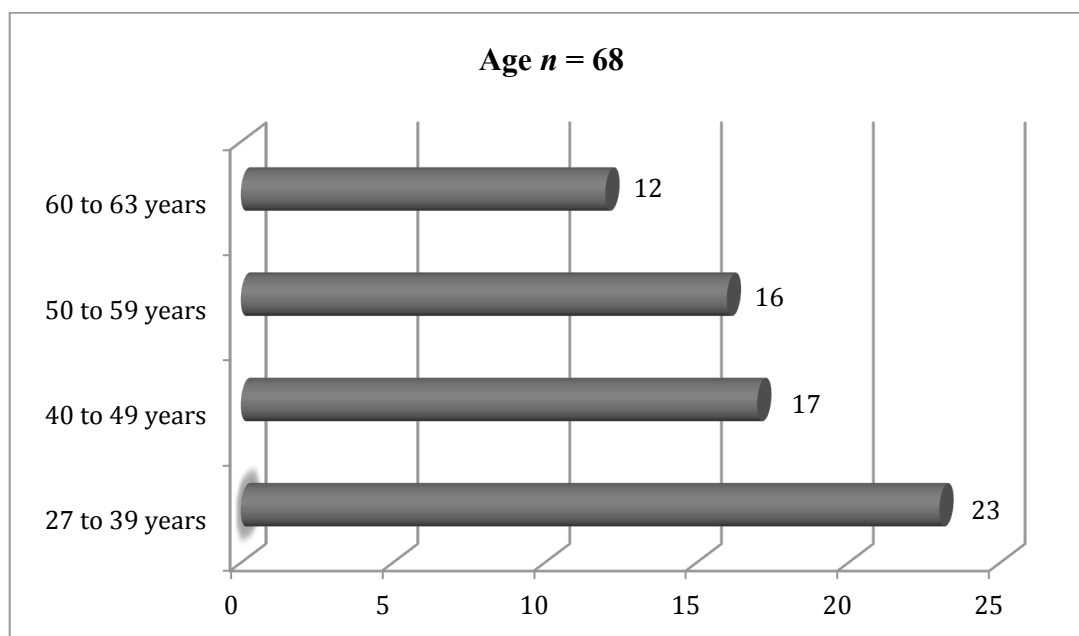


Figure 3. Age.

Six questions for the six competencies were used to investigate the teachers' perceptions on whether the principal leadership competency was important. The highest competence was for item 12 "Focus of Vision" rated  $M = 4.44$ . While the lowest rated competency was "Positive Disposition" rated  $M = 4.04$ . Table 4 shows the importance ratings for the six competencies sorted by the highest mean score. These ratings were given based on a 5-point metric (1 = *Strongly Disagree*- 5 = *Strongly Agree*).

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for the Leadership Importance Ratings Sorted by Highest Mean*

Item	$M$	$SD$
12. Focus of Vision	4.44	1.00
14. Enhance Trust	4.31	1.01
16. Offer/Accept Feedback	4.29	0.93
10. Support Social Relationships	4.25	1.07
8. Cultivate a Shared Belonging	4.21	1.09
6. Positive Disposition	4.04	1.52

Note. Ratings were based on a 5-point scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. ( $N = 68$ )

Table 5 shows the competencies present in the participants' current principal leaders sorted by the highest mean score (see Figure 4 for results). These ratings were given based on a 5-point metric ( $1 = \textit{Strongly Disagree}$ -  $5 = \textit{Strongly Agree}$ ). The competency with the highest presence in a principal leader was "Focus of Vision" with a mean  $M = 3.68$  and a standard deviation of  $SD = 1.25$ . The competency with the lowest presence in a principal leader was "Enhance Trust" with a mean of  $M = 3.25$  and a standard deviation of  $SD = 1.32$  (Table 7).

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for the Leadership Competence Ratings Sorted by Highest Mean*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
13. Focus of Vision	3.68	1.25
9. Cultivate a Shared Belonging	3.40	1.22
7. Positive Disposition	3.31	1.33
17. Offer/Accept Feedback	3.29	1.22
11. Support Social Relationships	3.26	1.14
15. Enhance Trust	3.25	1.26

*Note.* Ratings were based on a 5-point scale:  $1 = \textit{Strongly Disagree}$  to  $5 = \textit{Strongly Agree}$ . ( $N = 68$ )

