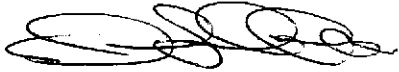


## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE IMPACT ON SCHOOL CLIMATE, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Leadership in the School of Education, Concordia University Irvine.



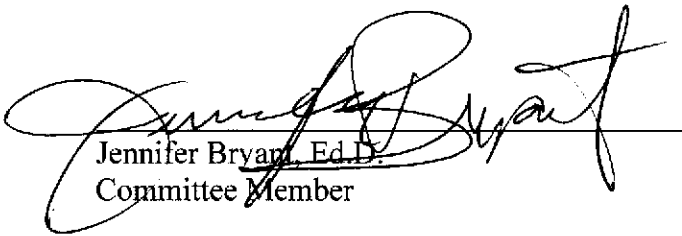
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POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS: A  
QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE IMPACT ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

by Lisa Lopez

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Doctor of Education  
in  
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School of Education  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the relationship between school leaders and teachers and how these relationships impact school climate. The study also examined essential traits of effective school leaders using the lens of servant and transformative theories. The focus on research included secondary schools under the umbrella of a large charter school organization in Arizona. The participants in this study included school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers. Participants completed surveys and open-ended questionnaires. Findings revealed effective leaders are more likely to cultivate and sustain positive school relationships. Furthermore, strong communication skills create an environment of trust that fosters positive school relationships. Positive relationships between school leaders and teachers help nurture and sustain positive school climate.

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This work is dedicated to the memory of my Father, David W. Gilpin.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction**

There is a growing disconnect between school leaders and teachers that can lead to negative school climates (Flannery, 2021; Shields, 2018). Additionally, the growing nationwide teacher shortage accelerated by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 is further adding to the problem (Flannery, 2020). The rise of flabbergasted school leaders and unhappy, undervalued teachers leads to miscommunication and hostile school environments (Flannery, 2020). Negative school climates can have a negative impact on student learning, especially in low-income areas, because these areas lack funding (Flannery, 2021; Shields, 2018). Understanding the root cause of these issues is critical to initiate change (Fullan, 2011).

The life of a school leader/administrator and educator is filled with a variety of roles and responsibilities that are connected in one way or another to the leadership style of the school leader. School leaders and teachers have a complicated relationship because of their varying responsibilities. While both parties endlessly search for ways to improve student engagement and increase rigor in the classroom, relationships between school leaders and teachers can become muddled and complicated adding more tension and frustration (Fullan, 2011). Both parties have pursued a career in education with similar motivation, making a difference and serving others (Shields, 2018). Both parties are playing different roles in the education with the same goal of making decisions with the most successful student outcomes. The varying responsibilities can lead to conflicts. School leaders have the pressure of state and local leaderships. If teachers do not have buy in of macro goals, then school leaders need to be more autocratic in their approach to leadership. Conversely, teachers have the pressures of planning, instruction, assessments, and additional responsibilities that can impair their understanding of macro goals. Somewhere along

the line pathways to common goals and macro versus micro-goals shift, leading to conflicts and resentment (Northouse, 2013). In this quest for “what is best for the student,” frustrations and blame pile up between these two important stakeholders (Knight et al., 2015). Unresolved conflict between school leaders and teachers can result in a negative school climate. (Shields, 2018). The challenge is many school leaders and teachers fail to effectively communicate and resolve conflicts; thus, contributing to a negative school climate.

Administrators, including school leaders, assistant school leaders, and curriculum coaches, and teachers need to bridge the dichotomy of the “us” versus ‘them’ to improve school culture. School culture impacts student education and performance. School culture can be impacted either positively or negatively by the leadership of the school and the tension between staff and leadership can have an impact on school culture. When key stakeholders such as school leaders and educators are unable to effectively communicate, it leads to less equitable education for all students. (Knight et al., 2015; Shields, 2018). Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) assert that great leaders educate their constituents and great educators effectively lead their students. While adhering to traditional standards and methodologies provides measurable and consistent results, being a more dynamic leader and educator creates an environment that motivates, inspires, and encourages students to become part of the conversation (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). In order to ease this tension and cultivate a positive school climate, effective communication and dynamic leadership are essential.

Effective communication helps rehumanize the relationship between school leaders and teacher (Brown, 2012). As mentioned before, both parties share a common goal of providing an equitable education for student. Therefore, school leaders can lead the way by building a strong connection with teachers (Hallowell, 2011). School leaders can increase connections by

effectively communicating a shared vision, mission, and goals that create a teacher buy in (Brown, 2021; Hallowell, 2011). As a result, this leads to a more positive relationship between school leaders and teachers (Fullan, 2011; Keith, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In today's educational climate, there is a heavy emphasis on high academic performance of students. While teachers have an undeniable impact on student test results, there are many secondary actors that can also drive performance. The relationship between school leaders and teachers is one of these factors. Historically, there have been waves of disconnect, lack of trust, and miscommunication between school leaders and teachers (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013). The onset of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 led to drastic divisions between school leaders and teachers (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013). NCLB required unrealistic expectations of school leaders faced with the consequence of school takeover and loss of school funding and resources (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2016). Schools were rated on how well students passed standardized tests, leading teachers to teach to the test, losing creativity and autonomy in the classroom (Ravitch, 2016). A business model of extrinsic rewards does not improve education (Ravitch, 2016). A business model leads to further mistrust between school leaders and teachers (Ravitch, 2016).

Understaffed schools, lack of autonomy, unheard teachers, and the growing disconnect between school leaders and teachers contribute to a toxic workplace (Flannery, 2020). Similar to teachers in the classroom, administrators consume a myriad of roles that make it difficult for them to balance the needs of federal, state, and local mandates on top of running a school (Clifton-Bacon, 1999). The teaching profession is constantly being redefined in the midst of a 24/7 news cycle and a perpetual connection to social media always at peoples' fingertips and

adding additional external pressures to the profession. As a result, two of the primary stakeholders in education: school leaders and teachers, have been losing their voices. Rooney states (2005) “...sound-bite cures for complex education issues dot the evening news, and political rhetoric scatters blame for social issues like confetti over the education community” (p. 1). Leaders and society are dismissing the voice of key stakeholders which creates a more hostile work environment (Fullan, 2011). Lack of autonomy and input breeds miscommunication and distrust (Hallowell, 2011). A hostile work environment negatively impacts school climate, thereby harming student learning and success (Ravitch, 2016). Teachers plan, teach, and provide more than educational support to students. They work beyond the eight-hour, five-day work week, while society is constantly questioning and criticizing their work ethic. Teachers are the backbone of the education system; therefore, a negative school climate makes an already challenging career an additional hardship.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the relationship between school leaders and teachers and how these relationships impact school climate. These relationships have an impact on school climate that can enhance or hinder an inclusive school environment (Hay, 2013). Burnt out teachers and frustrated administrators are a recipe for disaster for students. The pathway to an authentic, inspiring, and effective professional relationship is not an easy one. According to Schmuck, Bell, and Bell (2012) “conflicts are inevitable,” and both can be useful and destructive (p. 234). In every profession, tension can exist between the “boss” and their employees. Education is not a commodity; it is a basic evolving right that involves many human variables, therefore there is not a simple formula or one right leadership style. (Moore, 2000).



The success or failure of leadership has a direct impact on the quality of education that is provided to students (Brown, 2021).