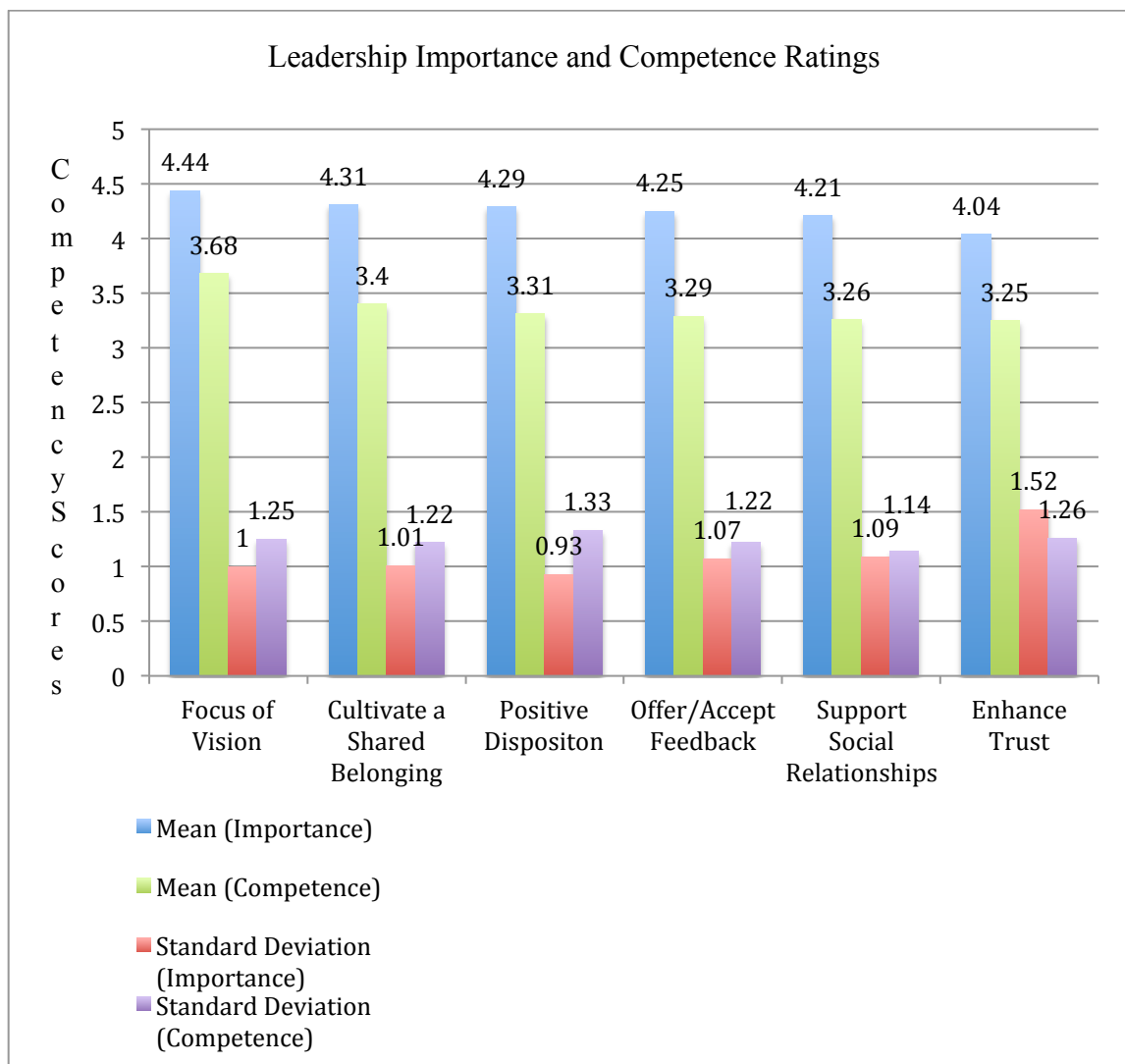


Figure 4. Leadership importance and competence ratings.

Table 6 displays the descriptive statistics for school culture survey questions rated by highest mean  $N = 68$ . There were 14 statements given about school culture and the survey gave the participant 5 choices: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Always or Almost Always* (Wagner, 2006). The table displays the highest mean score first. The highest mean score is the statement “Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.” The mean score was  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ . The lowest mean score statement was “When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.” The lowest mean score was  $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ .

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for the School Culture Ratings Sorted by Highest Mean*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
18. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	3.99	0.78
31. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	3.75	0.80
20. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.	3.60	0.90
28. School members are interdependent and value each other.	3.41	0.74
25. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.	3.25	0.89
30. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	3.22	1.21
29. Members of our school community seek to define the problem rather than blame others.	3.10	0.90
24. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.	3.06	1.06
23. Our school reflects a true “sense” of community.	3.03	0.90
19. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.	2.88	0.99
26. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations, including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment	2.79	1.00
22. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each others’ company.	2.72	0.83
27. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.	2.69	0.85

*Note.* Ratings were based on a 5-point scale: 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always, or Almost Always*. (*N* = 68)

Table 7 reflects the reliability of the four Competency Approach Survey scales. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients found all coefficients to be at least  $\alpha = .85$  suggesting all scales had acceptable levels of internal reliability (Cohen, 1988).

Table 7

*Psychometric Characteristics for the Summated Scale Scores*

Scale	Number of Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High	$\alpha$
Leadership Importance <sup>a</sup>	6	4.26	0.85	1.00	5.00	.85

(continued)

Scale	Number of Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High	$\alpha$
Leadership Competence <sup>a</sup>	6	3.37	1.06	1.00	5.00	.93
Importance with Competence <sup>b</sup>	6	3.68	0.87	1.00	5.00	.92
School Culture <sup>c</sup>	14	3.17	0.60	2.07	5.00	.90

<sup>a</sup> Ratings were based on a 5-point scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. ( $N = 68$ )

<sup>b</sup> Individual items for this scale were derived by multiplying the teacher's competence rating with their importance rating followed by taking the square root of the product to retain the original 5-point scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

<sup>c</sup> Ratings were based on a 5-point scale: 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always, or Almost Always*.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

**Research hypothesis one.** The first research question asked: What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture? The corresponding hypothesis predicted: There is no correlation between leadership competency and school culture. There is significant positive correlation between principal leadership competence level and the culture of the school,  $r = .45, p < .001$ , which provided support to accept the alternative hypothesis (Table 8).

Table 8

*Pearson Correlations for Selected Variables with the Leadership Competency and School*

### *Culture Scales*

Variable	1		2
1. Leadership Competence Scale	1.00		
2. School Culture Scale	.45	****	1.00
Years of Teaching Experience	.12		.11
Years at School Site	.04		.06
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.02		.06
Age	-.06		.03

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ . ( $N = 68$ )

<sup>a</sup> Gender: 1 = *Male* 2 = *Female*.

**Research hypothesis two.** Research Question 2 asked, “After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, what is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?” and the related null hypothesis predicted that, “H<sub>0</sub>2. After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, there is no correlation between leadership competency and school

culture.” To answer this question, Table 9 displays the results of the relevant multiple regression model. The overall model was significant ( $p = .009$ ) and accounted for 21.4% of the variance in school culture. Inspection of the data found none of the four teacher demographic characteristics to be related to teachers’ perceptions of the school culture. However, there was a significant, positive relationship between teachers’ perception of leadership competence and school culture ( $\beta = .46, p = .001$ ). This combination of findings provided support to reject null hypothesis two (Table 9).

Table 9

*Prediction of School Culture Based on Leadership Competence Controlling for Teacher’s Demographic Characteristics*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Intercept	1.99	0.51		.001
Years of Teaching Experience	0.00	0.01	.01	.97
Years at School Site	0.00	0.02	.02	.91
Gender	0.08	0.15	.06	.60
Age	0.00	0.01	.06	.73
Leadership Competence	0.26	0.07	.46	.001

Full Model:  $F(5, 62) = 3.38, p = .009, R^2 = .214, (N = 68)$

The results of this study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between principal leadership and school culture. This correlation was shown using a Pearson correlation to determine the correspondence on a line. The surveys were sent via school district e-mail in a link to 835 teachers. Out of the 835 teachers, 83 started the surveys for the study and 68 teachers completed them. The hypotheses were supported with showing the positive correlation between leadership and school culture.

In summary, this study used survey responses from 68 teachers to determine if teachers’ perceived a connection between principal leadership and school culture. Hypothesis 1 (leadership



and school culture) was supported (Table 8). Hypothesis 2 (leadership and school culture controlling for demographics) was supported (Table 9). In the final chapter, these findings will be compared to the literature, conclusions and implications will be drawn and a series of recommendations will be suggested.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter contains a brief summary of the study's key findings. The chapter reviews the literature that supported the findings of the study. The final thoughts about the literature will be discussed with an analysis of the literature, with the theoretical framework and a final summary. This chapter will also provide recommendations for future research and best practices.

**Purpose.** The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of teachers' perceptions of principal leadership on school culture with six principal leadership competencies found in the literature (Cross, 2011; Mendels, 2012). The culture at a school is important for educational successes and progress. Through research and theory, this study examined six specific competencies found in the literature to have an influence on school culture. The study collected and examined surveys and demographic information to investigate an influence of teachers' perceptions of principal leadership competencies on a school culture organization. Leadership competencies found in the literature were used, along with a school culture survey developed by Wagner (2006). The school culture survey asked Likert scale questions to determine teachers' perceptions of the health of the culture at the given school site. The results were compared to the presence and importance of leadership competencies in a principal leader. Once the leadership competencies were measured for presence and importance, school culture was surveyed for a presence of behaviors within a school site to measure the school culture and its health.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1. The first research question asked: "What is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture?" The corresponding hypothesis predicted that: "There is no correlation between leadership competency and school culture."

RQ2. Research question two asked: After controlling for teacher demographic characteristics, what is the relationship between leadership competency and school culture? The demographic characteristics used were in the form of a question on the Survey Monkey Web site through the link created through e-mail. The demographic questions were: How long have you been a teacher?; Male or Female?; How long have you been at your school site?; What is your age? Each demographic characteristic was grouped into categories to better analyze the data.

## **Results**

The results displayed a positive correlation between teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and school culture. There was a Pearson correlation test used to show that there was a connection between the two. Two surveys (leadership and culture) were sent through district e-mail to 835 teachers with 68 completed surveys. The hypotheses were supported with showing the positive correlation between leadership and school culture with the given participants.

**Demographics.** The participants in the study were represented on many levels of demographic characteristics. Each of these characteristics was used as a point of analysis on the basis of understanding the data and the participants. Sixty-eight participants completed the surveys and 83 started the surveys. The information is important because it may be interpreted that the surveys were viewed as: difficult, lengthy, uninteresting, and time-consuming. It is not clearly understood why 835 teachers were sent the survey link and only 68 completed the survey, but the survey may have not been as important to the participants as it was to the principal researcher. Teachers are sent surveys all of the time, many teachers who choose to go back to pursue higher education send surveys through e-mail to the district employees. The frequent requests could be one of the reasons that only 10% or 83, began the survey, and 8% 68 completed the survey.

**Gender.** In the Southern California school district studied, 1,729 teachers worked in the district. In the middle schools and high schools that were chosen by the researcher, a total of 835 teachers received the surveys to complete. Of the 68 participants, 66% or 45 females were those who participated. Also 34%, or 23 males participated in the study. In a study performed by Hughes (2012) that examined teacher retention, 86% of participants were female. The study performed examined several variables of teacher retention, one of which was “principal support” (p. 249). The results of the study by Hughes, showed that demographics did not make a difference for the results examining why teachers teach until retirement, and retention.

**Years of teaching experience.** It was important to question the years of teaching experience for the participants of the study to see if more experience or less experience affected the results. In any given school, teachers are present with varying years of experience (Gulcan, 2012). There could be a teacher present at a school site with 30 years of experience and also a new teacher beginning the first year of teaching. The participants in this study showed a variance between 2 years teaching experience to 40 years teaching experience. The years of teaching experience were grouped into four categories: 2 to 9, 10 to 19, 20 to 29, and 30 to 40. The category with the most participants at 51% or 35 participants was the second category with 10 to 19 years teaching experience. The age of retirement for teachers may vary by district but it usually averages 30 years, so based on the years of teaching, participants were 1/3 -1/5 of the way to retirement from the teaching profession. The results show that their experience offers valuable insight in terms of teachers’ perceptions. The study focused on teachers’ perceptions, and this age group encompassed many years of teachers’ perceptions. The insights from various years of experience gives credit to the data collected because it is very valuable by culminating the many years of experience in the perceptions of the participants.