The following research questions are designed to help examine school leaders and teachers' relationships and what contributes to a more positive school climate:

### **Research Questions**

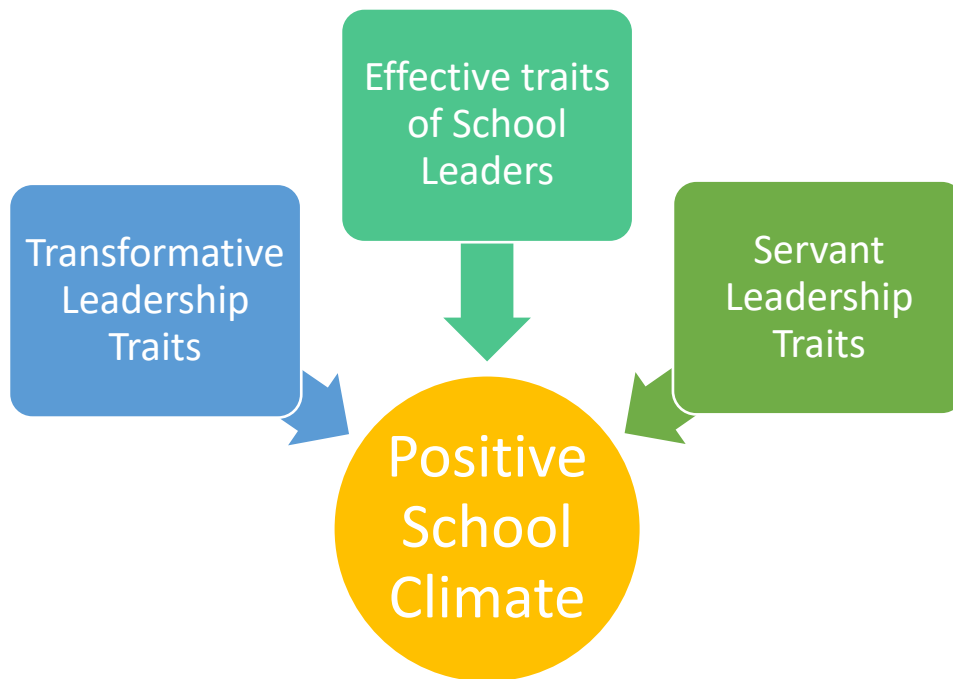
1. Which leadership traits contribute to a positive school climate?
2. What actions do curriculum coaches need to implement to establish a positive school climate?
3. What are effective traits of communication between school leaders and teachers?
4. How can a positive school climate be maintained over time by its leadership?

### **Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a written presentation of the expected relationship between variables (Swaen, 2021). In this study, the expected relationship is that a positive school climate is driven, in part, by the leadership style and decision making of the school leaders. The additional variable here is that a positive school climate has an impact on the schools' results, for example student performance (Cohen et al., 2020). Our variables are certain leadership traits are well suited for leading a school. These traits help to foster a positive school climate (Cohen et al., 2020)

There is a link between positive school climate and school performance (Cohen et al., 2020). The researcher will examine the traits of transformative and servant leadership styles that are best suited to creating a positive school culture and better school performance. The conceptual framework for this study includes examining the leadership theories of transformative and servant leadership and how the traits of transformative and servant leadership positively influence school climate. Both leadership styles emphasize establishing positive relationships through effective communication (Keith, 2012; Shields, 2018). This qualitative case study

research design will help pinpoint the most effective traits of leadership through the lens of transformative and servant leadership (Creswell, 2014).



(Lopez, 2022)

In addition, the framework design includes a level of inquiry that will examine the factors and variables that influence professional school relationships (Creswell, 2014; Niglas, 2004). The research study will center around a qualitative case study using a step-by-step survey design and open-ended questionnaires, looking for the relationship between the variables (Creswell, 2014). The researcher will be using the lenses of transformative and servant leadership to evaluate effective traits of school leadership, constructive communication, and school relationships on school climate.

### **Significance of the Study**

School districts across the United States each have their own unique sets of challenges, whether due to physical environment, the proximity of population or socio-economic status, a

nationwide teacher shortage, and pandemic related issues (Coffin & Meghjani, 2020; Flannery, 2020). This study is important because school leadership or lack of leadership plays a significant role in establishing both school culture and the overall work environment for the staff. We are in the midst of an educational crisis with the newer teacher shortage and wider achievement gaps created by the pandemic (Flannery, 2020). To provide equitable education opportunities, leaders must be aware of the action needed for effective leadership (Shields, 2018).

Leaders should be concerned with not just retaining staff, but creating an environment where teachers can excel and students can thrive. Wanting to create a positive school climate and knowing how to do it are not one in the same (Cohen et al., 2020). A positive school climate is not simply developed by saying “please” and “thank you” in emails and putting treats in the teachers’ lounges, school need a whole hearted and committed leader. It takes an understanding of how to effectively and authentically lead (Brown, 2012). This study is important because it can identify certain traits or actions that a leader will need to make use of to create the environment that fosters both teacher and student growth (Walker, 2019). It should provide leaders or prospective school leaders with examples of good leadership. It can show them the types of actions and communication that is needed (Hord & Roussin, 2017). Or another way to look at it, most, if not all school leaders have come up through the ranks as teachers. They went to school to become teachers; their focus has been on being educators. However, when teachers make the move to an administrative position, it requires a different toolbox to be successful (Fullan, 2011). If the only tool the administration has at their disposal is a hammer, then they are going to treat everything that comes their way as a nail. This study can help put other tools in their box so that they can build better and stronger schools that help undervalued teachers thrive and grow in the uncertainly brought on by the worldwide pandemic (Wiggan et al., 2020).

Undervalued teachers and continuously shifting expectations stemming from the pandemic leads to breakdown in miscommunication, leads to a breakdown of communication (Keith, 2012, Shields, 2018). Due to the unique challenges faced by educational organizations, a one-size-fits-all approach to equitable education is unrealistic (Hess, 2008). Effective communication between all key stakeholders is critical in educational policy making (Hess, 2008). Hess (2008) affirms: “That role is not to dictate outcomes but to ensure that public decision-making is informed by all the facts, insights, and analyses that the tools of science can provide” (p. 538). This in turn will help cultivate and sustain a more positive school climate (Keith, 2012; Shields, 2018).

One common challenge that impacts education is the complicated relationship between administrators and teachers. The tension between both can impact the school environment (Schmuck et al., 2012). Additionally, the pandemic has further strained leader and teacher relationships (Coffin & Meghjani, 2020). In this quest for “what is best for the student,” frustrations and blame pile up between these two important stakeholders. An increase in frustration and blame can lead to negative school culture and ultimately an educational crisis (Flannery, 2020). Administrators and teachers need to bridge the dichotomy of the “us” versus ‘them’ with effective communication and leadership (Reitman & Karge, 2019). Effective education leadership is essential to positive school culture (Piotrowsky, 2016). For example, in the classroom, one size does not fit all, meaning administrators should be aware of having an authentic and meaningful leadership, since the role of effective leadership is constantly evolving and crucial to a positive school environment (Brown, 2018; Shields, 2018; Willis et al., 2017). This will inform leadership practices moving forward.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

The researcher has 17 years of experience in education including 4 and half years of administrative experience as a curriculum specialist and coach. Currently, the researcher is employed as a high school administrator and curriculum coach in a brand-new charter high school. The researcher's first year in the position of administrator the researcher was overwhelmed by unforeseeable challenges and unrealistic expectations by other administrators, teachers, and parents. Additionally, over the span of 17 years, this researcher with teaching and administrator has observed the strained relationship between teachers and administrators often leading to negative school climates. Key stakeholders in education such as district administrators, school leaders, teachers can use the results of the study to inform current practice. The practicum of current effective administration in the school setting promotes a harmonious relationship between school leaders and teachers, thereby cultivating and sustaining a positive school climate.

During the researcher's first year of administration, the researcher had visions of grandeur similar to when she first became a teacher: she was going to be the best administrator ever! Within weeks, the researcher found that many teachers were unhappy. She brought goodies to the meetings, sent positive notes, and said: "thank you" all the time. After much reflection and guidance from her mentor and principal, she soon discovered cookies and 'happy' notes are superficial without meaningful and authentic leadership. Additionally, the researcher studied and analyzed different types of leadership and quickly identified servant and transformative leadership as ones that could help bridge the disconnect between administrators and teachers. The first part of the researcher's career (2004-2015) was spent in a large, lower socio-economic high school setting, located south of Los Angeles, California. When the researcher began her

teaching career at this school district, the administration was well respected. Teachers felt supported and heard, leading to a positive school culture, where students were thriving. Many teachers were happy to come to work, collaborate, have a voice, be creative, and teach students. After five years, the district changed the entire administration team. There was no explanation given for the sudden change in administration from either the district or the new administration team. The lack of an explanation for this change resulted in rumors and speculation. Poor communication around the change created a foundation of mistrust. The mood on the campus changed dramatically. The staff was confused and anxious about the ramifications of such a dramatic change. Fast forward a few years and the teacher turnover increased, stakeholders' complaints increased, and student engagement declined because of too many mandates and unrealistic expectations. Mentally checked out and neglected teachers serve as a launching pad to teacher burnout and it made the researcher realize the importance of a positive school climate (Schneider-Levi et al.,2017). Administrators assume the teachers did not want to work hard because of lack of teacher engagement at meetings, when in fact they were just burnt out (Schneider-Levi et al.,2017). Assumptions can have a negative impact on a large majority of daily interactions with other stakeholders and perspectives that filter the way we project our views onto others (Mezirow, 1991). Both administrators and teachers wanted to work hard, given the right conditions, but did not because of ineffective leadership and poor communications (Hallowell, 2016).

As a teacher in the 2016-2017 school year, the researcher worked in a large suburban lower socio-economic area in Colorado. Due to lower test scores and graduation rates, the school district was at risk of the State taking over the school. As a result, the district administration took drastic steps to turn the school district around and increase rigor for the students with the hope of

raising test scores. They implemented a Competency-Based Learning system where the entire school system was organized around students working at their academic levels and only advancing when they had demonstrated proficiency of 80% or more on assessments. In theory, it sounds like an ideal and practical way to meet the needs of all learners. However, the execution of the plan created a hostile, depressing environment and produced a high teacher turnover.

During the researcher's new teacher orientation to the district, there were over a hundred new teachers in attendance and that was not due to an increase in student enrollment. In fact, student enrollment had been on the decline.

There were many challenges and issues unique and not so unique to this school district. The biggest challenge the researcher encountered was unhappy staff working in a climate of fear. The dedicated staff worked endlessly to follow district initiatives while maintaining best practices for students. Teachers who were actively participating in critical reflection and collaboration worked tirelessly to improve their craft. The central administration gave the illusion of respecting teacher input by assigning brand new teachers to committees. This was a facade, however, as the administration purposefully selected new teachers as those are less likely to speak up due to fear of retaliation or termination. Artificially collecting teacher input, leaves many teachers feeling frustrated and ignored. By not acknowledging the negative emotions in the workspace, the central administration is being counterproductive (Nass & Yen, 2012). In addition, the central administration did not ask teachers what they would like to teach, they were told what they would teach. It is understandable that based on enrollment and factors that teachers cannot always have the ideal schedule, however when there is an easy solution to match the right person to where their passion lies then that voice should be heard (Hallowell, 2011). Working the wrong job is "...like marrying the wrong person... (Hallowell, 2011, p. 43)."

Another teacher requested growth in her instructional strategies but was denied with no explanations. People are matched for their passion and deal with negative emotions. This leads to environments that dim their shine and growth opportunities, harming all stakeholders (Hallowell, 2011). Passion met with hostility contributes to a toxic workplace. The researcher may have potential bias, since she has served in education for 17 years. To improve validity in research, it is important to keep personal bias in check (Creswell, 2014).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Equity*: Providing individualized services and programs to people that address possible barriers, like socio-economic disadvantages (Why Understanding Equity vs Equality in Schools Can Help You Create an Inclusive Classroom, 2019).

*Equitable Education*: Providing individualized support and programs to students that address possible barriers, like socio-economic disadvantages (Why Understanding Equity vs Equality in Schools Can Help You Create an Inclusive Classroom, 2019).

*Leadership*: A person who has influence and/or power over a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2013).

*Multiple Intelligences*: People have varying skill sets housed in their brains, meaning some people are more skilled in mathematics, while others are more skillful in artistic endeavors (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). This is emotional intelligence as well (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017).

*School Climate*: School environment that impacts students' learning (Walker, 2019).

*School Culture*: Culture is defined as who we are; school mission, vision, and values (Brown, 2015).

*Servant Leadership*: The leader is driven by serving the organization first (Greenleaf.org, 2002)



*Relationships:* For the purpose of this study, relationships will be defined as interpersonal interactions between school leaders and teachers (Knight, 2018).

*Transformational Leadership:* The leader is driven by creating purposeful change for the greater good (Willis et al., (2017).

*Transformative Leadership:* The leader is driven by the need to transform an organization in a democratic way in order to produce more equitable outcomes (Shields, 2018).

### **Summary**

School leaders need to find the balance between managing diverse personnel and creating a safe place that fosters student learning (Shields, 2018). School leaders are likely to cultivate and maintain a safe places for student learning when they pause, reflect, communicate, and take the time to listen to the needs of their constituents (Greenleaf, 2002). Reflection and communication can help support action plans goals that contribute to a more positive school climate and help to provide a more equitable education for students (Fullan, 2011; Shields, 2018). School leaders have an enormous impact on the climate of the school and can help charter and sustain the course for success by effectively managing and communicating to key stakeholders and creating an environment of trust (Baxter & Clayton, 2014; Hallowell, 2011).

School leaders can improve relationships with key stakeholders by creating an environment of trust (Fullan, 2011; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015). A positive relationship between school leadership and key stakeholders is essential cultivating and maintaining positive school culture (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015). Developing strong communications skills can improve a school leader's leadership (Flannery, 2021). Teachers that feel supported are more likely to improve their practice, thereby leading to a more positive school climate (Schmuck et al., 2012).

School leaders have a vast influence on the environment of the school (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015). It is pertinent for school leaders to be mindful of other perspectives for the benefit of all stakeholders (Baxter et al., 2014). Harmonious communication between all stakeholders promotes positive school climate (Baxter et al., 2014). Thus, authentic communication in a school setting can have a progressive bearing on school climate. School leaders need to be highly sophisticated at the art of communication to balance the needs of all shareholders (Schmuck et al., 2012). Listening to the needs of teachers leads to happier teachers in turn improving qualified teacher retention (De Stercke et al., 2015).