According to a study performed by Gulcan (2012), which examined leadership competencies and school principals, “teachers’ views on these issues do not vary depending on gender, or experience in the field” (p. 634). In this study there was no variance in results with the years of experience; this did not affect the results of how the teachers or administrators perceived the leadership competencies. One competency that was found to be significant in Gulcan’s results was the ability of the school principals to keep a vision, this was also a competency that was found useful in this study. Teachers and administrators were examined to study views on leadership. The 21-question survey was sent to 675 teachers and administrators and 460 completed it. The highest percentage of years of experience was the category for 1-5 years of experience at 30% of participants. Gulcan’s study had more participants surveyed but had more participants in the range of 1-5 years teaching experience. The present study had 35 participants, which was the second category with 10 to 19 years teaching experience.

**Years at school site.** When examining a principal leader the research suggested it was important to determine how long the participants had been present at the school sites (Gulcan, 2012). In this study, if a teacher participant had only been at a school site for less than a year, would he or she determine the leadership competencies of a principal the same as a teacher who had been at the present school site for 20 years? The results showed that it did not matter how long a teacher had been present at a school site, the demographic data had no influence on the overall results of the study. Lambert (2006) a former principal and researcher studied teachers’ perceptions and leadership in schools that were constant in their efforts and progression as effective schools. She found that principals must stay focused on the schools’ values to maintain teachers’ perceptions of effective leadership. She further states that consistent positive

progression of school change and efficiency is perceived similar for teachers and principals and the two must be aligned to be effective. The research supports Lambert's findings.

Despite the beliefs of the researcher, that different years at a school site might bring different perceptions, the data showed that teachers perceived their principal leaders the same at all years of experience. The thought that the years at the school site would affect teachers' perceptions is not an idea supported by the data. This thought may connect back to Schein and the discussion of culture (2004). New members of a culture may integrate into that culture or bring personal values and beliefs that become a part of the new culture (2004). It could be that the participants surveyed felt similar to their peers because they had been immersed in the culture and absorbed the beliefs of those around them. The absorption of the current culture's beliefs could have affected the results to show that the majority of the participants felt similar about their principal leaders.

**Age.** According to Muhammad (2009), teachers present have varying ages, and with the education system turning over frequently many novice teachers are present and not many teachers are present who have a chance to advance in the field and gain more experience. Once completing an undergraduate program and a credential program, a teacher could be approximately 24 years old when he or she begins the teaching career. After an average 30 years as a teacher before retirement (without retention issues), a teacher may be 65 years old at the age of retirement. The demographic data displayed a presence of participants' ages 27-63. Four categories were present: 27-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60-63. There were 34% or 23 teacher participants who were between the ages of 27-39. The least amount of participants was 60-63 years old with 17% and 12 participants. As Muhammad explained, it is important for there to be more teacher growth and experience and it is difficult when retention impedes this. This study

only had 17% of participants in the ages of 60–63 years. Either way, the vast expansion of ages in this study offers great insight into the perceptions of many different people and possibly many different cultural beliefs.

According to Deal and Peterson (2009), school culture must be built by bonds and with strong relationships. A total of 68 participants participated in the study and it may be a positive basis to show the culture and teacher perceptions of leadership. Overall performance can be improved with a cohesive culture, and this paper attempted to identify leadership competencies and school culture with the best representation of each school's teacher participants.

**Leadership competency importance.** Six principal leadership competencies were identified in the literature: Positive disposition (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005), Supports social relationships (Sergiovanni, 2004), Cultivate a shared belonging (Margolis, 2008), Focus of vision (Mitgang, 2012), Enhance trust (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010), and Offer/accept feedback (Massey, 2013). When participants were surveyed the results showed that each competency was deemed important on a likert scale of 1 = *Strongly Disagree*- 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The mean scores for importance of these competencies ranged from 4.44- 4.04. This score would fall into the range of Agree-Strongly Agree. The results showed that the 68 participants agreed that these 6 competencies were important in a principal leader. The competency found most important with a score of 4.44 was *Focus of Vision*. The competency is important in a leader because as a leader it is crucial to have a vision of how the organization should be operating and where the organization is headed in the future. In the study, the competency found important with the lowest rating was *Positive Disposition* with a score of 4.04. The competency was deemed important but not the most important and this may be interpreted as important that a leader is positive and promoting positivity but if this positive leader does not have a vision for

the betterment of the organization, than his or her disposition may not be as important. The data also may be interpreted to suggest that if the principal leader's vision does not contribute to the betterment of the organization then the culture may be affected. The participants agreed with its importance but rated the competence to be lower than they importance, this could be because the leader may not share the same vision of the participants. Further research could be performed to see if the principal's vision is aligned with the participants. It would also be useful to survey the principal leader to see if he or she perceives the importance and competence the same as the participants perceive it.

According to research done by Mitgang (2012) and the Wallace Foundation, when a principal leader has a vision, the organization can run smoothly. In addition, The Education Development Center, Inc. developed a training program for principals, which included a "vision for learning" (Mitgang, 2012, p. 15). According to Massey (2013), in her research of literacy and improvement of schools, stakeholders must develop vision for success in schools. This paper found that *Focus of Vision* was most important of the competencies studied.

Martineau (2012), a contributor to *California Schools*, discusses that vision is an important component for a principal leader to have an efficient school. She focused on the perceptions of school boards and came to the understanding that vision is important for a principal leader. Although this paper focused on principal leaders it had a strong emphasis on the importance of *vision* as well, which was found most significant.

Referring to the *positive disposition* results above, research performed by Daly and Chrispeels (2005) show the components of effective schools. The best and most effective principals are those who have a positive outlook on the school wide organization. It is those leaders who have effective schools. The results for positive disposition in the leadership



competencies survey showed that positive disposition had the least score for importance as perceived by teachers.

Wasickso (2007) explains that good leaders find positive things in people and offer kindness to those around them. Positive disposition will assist in increased school effectiveness and be advantageous to the stakeholders of the community. The study is the culmination of research and perceptions of a college professor, in Kentucky, and this paper focused on the perceptions of teachers in a specific Southern California school district. Although this paper focused on teachers as well, it did not find that a positive disposition was as important as vision and vision was also least present in the principal leaders according to teachers' perceptions.

The results of this paper showed less significance for this specific competency in a leader. A positive disposition in a principal leader may have been less important in this study because the perception of teachers in this district may have observed vision to be most important. With only 6 competencies focused on in this study, teachers' may have perceived vision to be the most important because as the literature shows, vision may help the overall effectiveness of a school (Martineau, 2012).

**Leadership competence and presence.** Of the 6 competencies examined in this study, each participant was asked if they perceived these competencies as present in the current principal leader at each of the participants' school sites. According to the data, the competency with the highest presence in the principal leaders was *Focus of Vision* with a median score of 3.68. This competency was also found as most important in this study. There was a positive correlation between the importance and competence of *Focus of Vision*, which was the highest-ranking competency, with a mean of 4.44 for importance and 3.68 for presence. However, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the competency being important and the

competency being present. If teachers find this competency important, than ideally it should be more present in the principal leader to provide a healthier school culture. Licata, Teddle, and Greenfield (1990) performed a study of 1,769 teachers in 62 schools using the SVI, School Vision Inventory. Results showed that principal leaders with the ability to focus on vision were able to offer strong leadership for school change. The participants of this study perceived that vision was the lowest competency present and found it most important which could have affected the school culture rating and its connection.

The competency found least present in principal leaders was *Enhance Trust* with a median score of 3.25 ranging between Neutral and Agree. In comparison with the second highest importance rating which was *Enhance Trust* with a median score of 4.31 *Agree to Strongly Agree*. The data showed a negative balance between importance and presence for this competency. With this competency being the second highest rated in importance, and the lowest ranking in the presence of this competency, there is definitive data to show this competency is important but not present.

Trust is important as shown in the literature and in the participants' perceptions, with this knowledge, significant postulations may be made about the culture at the school site based on the results of the study. The lower the levels of trust in a school site, the weaker the health of the culture. This idea may be further examined with an investigation into trust and its effects on culture. Many studies are performed of trust and its importance in an organization. Further studies may be done to determine specific characteristics of trust and direct implications on culture.

The findings to a study by Handford and Leithwood (2013), who performed a survey for 3,980 teachers in 134 schools, focused on teachers' perceptions of their school and leadership.

They found with research that “openness” (p. 13) was a characteristic of trust. According to research, openness is a quality of schools that can start change and view professional development as something that is openly discussed. This paper’s study showed in the school culture ratings (See *School culture ratings* below for results) that teachers did not feel confident to discuss or collaborate change, which is considered to be important for school culture health according to Wagner (2006). In essence, the competency score was low for trust; a characteristic of trust is openness, according to Handford and Leithwood (2013) and also was not as shown strong in the culture survey.

According to teachers’ perceptions in this study, trust was not shown in this study to be as highly present in principal leaders but it was shown to be the highly valued. Teachers could have found it as strongly important because it was not as present in the principal leaders. If teachers did not perceive that there was trust in the school site, they could have deemed it most important to have this trust present because of its absence. The literature demonstrated a very important reason to have trust in the school sites, one reason being that trust is highly important for principal leaders to demonstrate for the betterment of the school and its ability to change (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

**School culture ratings.** Of the 21 statements in the survey, 14 statements were used from Dr. Wagner’s School Culture Triage Survey (2006). These 14 statements were ranked on a likert scale of *1 = Never- 5 = Always, or Almost Always*. According to the data, the statement with the highest frequency was “Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.” The median score for this statement was 3.99 or *Sometimes- Often*. The statement was important because it analyzes the frequency that teachers are able to socialize concerns and curriculum. The teachers who participated in this survey felt that this statement encompassed a

procedure that teachers currently practice. It does not directly relate to principal leadership but it does relate to the culture of the school and how the teachers and staff members are able to interact with each other for the good of the organization. When teachers feel open and are able to discuss openly their problems and concerns, the entire school is able to run better and more efficiently (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

The statement that had the least frequency in this survey, which is discussed in the preceding paragraphs, was “When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.” The statement had a score of 2.69 or *Rarely-Sometimes*. According to Wagner (2006), three elements: (a) Professional collaboration, (b) Affiliative and collegial relationships, (c) Efficacy or self-determination, are present in a school culture. The statement from the survey with the least frequency is in the category of efficacy or self-determination. Research suggests that a school needs a leader who leads staff members to be proactive in the benefit of the school site, instead of reactive (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Teachers must feel that their school site is ready for repairing and ultimately helping the school site to run smoothly. If this is not happening at a school site, there may be many issues that are seen as reactive and not proactive to prevent future failures. This aligns with the belief that principal leadership does influence school culture and teachers perceptions of it (Gulcan, 2012). As examined below with the research, the literature supports the purpose of this study and the need for principal leadership and its influence on school culture. Efficacy is a term that relates to worth, teachers may not feel like the organization is important if the principal leader is reacting to issues instead of trying to prevent them. This feeling of worth could also relate back to the competency of trust and the understanding that if the teachers feel trust in the organization they may feel worth as well.