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

The rapid pace of globalization in the 21st-century requires a different and more democratic leader (Goleman, 2011; Hay, 2013). A leader with the 21st-century skill set of collaboration, strong communication skills, and relationship-building empowers others to grow. The path to this authentic, inspiring, and meaningful leadership is not an easy one or, for the faint of heart (Hay, 2013). The call to service starts with a desire to improve leadership and authentically help others (Greenleaf, 2002). This calling also includes exploring different leadership styles that support this calling to establish a positive climate and foster teacher morale and student engagement (Keith, 2012; Shields, 2018). Servant and transformative leadership theories provide a pathway that helps leaders answer this calling. This literature review examines the traits of servant and transformative leadership that improve the relationship between school leaders and teachers, contributing to a more positive school climate.

The approach to school leadership has shifted due to 21st century educational reform, making it challenging to land on the most effective leadership style (Gosnell-Lamb et. al, 2013). In the 1990s, a new elementary and secondary education act with an educational reform package was developed by Congress. In 2001, this became known as the: "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act (Ravitch, 2016). It was signed into law by George W. Bush in 2002 (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2016). The implementation of NCLB shifted school priorities to high-stakes testing (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013). The demands of NCLB emphasizing high-stakes testing left school leaders with less time to focus on behaviors that contribute to a positive school climate (Fullan, 2011; Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2016). Since the sun has set on NCLB, new emphasis has emerged on evolving types of leadership to counter the consequences

of NCLB (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013; Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Ravitch, 2016). Educational organizations have placed a greater emphasis on shared decision-making, collaboration, and building trust since the conclusion of NCLB (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). President Barack Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law on December 10, 2015 (Miller, 2015). ESSA, a bipartisan bill, was enacted to revise and replace No Child Left Behind (Miller, 2010). This new law helped states and districts reduce time spent on standardized tests, provide multiple ways for students to become more college and career ready, ensure more accessible state preschool programs, allow state government to and promote a platform form shared decision making (Kerr, 2015; Miller, 2015). Research shows that school organizations cannot thrive without collaboration, innovation, and trust (Brown, 2015). Additionally, Shapiro & Stefkovich (2016) assert that leaders keep ethics of critique, justice, care, and education at the forefront of their approach to educational leadership. These concerted efforts contribute to a positive school climate with effective leadership and encourage positive relationships between school leaders and teachers (Brown, 2015; Fullan, 2011).

### **Evolving Leadership Definitions**

The evolution of humanity relies upon a society ingrained with the ability to learn and grow from each other and adapt leadership to meet the evolving needs of society (Kreber, 2004). Thus, the definition of leadership is constantly evolving. The exemplary leadership in the 21st century includes an active learner who is flexible, adaptive, collaborative, and concerned with the needs of others (Hay, 2013; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Traditionally, leaders have been valued for their communication and decision-making skills (Spears, 2018). The ultimate goal of leadership is to make the world a better place by ensuring a more equitable, inclusive, and safe place for all (Keith, 2010). Therefore, the definition of effective leadership is constantly

changing to meet the needs of an evolving 21st-century system. A system that supports and serves the whole organization in the 21st century (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

### **Servant Leadership**

A servant leader leads by supporting the whole organization while encouraging growth, innovation, and happiness (Allen et al., 2016). Leading an organization is no easy task; it requires patience, dedication, and much self-reflection to become an authentic servant leader (Brown, 2015; Keith, 2015). The crucial step of self-reflection is an intimidating task because one has to examine their worldview and critically reflect on their strengths and weaknesses (Brown, 2018, Fullan, 2011 & Merizow, 1991). Shedding one's armor during self-reflection may lead to the vulnerability that often leaves people feeling exposed. However, this vulnerability will grow and contribute to more effective leadership (Brown, 2015). Self-reflection sets the stage for self-awareness and the growth of the servant-leader (Spears, 2018). Self-Awareness helps leaders better understand their own and differing perspectives, providing a holistic approach (Spears, 2018).

Spears (2018) asserts that servant-leadership has ten characteristics (Spears, 2018). These characteristics include: Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, and community building (Kiker et al., 2019, p. 179). Kiker et al. (2019) discovered in their research of several high-profile companies that servant leadership positively affects the workplace climate and job satisfaction. Servant-leaders often set action goals to cultivate professional growth in staff and students and provide a nurturing environment to build character (Keith, 2010). A nurturing environment helps servant-leaders inspire and empower others to lead, such as teachers who take more active leadership roles (Markie, 2010). Teachers that recognize their leadership qualities are more likely to promote leadership in the

classroom (Hallowell, 2011). Providing leadership in the classroom can provide students opportunities and help them excel and exceed the expectations they have set for themselves and inspire them to be ethical leaders for future generations (Hallowell, 2011). The servant-leader serves and takes care of the needs of others before themselves, using self-reflection to better connect to their constituents (Keith, 2010).

Self-reflection is a critical part of servant leadership (Goleman, 2011). It enables a leader to better listen to the needs of their constituents (Goleman, 2011). Listening to the needs of the teachers leads to better collaboration, thereby empowering teachers and giving them more of a voice and creating trust in the organization (Greenleaf, 2002; Keith, 2011). Additionally, Keith (2011) recommends that leaders refrain from solving all the problems, allowing and guiding constituents to solve their problems, further instilling trust in organizations. Educational organizations, where trust is even more crucial in maintaining a safe and positive environment (Keith, 2011). Gradually allowing constituents to run their meetings further instills trust and helps support a positive working environment (Northouse, 2013).

The traditional hierarchy of pyramid management does not support relationship and trust-building (Keith, 2012; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). In a time of political uncertainty in the US, establishing relationships is more important than ever for organizations. trust strengthens and cultivates relationships (Keith, 2015). Positive relationships between school leaders cannot exist without trust (Greenleaf, 2002). However, leaders can tear down the walls of a traditional hierarchical structure. School leaders that take the time to build rapport and provide clarity of shared responsibilities, vision, and macro and micro goals will foster teacher buy-in and foster a relationship of trust (Fullan, 2011; Keith, 2012; Shields, 2018). Trust will promote a healthier and more effective relationship. Using relationship-building techniques of listening, providing

clarity, and understanding the multiple intelligences of others will help contribute to a positive school climate (Goldman, 2012; Keith, 2012). Enhanced relationships foster student and teacher success (Kraft & Faulken, 2020). Finally, the importance of communication will be explored to discover how relationships and multiple and emotional intelligence help strengthen relationships, thereby establishing a more positive school climate (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

School leader and teacher relationships can be complex and multifaceted (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Each key stakeholder has demanding responsibilities in a challenging political and social climate that is constantly shifting (Flannery, 2021; (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). With the additional constraints and obstacles stemming from Covid-19, it is more important than ever for school leaders to build trust positive relationships with teachers and listen to their needs (Flannery, 2021; Knight, 2018; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Influential school leaders who communicate regularly with all stakeholders and about shared resources, responsibilities, school mission, ethics, and values will cultivate trust with teachers (August et al., 2012; Fullan, 2011; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Shields, 2018).

### **Transformative Leadership**

There are multiple approaches to effective school leadership, as long as it is an authentic form of leadership (Shields, 2018; Sinek, 2019). Transformative leadership is a holistic approach to leadership that includes breaking down current frameworks to build new ones that help create equitable change (Shields, 2018). Transformative leadership is often confused with transformational leadership; however, the different theories. Transformative leaders have a unique sense of self-awareness and moral courage that allows for a greater understanding of an organization's macro and micro goals by having the courage to ask difficult questions (Bieneman, 2011). Transformative leaders make difficult decisions that promote the most

equitable change enabling them to be more active stewards of an organization (Bieneman, 2011; Shields, 2018). School leaders must have a good sense of stewardship (Northouse, 2013). They can do this by looking for ways to empower the staff and students (Greenleaf, 2002; Shields, 2018). Hence, school leaders need to be self-aware of leading without assigning lower status to teachers and others in any organization (Knight, 2018). Transformative leadership includes taking time to listen actively, speak less, have integrity, and live a wholehearted, authentic life (Keith, 2012; Palmer, 2004; Shields, 2018). A significant component of transformative leadership includes living a moral, principled, and spiritually balanced life similar to servant leadership (Bieneman, 2011).

School leaders need to have the moral courage to make an effective change (Bieneman, 2011; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). The court of public opinion does not make equitable educational policymaking easy, especially with readily available critiques and opinions on the internet highway (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Shield, 2018). Moral courage empowers leaders not only to recognize inequity and improve the betterment of all (Shields, 2012). It can be difficult to challenge decisions and policies with integrity, significantly when it can jeopardize careers. Daring leaders are not afraid to challenge the status quo (Brown, 2012; Shields, 2018). Thus, influential and courageous school leaders fall forward for more equitable and meaningful change. (Brown, 2012).

An effective leader inspires trust and growth (Fullan, 2011). A task that takes time but is worth staying the course (Fullan, 2011). A transformative leader is uniquely qualified to advance an organization and inspires intellectual stimulation, innovation, and creativity in a way (Allen et al., 2016). Transformative leaders listen, ask questions, and support critical thinking in organizations, which is especially important in education organizations (Shields, 2018). Being



self-aware of educational organizations' needs contribute to a more positive school environment (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Shields, 2018).

Effective educational leaders contribute to a positive educational climate by building a shared vision and mission (Shields, 2018). When crucial stakeholders such as teachers have a shared vision and mission with the school leaders, a positive school climate is more likely to occur (Shields, 2018; Sinek, 2019). Additionally, holding each other accountable using continuous reflection on shared vision and mission ensures that the vital stakeholder does not lose sight of the task at hand (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). The transformative leader's approach to leadership is constantly evolving because of the critical and reflective leadership process (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Being a more empathic leader will help organizations and others to become successful (Fullan, 2011). Combining empathy with assertiveness will further help empower people and growth in organizations (Fullan, 2011). Lastly, ensuring constructive conflicts warrants an atmosphere of respectful truth that will allow for authentic and meaningful growth (Heffernan, 2012). The growth will create space for diverse perspectives from multiple backgrounds to contribute to a shared vision and goals (Shields, 2018). A shared vision will contribute to an overinclusive and positive school climate that will foster growth and benefit all stakeholders (Bieneman, 2011).

### **Transformational Leadership**

It is important to note that this literature review illustrates the difference between transformative and transformational leadership because they are often interchangeably used when discussing and examining leadership styles. Transformational leaders are driven by making interpersonal connections with constituents to inspire motivation and improvements by individuals in organizations (Northouse, 2013). Transformational leaders strive to inspire

individuals to intrinsically change for the betterment of the organization by being role model who encourages innovation and creativity (Northouse, 2013; Palmer, 2003). However, it is not easy to measure how effective this leadership is because it is often characterized as too broad and more of a personality trait (Northouse, 2013). Therefore, transformative leadership has ideal components but lacks clarity and will not be used for this study (Northouse, 2013).

### **Servant and Transformative Leadership**

Servant and transformative leadership provide a clear, concise framework of traits and behaviors for becoming a more effective leader in an organization (Keith, 2012, Shield, 2018). These traits can help school leaders cultivate and sustain positive school (Keith, 2012, Shield, 2018). Servant and transformative leadership traits also provide a blueprint for equitable and lasting change.

Servant and Leadership Traits/Behaviors	
Leadership	Effective Traits/Behaviors
Servant Leadership (Keith, 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having Empathy</li> <li>Having empathy</li> <li>Being an active listener</li> <li>Having self-awareness</li> <li>Having a sense of stewardship</li> <li>Supporting individual growth of others</li> <li>Building Community</li> </ul>
Transformative Leadership (Shields, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moral Courage</li> <li>Provide Clarity of vision, goals, and expectations</li> <li>Self-Awareness</li> <li>Being Authentic</li> <li>Commitment to strong morals and ethics</li> <li>Foster Equitable Change</li> </ul>

(Lopez, 2022)

Both leadership styles emphasize keen self-awareness, guided by a solid moral compass. Greenleaf (2002) states: "The leader is the servant first," meaning effective leaders lead by example and serve their constituents, as opposed an autocratic leadership (p. 27). This moral compass can help build, grow, and sustain positive communities, thereby decreasing "...social, cultural, and economic inequity and injustice" (Shields, 2018, p. 107). Additionally, both leaderships emphasize the importance of empathic and robust communication skills. Vital communications skill contributes to creating an environment of trust. An environment of trust contributes to positive relationships between school leaders and teachers. Positive relationships between school leaders and teachers support and nurture a positive school climate; A positive school climate can support equitable education opportunities.

### **Essential Traits and Qualities Servant and Transformative Leadership**

Susan B. Anthony once said, "Failure is impossible." An effective leader, an egoless leader, a change leader, stays the course of the original goal (Hay, 2013). A good leader thinks about the needs, provides continuous support for the organization's good, and inspires others to be the best version of themselves (Keith, 2010). Thus, effective leadership naturally coincides with a positive school climate. When key stakeholders, such as teachers, are happy, they produce more and contribute to a happier environment that greatly benefits students (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018).

Essential traits and qualities of an effective leader include fluid communication, empathy, self-awareness, and vulnerability (Brown, 2015; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). A leader needs to keep fluid communication, listen to the needs of others, and provide support and guidance (McChrystal, 2011; TED 2011). A leader must have the self-awareness to reflect on the challenges and successes of the organization (Goleman, 2011). Sinek (2019) recommends having the "why" mindset, meaning being self-aware of the reason behind goals and effectively communicating to your constituents. People are more willing to follow when they understand the vision and goal. Sinek (2018) asserts that providing clarity is crucial to gaining trust. A leader needs to serve and lead by example to inspire trust (Greenleaf, 2002). Brown (2018) adds that influential leaders are open to change, lead with integrity, establish trust through vulnerability through showing and being seen. Hence being an effective leader, an action leader, a change-leader is not an easy task and takes time, experience, openness, interpersonal communication skills, trust, and motivation (Brown, 2018; Goleman, 2011; Sinek, 2019).

An effective leader must model positivity, have the ability to express passion, hopeful enthusiasm and invest in others (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). These traits are what allow a

leader to attract followers. In their book *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner discuss the importance of enlisting others (2012). This enlisting of others in one's passion helps create a team and a bond (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Creating and keeping a lasting bond takes meaningful actions (Kouzes and Posner, 2012).