## **Principal Leadership**

Several studies exist in the literature that supports the purpose of this study. Principal leadership has an influence on school culture. According to a study done by Johnson et al., (2012) school improvement and culture are important to teachers. The third research question in this study stated: “If the conditions of work are important, what elements of the work environment matter the most?” (p. 9). The results that supported the preceding research question showed that leadership and a positive work environment were important to teachers. Teachers wanted to be supported, this research question and its findings corresponds with the data collected in this study that teachers believe certain leadership competencies are important in a school leader. One of the competencies reviewed in this study was *Supports Social Relationships*, which means that the “Teachers have chosen a career in which social relationships are central, and they find that their work with students is influenced heavily by the relationships they form with other adults—their principal and their colleagues—in the school” (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 27). This support and communication was important to developing a positive school culture and work environment that was studied by Johnson et al.

## **Teachers’ Perceptions and Principal Competencies**

Kelley et al. (2005) studied teachers’ perceptions using The Attitude Towards Staff Development Scale. This scale was used to determine teachers’ perceptions of administrative support in a variety of areas. There were 31 schools surveyed, along with 31 principals and 155 teachers. The results showed that principals have the ability to impact the climate of a school. The results also identified three important areas that may improve the school environment that the principal had the power to change: feedback, trust, and vision. These three areas that Kelley et al. studied were also competencies studied in this paper. *Offers/Accepts Feedback, Focus of*

*Vision*, and *Enhance Trust*, are all competencies found to be important in this study for a principal leader. The competencies were also correlated with school culture data to identify a connection between the two, based on the hypothesis. The hypothesis was supported by the data and proven to be a positive correlation between school culture and principal leadership and its importance.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was performed in one Southern California school district. The study was distributed through district e-mail. It provided confidentiality for its participants but may not have been as available to participants within the work environment. If teachers wanted to participate in the study, it had to be through their employee e-mails, which for some may not have been as easily accessible at home. Also, the dates that these surveys were sent out were in the beginning of the school year. This time period could have been manageable for some teachers and quickly completed, but for others, the beginning of a new school year may be hectic and provide no additional free time to complete surveys.

Since this study was performed at only one school district, the answers are confined to a certain faction of people. The results do not display the views of other school districts or of the entire population of this district. The limit of 68 participants keeps these results very narrowed to the views of 63 teachers within one district in Southern California. In another area of California or other state, with more participants, there may be other results.

### **Implications for the Field**

According to research, principal leaders influence school culture with the presence of leadership competencies (Gulcan, 2012). Chapter 2 examined literature for school culture and with the studies of school culture, the literature lead to the influence of a principal leader. With

the numerous studies performed about leadership and certain competencies deemed important for principal leadership, this study focused on 6 for the purpose of the research.

Useful information may come from the research in this paper that may be used in school sites to facilitate better leadership and a better school culture. Below is a list of each competency along with a description and implications for a principal leader.

Positive disposition (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005): A principal leader who shows positivity with his or her staff members and offers appreciation and gracious interactions is a principal who envelopes a positive disposition. Research shows a principal who embodies this competency has an influence on school culture that is positive and promotes an overall healthy school culture rating. Although this was not the most important competency, it does have an influence on the teachers' perceptions of principal leadership.

Supports social relationships (Sergiovanni, 2004): A principal who encourages social relationships with staff members and allows them to grow as individuals socially, also encourages a positive school culture or working environment. This association is important in the field of education because principal leadership has a strong influence on school culture.

Cultivate a shared belonging (Margolis, 2008): The competency is important because when a principal cultivates a shared belonging he or she is encouraging a work environment where everyone feels like they belong. Participants in this study deemed this competency important and it also has an influence on teachers' perceptions of school culture.

Focus of vision (Mitgang, 2012): When a principal leader has a vision, this leader is showing the school site how important the school site is. It is important that principal leaders have a vision and also focus on this to influence the school culture in a way that is productive and positive.

Enhance trust (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010): Trust is an important factor in any leadership position. With this study, trust was shown to be important because teachers perceive trust to be an important competency of a principal leader and this competency also influences the teachers' perceptions of their school culture as well.

Offer/accept feedback (Massey, 2013): It is important for a principal leader to offer feedback to its staff members but to also be receptive to feedback. This competency was seen as important in this study and also an influence on school culture.

The data from this study may be used to continue the study of the role of leadership in schools. It is important that school sites promote a culture that is conducive to the success of the school as a whole. This study examined leadership competencies that proved important for principal leaders when perceived by teachers and compared to the presence of these competencies in principal leaders. Leadership must be treated as important. Principals are not just administrators of teachers, administrating the school governance. Principals are also leaders who have a duty to be examples to teachers in how they lead and how they deal with situations that arise at the school site. School districts may use the information from this study to examine current principal leaders along with future principal leaders.

In current California Administrative Services Credential programs for future principals, there is only one required class in Leadership. The classes required are those associated with governance, laws, and management of the school sites. The results from this study could contribute to the literature that may help the current credential programs to focus more on the leadership aspect of principals and not just the management aspect. The information gathered from the study will also help other researchers assess the findings of the paper to measure the commonalities with other school districts and demographic regions in a larger study.