Meaningful change requires time and purposeful planning; it does not happen overnight (Fullan, 2011; Kouzes and Posner, 2012). We learn from our mistakes, and we learn by trying and from new experiences (Palmer, 2004). Taking risks and learning with a positive mindset leads to effective change (Fullan, 2011). Having moral courage and being open to the vulnerability of change enhanced the traits of influential leaders because they are willing to take risks for the greater good (Brown, 2015; Shields, 2018). Practitioners of education are the backbone of the school and respond well to effective leaders (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Leaders that exhibit vulnerability lead with integrity, braving trust, and learn to inspire others to rise (Brown, 2019).

There are four essential traits to being an effective leader (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018). First, research shows leaders who take a strength-based approach to inspire others to excel (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018). In other words, teachers and students thrive in an environment that supports personalized goals (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018). Second, when school leaders adopt an "attitude of gratitude," students and teachers tend to perform at higher levels because they feel a strong sense of community and appreciation (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018). Third, school leaders support a collaborative environment (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018). When teachers and students can share their ideas, they grow as a team (Brown, 2012; Fullan, 2011). The act of giving them the chance to share their ideas makes them feel more valued (Fullan, 2011). Valuing stakeholders contribute to a positive school environment because people tend to

have more positive attitudes. (Hallowell, 2011). Effective leaders recognize unique gifts and talents (Spears, 2020). They are also empathetic towards others' needs (Spears, 2020). Finally, school leaders that cultivate a positive interpersonal relationship with all stakeholders are more likely to listen and hear the needs of all (Cunningham & Rainville, 2018).

The mark of a successful leader is an active learner in their organization that promotes leadership from the bottom up, innovation, and shared purpose (Fullan, 2011; McCrimmon, 2010). Innovation supports creativity and connectivity and provides people with a shared purpose and meaning (Brown, 2015; Hallowell, 2011). Hence, the mark of an effective leader is supporting the organization's needs and having a solid moral compass to help navigate the needs of others (Keith, 2010). Like learning, leadership is a lifelong journey that involves the success of each stakeholder, not just the leader." This quote can be applied to Kouzes and Posner's (2012) five practices of being a good leader; model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (p. 14.)

Effective leaders empower their followers to succeed and guide them along their learning path (Pink, 2009; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). By instilling confidence in their followers and helping them recognize their talents, they effectively produce better outcomes (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). When people feel respected and valued, they try harder and feel more accountable. Thus, respect and confidence are essential to an organization's success. Some leaders micromanage their constituents to the point of dependency, where they cannot carry out tasks (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Micromanaging can diminish growth in the workplace, school, home, and all facets of life (Pink, 2009).

Fullan (2011) asserts that it is passable that things do not go perfectly and not have everything figured out. Not one size fits all, meaning what may work in one setting may not

work in another (Willis et al., 2017). A confident leader can lead their team to success and create an environment for people to shine (Fullan, 2011; Hallowell, 2011). Leaders that take the time to praise small and big acts cultivate an environment where people feel like they are valued. The cultivation of appreciation encourages people to foster connectivity in the workplace (Hallowell, 2011).

Additionally, Brookfield (2009) describes how to use the process of critical reflection to best train people in leadership roles. It is essential to utilize the perspectives and experiences of employees in order to reach the most diverse demographic possible (Fullan, 2011; Hay, 2013). Not only does this create a climate of mutual respect, but it creates an opportunity for organizations to thrive (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). There are numerous leadership theories, the traits of servant and transformative leadership make for effective school leadership.

### **Effective School Leader Behaviors**

School leaders have high pressure and demanding job and must lead an authentic and wholehearted life to perform it well (Brown, 2021; Palmer, 2004). The tasks of educational stakeholders are never truly completed; effective, authentic, and meaningful change is ongoing because it is continuous (Fullan, 2011; Palmer, 2004). School leaders that are open, active listeners, ethics of care, and empower their staff to shine are more likely to cultivate and sustain positive school relationships (Hallowell, 2011; Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

Hallowell's Process for getting people to shine (2011)		
Step	Title	Action
1.	Select	Placing the right staff in the right position, and providing tasks that cultivate growth.
2.	Connect	Continuously strengthening interpersonal opportunities among members.
3.	Play	Support creativity and innovation in the work.
4.	Grapple and Grow	Engage critical reflection and growth.
5.	Shine	Encourage staff members' passions and talents and provide multiple opportunities for them to shine at work.

(Adapted by Lopez, 2022)

### **School Culture versus School Climate**

School culture is defined as how an educational institution outlines its school mission, vision, and values (Brown, 2021). It is a system of shared beliefs, values, norms, and expectations in a school (Çakiroglu, Akkan, & Guven, 2012). These factors may influence how people behave and interact with others (Kane et al., 2016). School culture is systematically embedded in a school and may only be altered by a school's climate (Kane et al., 2016). Hence, it is crucial to cultivate a safe and secure school climate before changing school culture. Since students spend a substantial quantity of time in school daily, students' feelings and beliefs significantly impact their lives (Kane et al., 2016; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Students need to feel safe, secure, and comfortable at school and have a supportive educational environment where key stakeholders work towards the same goals (Kane et al., 2016). Consistent positive school climate has been interconnected to constructive student development, learning, high graduation rates, and teacher retention (Thapa et al., 2013). Retaining and supporting an



adequate teaching staff improves the school climate (Kraft & Faulken, 2020). Positive school culture helps drive student improvement and success, thus improving student improvement (Thapa et al., 2013).

### **School Climate**

School climate often refers to the safety and stability of an educational organization (Cohen et al., 2009). The place where collaboration, positive professional relationships, and teamwork prosper and thrive (Cohen et al., 2009). A climate includes key stakeholders sharing a shared vision and goals that enhance student engagement and student success (Zullig et al., 2011). Persistent positive school climate has been linked to positive student development, learning, academic achievement, effective risk prevention and health promotion, high graduation rates, low dropout rates, and teacher retention (Thapa et al., 2013).

School climate is impacted by various factors, including obstacles to student learning, lack of resources, and ineffective leadership (Walker, 2019). Research shows that school climate impacts student learning (Huang et al., 2017). A positive school climate can significantly improve students' academic achievement, engagement, behavior, and teacher satisfaction and retention (Prothero, 2020). A school environment that is stressful and toxic erodes job satisfaction and morale, driving a growing number of teachers out of the profession (Walter, 2019). As a result, students are left without a safe, positive, and equitable learning environment (Shields, 2018). Researchers found that replacing a school leader with an effectiveness level at the 25th percentile with a more effective school (at the 75th percentile) yields students an additional three months of learning in math and reading (Brown, 2021). A positive and robust work environment helps teachers improve their potential because they feel valued (Kraft & Falken, 2020). Teachers are more effective in positive climates that cultivate trust, collaboration,

and respect, benefiting students. Hence, a toxic environment and ineffective leadership create a climate of fear instability, ultimately hindering student learning (Prothero, 2020).

In the United States, education is greatly valued; educators are not (Flannery, 2020). Furthermore, Americans are still lacking in education compared to other countries (McWhirter, 2012). For public education to improve, there is a need for more financial resources and human resources, which is the cornerstone of democratic countries (McWhirter, 2013). Positive school climates better educate students and reach multiple types of learners, such as students with disabilities, English Language learners, emotionally challenged learners, and so forth (August et al., 2012).

Creating and fostering a positive school climate takes time, dedication, and commitment to purposeful strategies (Zullig et al., 2011). August et al., (2012) highlight three different strategies to improve school climates significantly. First, it is recommended to provide all learners equal access, meaning providing the appropriate services for the many different types of learners (August et al., 2012). Secondly, it is recommended that teachers take the time to value each student and help them learn how to contribute to society (August et al., 2012). Thirdly, it is crucial to use reflection and evidence-based teaching strategies to enhance classroom instruction (August et al., 2012). Successful and effective leaders and teachers who engage in continuing reflection tend to be fairer and use student diversity to enhance classroom instruction (Shield, 2018). Student diversity promotes a more harmonious learning climate because stakeholders feel more intrinsically motivated and connected to the community (Pink, 2009; Shields, 2018). Effective schools identify that student success is a community effort (Shield, 2018). As a result, community building will foster positive school climates (August et al., 2012; Shields, 2018). Strengthening relationships helps cement the school climate and community (Fullan, 2011).

### Utilizing Multiple and Emotional Intelligences

Successful leaders bring out the best in their staff by cultivating an environment of trust to sustain and strengthen relationships (Fullan, 2011). One way to foster effective communication and support positive relationships is by understanding multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). People have multiple intelligences, meaning people have different areas they excel in and acquire and process information (Gardner, 1993). Gardner's theory on multiple intelligences has been widely studied and applied in education settings (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012).

Gardner's List of Multiple Intelligence (1993; Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012)	
Existential	Deep and complex thinker
Linguistic	Well-developed verbal skills
Intrapersonal	Being self-aware of one's inner beliefs and feelings
Logical	Being able to think conceptually about logical and numerical patterns
Musical	Ability to produce harmonious sounds and rhythms
Kinesthetic	Ability to skillfully handle body and objects
Visual	Have an awareness of the conceptual thinking of images and pictures
Interpersonal	Having a strong ability to understand the people's state of being

Goleman (2011) applies this theory to the emotional intelligences of people that further supports positive relationships between school leaders and teachers. Goleman (2011) asserts that some people have emotional intelligence and are keenly into others' emotions. Emotional intelligence skills connect people to a bold shared vision, making learning a more meaningful school environment (Goleman, 2011; Shields, 2018). Emotional intelligence can be learned with the right type of training and a sincere approach (Goldman, 2004). Therefore, school leaders and

teachers who lack emotional intelligence can learn from them, thereby enhancing their overall learning experience—for example, reflecting on self-awareness. Teachers and students who are motivated about their success and have a moral guide of doing their best are more likely better results, as confirmed by Goleman's research on leaders (2004). A more empathic approach to leading, teaching, and helping students contribute to a positive school climate allows for a safer and more equitable learning environment (Shields, 2018). School Leaders need to have the emotional intelligence to empathize and communicate with teachers better. A leader with better emotional intelligence is better equipped to be a dynamic leader that can retain good staff and sustain a positive climate. School leaders who learn and practice these traits are far more likely to succeed (Goldman, 2011).

### **Summary**

Traditionally, most people enter the education field to enrich the lives of others (Keith, 2012). Perhaps, somewhere along the way, they begin to focus on politics and bureaucracy, creating a divide between school leaders and teachers (Fullan, 2011). Since both parties are generally passionate about equitable education, both have a common grounding in wanting student success. Both school leaders and teachers help lead the way to meaningful change (Fullan, 2011; Shields, 2018). Teachers and school leaders need to have a balanced voice in the macro and micro goals of the school. A healthy balance will help cultivate positive communication, promoting a positive environment (Schmuck et al., 2012). It is up to the leader to set the tone and lead by example (Brown, 2021; Fullan, 2011).

One of the most imperative influences in school effectiveness and a positive environment is the school leader (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). The school leader navigates district-wide policies, academic goals, school-level performance, supports and nurtures teachers, and sets the

tone for the school climate (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Thus, having effective communication by strengthening relationships contributes to effective leadership. Furthermore, when school leader practices in their multiple intelligences. It can help foster a more positive school climate (Goleman, 2011; Shields, 2018).

According to the research, when teachers and students feel safe and supported by the principal, they are more likely to achieve collective goals (Brown, 2012; Keith, 2015; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Effective change begins with leaders (Schmuck et al., 2012). When school leaders can effectively manage the change process, they significantly contribute to teachers' and students' feelings of support (Brown, 2021). Effective communication between school leaders and teachers contributes to effective change (Hord & Roussin, 2017). Six beliefs influence change (Hord & Roussin, 2017).

These are: all change requires learning, and improvement requires change; implementing a change through social interaction increases the potential for success; individuals change before the school changes; the change affects the emotional and behavioral dimensions of people and; people opt for change when they foresee the potential for enhancing their work (Hord & Roussin, 2017, p. 8).

An effective leader must facilitate conversations that invite others to own the desired change (Brown 2021; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Hence, leaders modeling the path set the course of success. Practitioners of education are the backbone of the school system and need to work together for a positive school environment (Reitman & Karge, 2019). Ineffective leadership breaks the backbone of the school system.

Effective leadership that supports a positive school climate is a form of art; it can be cultivated and refined over time. Being an effective leader means doing what is best for your

constituents and fostering their growth, thereby creating a canvas for growth (Shields, 2018).

Gardner (1990) affirms that good leaders can evolve with the right motivation and learning.

Good leaders can learn listening, teamwork, and communication skills essential to being a good

leader. In doing so, leaders establish a climate of positive production and working relationships

(Fullan, 2011). "Leadership is a relationship between leaders and followers" fosters growth

(Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, nurtured relationships improve with time and effort,

contributing to a more positive and inclusive learning climate (Shields, 2018).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the impact of school leadership on school climate in the 21st century within the framework of a case study analysis (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research approach provides a unique approach to academic inquiry because people's learning has evolved; thus, leadership needs to adapt to changing times (Creswell, 2014). Stake (2010) asserts that rich depth details and analysis are an essential core of qualitative research, in addition to the integrity of research. Furthermore, the case study design of a qualitative research design provides a more holistic account of current reality (Creswell, 2014). People seek knowledge based on paradigms, patterns, thoughts, and experiences that guide actions (Creswell, 2014).

Paradigms set approaches, methods, or action plans to learn and create foundational research. Acknowledging approaches and paradigms establishes transparency providing freedom from research bias (Creswell, 2014). Transparency validates the researcher's choice and voice in methodology and methods (Crotty, 2010). Furthermore, "research, no matter what the paradigm, can contribute and is a worthy enterprise (Glesne, 2011, para. 11)." Hence, no question nor approach is irrelevant to the knowledge quest where patterns and themes formulate" (Crotty, 2010). Patterns and themes that emerge from qualitative research provide additional layers of multifaceted analysis (Creswell, 2014).

This study used qualitative data to gather information from school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers from surveys and open-ended questionnaires. Additionally, the study explored how interpersonal communication and relationships between school leaders and teachers impact school climate. The study was designed to understand better school leaders'

approach to leadership and how it impacts school climate. The study used both lenses of servant and transformative leadership theories as to the conceptual framework.