## **Suggestions for Future Research**

With the body of knowledge present in the field of education, many avenues are available to investigate when focusing on school improvement. This paper focused on teachers' perceptions of principal leadership as an influence on school culture. In a study performed by Odhiambo and Hii (2012), key stakeholders: parents, teachers, and students were interviewed to identify their perceptions of the outcomes of leadership. The results indicated that the key stakeholders perceived that effective leadership leads to an emphasis on quality teaching and learning. This study in association with the leadership competencies in this paper may offer suggestive means for further research. It may be important to study the effects of the leadership competencies on school performance in accordance with school culture. Future studies may find that these teachers' perceptions of leadership competencies may also influence performance.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan is focusing on the leadership of principals in school sites to better education (U.S. Department of Education 2013a, paragraph 3). He is promoting the leadership and training of principals to have better results at the schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a, paragraph 3). This focus adds importance to the literature and a need to further examine principal leadership and competencies. Many areas may be studied when examining school culture, but this paper focused on principal leadership competencies and school culture. There were 6 principal leadership competencies found in the literature to be important:

- Positive disposition (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005)
- Supports social relationships (Sergiovanni, 2004)
- Cultivate a shared belonging (Margolis, 2008)

- Focus of vision (Mitgang, 2012)
- Enhance trust (Louis et al., 2010)
- Offer/accept feedback (Massey, 2013)

Exploring teachers' perceptions of looking at the school culture and the leadership competencies present in the participants' current principal leaders, this study showed that principal leaders do influence school culture. The higher the presence of the leadership competencies, the higher the frequency of the school culture behaviors and more healthy the school culture. Principal leadership competencies influence school culture.

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## APPENDIX A

## The Competency Approach

Instructions: The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify the competencies that are important for a principal leader. Choose the best possible degree rating for the following competency statements.

**Years of experience as a teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Years in Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Key:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Competencies	Rating				
<p><b>1. Positive Disposition:</b> The principal leader reflects a positive attitude and evokes appreciation of staff. This may include encouragement and positive interactions.</p> <p>C. This competency is important in a principal leader:</p> <p>D. This is a competency of the current principal at my school site:</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p><b>2. Cultivate a Shared Belonging:</b> The principal offers others to share in leadership connecting staff to activities in the school.</p> <p>C. This competency is important in a principal leader:</p> <p>D. This is a competency of the current principal at my school site:</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p><b>3. Support Social Relationships:</b> The principal helps to develop relationships among the staff with use of collaboration and frequent communication.</p> <p>C. This competency is important in a principal leader:</p>	1	2	3	4	5







	Rourke & Booned, 2009; Certo & Fox, 2010; Killeavy, 2006; Roekel, 2008.	
4. Focus of vision: The principal has clear focus on what is needed for a school site and what he or she believes is important.	Mitgang, 2012; Maxwell, 2013; Jerald, 2006; Ritchie, 2013; “The School,” 2013; Devita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007; Kelley, Thornton, Daugherty, 2005.	Competency Approach
5. Enhance trust: The principal leader trusts others and encourages trust in others. The principal fosters relationships built on trust.	Vodicka, 2006; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Pricer, 2012; Mycoski, 2012; VanMaele & VanHoutte, 2012; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Myatt, 2012, April 4.	Competency Approach
6. Offer/accept feedback: The principal offers feedback to staff and also is open to accepting feedback from others.	Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Ingersoll, Merrit, & May, 2012; Massey, 2013; Kopkowski, 2008; Mitgang, 2012; “The New Teacher	<i>(continued)</i> Competency Approach

	Project, 2012; Llopis, 2013, Feb. 2; Myatt, 2012, April 4; Rourke & Boone, 2009.	
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## APPENDIX B

## Self-Assessment School Culture Triage

Instructions: Copy and distribute this survey to teachers. Tally individual scores.

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always or Almost Always</b>
<b>Professional Collaboration</b>					
1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Affiliative Collegiality</b>					
1. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each others' company.	1	2	3	4	5( <i>continued</i> )
3. Our school reflects a true "sense" of community.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations, including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Self-Determination/Efficacy</b>					
1. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.	1	2	3	4	5

2. School members are interdependent and value each other.	1	2	3	4	5( <i>continued</i> )
3. Members of our school community seek to define the problem rather than blame others.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
5. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	1	2	3	4	5

*Note.* (Wagner, 2006, p. 41)

*Demographic Data Collection*

Experience	Age/Gender/Ethnicity
How long have you been a teacher?	Male or Female
How long have you been at your school site?	What is your age?

APPENDIX C

E-Mail Approval for Survey Tool

**Center for Improving School Culture**

**International School Culture Research College**

***CREATING BETTER PLACES TO LEARN***

**Box 737**

**Cloquet, MN 55720**

**[schoolculture.net](http://schoolculture.net)**

**[cwriders@aol.com](mailto:cwriders@aol.com)**

**270 791 3088**

Dear Ms. Glover:

On behalf of the Center for Improving School Culture Board of Directors, I am delighted to give you permission to use the School Culture Triage Survey for your research.

If there is any assistance I can provide, do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest regards,

Christopher R. Wagner, Ph.D.

President, CISC

Tue, Dec 10, 2013 10:40 am


## APPENDIX D

## Approval for Study From Fontana Unified School District

Fontana Unified School District  
Instructional Services  
9680 Citrus Avenue  
Fontana, California 92335

January 16, 2014

To: Veronica Glover

From: Kimberly MacKinney, Director Secondary Education and Assessment & Evaluation 

Subject: Application to Conduct Research

-----  
Your request to do research regarding "A Study of the Influence of Leadership Competencies on a School Culture Organization" has been approved. You may conduct this study at the Middle Schools and High Schools with the exception of Kaiser High.

Please provide a copy of this memo to the principal at these sites which will show that you have authorization to conduct the research. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to call our office at 909-357-5600 ext. 29196.

/ib Research Request-Glover

Cc: Principals-Middle/High



## APPENDIX E

## E-Mail to Principals of School Sites Studied

Hello, my name is Veronica Glover and I am a teacher in Fontana USD and a student at Pepperdine University. **Please see the document attached for district approval to perform a study in FUSD.** Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

Veronica Glover

## APPENDIX F

## E-Mail: Initial Contact for the Study

Hello, my name is Veronica Glover and I am a teacher in Fontana USD and a student at Pepperdine University. I am writing to inquire if you will participate in a study of teachers' perceptions of principal leadership competencies and their influence on a school culture organization. This study is conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University.

The results of this study will contribute to the understanding of principal leadership competencies and school culture along with the influence on the school. It will also help to understand the influence that principals have on a school site culture.

Your participation will require taking two surveys simultaneously. It can be expected to take approximately 20 minutes. The survey link is through Survey Monkey which is a protected Web site and will preserve the anonymity of your responses. To complete the survey please click on the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JJXVRML>

Your survey responses will be completely confidential and this study is entirely voluntary. I appreciate your support in continuing my education.

Thank you,

Veronica Glover

## APPENDIX G

## E-Mail Reminder for Teachers

Hello, my name is Veronica Glover and I am a teacher in Fontana USD and a student at Pepperdine University. I am writing to ask those who have not participated in the study to please click on the link below to complete the surveys.

Your participation will require taking two surveys simultaneously. It can be expected to take approximately 20 minutes. The survey link is through Survey Monkey which is a protected Web site and will preserve the anonymity of your responses. To complete the survey please click on the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JJXVRML>

Your survey responses will be completely confidential and this study is entirely voluntary. I appreciate your support in continuing my education.

Thank you,

Veronica Glover

## APPENDIX H

## Final E-Mail Reminder for Teachers

Hello, my name is Veronica Glover and I am a teacher in Fontana USD and a student at Pepperdine University. I am writing to ask those who have not participated in the study to please click on the link below to complete the surveys. This is a reminder e-mail, and final request for participation in the surveys.

Your participation will require taking two surveys simultaneously. It can be expected to take approximately 20 minutes. The survey link is through Survey Monkey which is a protected Web site and will preserve the anonymity of your responses. To complete the survey please click on the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JJXVRML>

Your survey responses will be completely confidential and this study is entirely voluntary. I appreciate your support in continuing my education. Thank you for your support of this study.

Thank you,

Veronica Glover

## APPENDIX I

## Consent With No Signature Form From Survey Monkey Web site

Dear Teacher:

My name is Veronica Glover and I am a student in the Organizational Leadership program at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University, who is currently in the process of recruiting individuals for my study entitled, “A Study of the Influence of Leadership Competencies on a School Culture Organization” The professor supervising my work is Dr. Nancy Harding. The study is designed to investigate principal leadership competencies, I am inviting individuals who are teachers to participate in my study.

**Please understand that your participation in my study is strictly voluntary.** The following is a description of what your study participation entails, the terms for participating in the study, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

If you should decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to identify the current leadership competencies in your principal. You will also be asked to identify competencies that you find important in a principal leader. Following the competencies, you will be asked questions to determine the overall health of the culture at your school site. It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete both surveys sequentially. Please complete the survey alone in a single setting.

You should be aware that the foreseeable risks or potential discomfort to you as a result of participating in this study are minimal. In the event you do experience any discomfort or foresee any risk, please contact me directly at [REDACTED] and I will address your concerns directly.

The potential benefits to you for participating in the study are the insights gained from the

principal leadership inquiry and the knowledge you will attain from this experience about leadership and its many facets.

If you should decide to participate and find you are not interested in completing the survey in its entirety, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision.

If the findings of the study are presented to professional audiences or published, no information that identifies you personally will be released. The data will be kept in a secure manner for at least 6 years at which time the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions regarding the information that I have provided above, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address and phone number provided below. If you have further questions or do not feel I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact Dr. Nancy Harding, chairperson, at: [REDACTED]. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Kevin Collins, Chairperson of the IRB at Pepperdine University, [REDACTED].

By clicking the agree button below you are acknowledging that you have read and understand what your study participation entails, and are consenting to participate in the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information, and I hope you decide to complete the survey. You are welcome to a brief summary of the study findings in about 1 year. If you decide you are interested in receiving the summary, please e-mail me directly.

Sincerely,

Veronica Glover

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



## APPENDIX J

## Pepperdine IRB Approval Letter

## PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate &amp; Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

July 18, 2014

Veronica Glover

Protocol #: E0414D05

Project Title: A Study of the Influence of Leadership Competencies on a School Culture Organization

Dear Ms. Glover:

Thank you for submitting your application, *A Study of the Influence of Leadership Competencies on a School Culture Organization*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, , have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nih.gov/training.com/ohrt/ohrtguidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a Request for Modification Form to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact Kevin Collins, Manager of the



Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu). On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thema Bryant-Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives  
Mr. Brett Leach, Compliance Attorney  
Dr. Nancy Harding, Faculty Advisor