The paradigm in this case study includes examining school leader-teacher relationships and how they impact school climate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study highlights school leaders' effective traits and behaviors that help foster leader-teacher solid relationships and examines how this impacts school climate (Creswell, 2014). Different techniques and data analysis were utilized to formulate accurate and credible conclusions in the research (Creswell, 2014). Themes, analysis, and rich descriptions will add validity and trustworthiness to the study (Creswell, 2014)

### **Research Survey Pilot**

The survey was tested at the researcher's former employment, where she served as the K-12 Curriculum Specialist. The school was referred to as AELO Upper School for the research pilot. AELO Upper School is located in Orange County, California, and borders the cities of Westminster and Huntington Beach, California. The school is a private school that serves grades K-12. The researcher piloted the survey questions with the school principal, dean, and upper school teachers to determine the validity of survey instruments and the answerability of the research question (Creswell, 2014). The questionnaire for the research study was not revised due to this research pilot.

### **Setting and Participants**

The study was conducted using purposeful sampling. The sampling came from The AP Educational Group (APEG), located in Arizona, United States. APEG has 27 schools in the state of Arizona. The participants were school leaders, assistant school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers. The researcher's educational network recruited participants via her employment,



AP Educational Group (pseudonym name). The survey was sent to all high school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers in the organization.

### **Sampling Procedures**

The goal was to collect data from school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers. The researcher sent surveys to the school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers at these organizations. The survey was sent electronically to participants via Google forms. They were kept anonymous by unclicking the "collect emails" in the survey settings. A short description was included in the form. (Creswell, 2014). The school leaders' perceptions, thoughts, and experiences provided a more profound insight that will help identify themes and patterns in the research (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher gathered consent forms that explained security and confidentiality for each participant, purpose of study, and release of information to publish results. This information was included in the survey forms. Participants had the opportunity to either accept or deny consent. Only participants who provided consent were sent the survey. A timeline was given to participants to ensure a timely process. The window was opened initially for two weeks then extended by an additional month to gather more data. The researcher also used an open-ended questionnaire consisting of 20 questions.

### **Instrumentation and Measures**

The researcher designed a questionnaire to collect data for this qualitative and case study for the research design (Creswell, 2014). The architect of the questions allowed the researcher to gather unbiased data from participants while covering multiple topics, such as essential leader traits and values (Creswell, 2014). The questions were specific to each target group, so they could subsequently be answered from their perspective while rooted in research-based factors

and traits of effective leaders.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and consistency are crucial to credibility; thus, having a clear action plan was produced for the most reliable results and the same method of inquiry (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) recommends "...incorporating validity strategies" to provide a checks and balances system for the researcher (p. 201). In order to increase validity, data will be collected and discussed to receive different perspectives and reflect upon the next steps in the study (Creswell, 2014). This process includes the use of member checking. Member checking is performed by participants to review their responses to their research questions (McMillan, 2012). Data triangulation was used to examine themes, and peer debriefing will help keep bias in check (Creswell, 2014). Data triangulation included surveys and open-ended questions. Furthermore, the triangulation of the data enriches the analysis of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; State, 2010).

The use of reflexivity was utilized to enhance the validity of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity is when the researcher reflects on how their values, perceptions, beliefs, lived experiences, and personal background shape their interpretations formed during the research study (Creswell, 2014). The characteristics of reflexivity help maintain the integrity of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers using the qualitative research approach often disclose in their reports how their backgrounds, worldviews, values, and potential bias that may influence their research questions and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The reflexivity process helps inform the reader of the researcher's interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some researchers will find ways to disrupt their analysis to provide a more authentic analysis (Stake, 2010). Stakes (2010) claims this will give readers a better insight into the researcher's

interpretations, providing a more objective and in-depth analysis. This process promoted neutrality confirmability and helped check the accuracy of the information, conclusions, and biases in the research process (Hendricks, 2013). Therefore, the same line of questions was used for validity. The data helped inform effective leadership practices that promote a positive school climate for future use in educational settings (Hendricks, 2013).

### **Data Collection**

The researcher used "purposely selected participants" and locations that helped the researcher better understand the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 189). The researcher gained access by first gaining site authorization, sending out an introductory email, then distributing the surveys via Google forms through her work email organization. This case study was explanatory by nature because it illustrated how one case explores the relational structure of school climates that emphasizes caring interpersonal relationships between school leaders and teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the study, the researcher desired a deeper understanding of how positive relationships impact school climate, so the research findings improve practice in the educational field. The researcher also examined the thick, rich details, worldview, and lived experiences of the participants to provide a detailed narrative (Wolcott, 1994).

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher sought to build patterns, categories, and themes by organizing the data inductive and deductive thinking that provided a rich depth analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher paid particular attention to participants' learning and the meaning of their experiences during the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process enabled the researcher to dig deeper and search for multiple meanings of the research providing a more holistic approach to

the analysis of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher prepared and organized data by looking for patterns and organizing the data into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process is known as coding (Creswell, 2014). The researcher coded the data by seeking patterns in data that people would expect to find, such as effective traits of a school leader (Creswell, 2014). Also, by looking for patterns in unexpected and surprising findings (Creswell, 2014).

Richards and Morse (2013) describe coding as aiding the researcher to simplify the data and identifying what the data is expressing. Gibbs (2011) references coding as categorizing, chunking text, or ideas or themes of words. Qualitative coding has a different purpose and results compared to coding in quantitative research (Richards & Morse, 2013). In qualitative research, the researcher does not count how often something occurs but interprets what is going on with the text, idea, or theme (Gibbs, 2011). This process assisted in the final interpretation of qualitative research of the data and research findings (Creswell, 2014).

### **Ethical Issues**

Case study participants were assured that their information would be protected with security and privacy in mind. Prior to the participants' agreement, a disclaimer about the importance of confidentiality was emphasized to each participant (Creswell, 2014). The participants were notified about the data collection procedures to ensure that the steps of confidentiality were used. This process helped minimize the risk of sensitive information being released or accessed to APEG (Creswell, 2014). The data collected will only inform effective practice and eliminate the risk of sensitive information being exposed for inappropriate gains. The researcher used security measures to ensure trust and security (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, participants were informed they had the right to withdraw from the study at any

point during the study (Creswell, 2014).

It is essential to point out that the researcher has worked at five different schools in three different states and has had varying experiences as a teacher and administrator. As a current administrator, she understands the importance of effective school leadership and a positive school climate. The researcher has had positive and negative experiences with the administration, teachers, and other stakeholders. Thus, it was challenging to differentiate between personal experiences and personal opinions on the state of education in the United States. It is also important to acknowledge that the researcher may be subconsciously influenced by personal bias for ethical purposes and research validity. Using Creswell's (2014) validity strategies helped ensure objectivity and minimize bias.

### **Summary**

This qualitative case study utilized research procedures of data collection to examine the impact of school leadership on school climate in the 21st century. The narrative emerged from the data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). The transferability of the case can be applied to other charter school groups. The findings informed descriptions and themes to understand better the dynamic relationship between leadership and school climate (Creswell, 2014),

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### **Findings of Qualitative Research**

This study aimed to examine the relationship between school leaders and teachers and how that impacts school climate. The study engaged in a qualitative research method using purposeful sampling. The sampling came from The AP Educational Group (APEG), located in Arizona, United States. APEG has 27 schools in the state of Arizona. The participants included one assistant school leader, curriculum coaches, and teachers. The researcher used the qualitative data to fully comprehend the relationship between leadership, communication, and positive school climate. Qualitative methods allow for collecting the language words of participants in the study (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative data allows for the collection of documents that humanizes the data. Participants can provide more attention to the data (Creswell, 2014). This process enables the researcher to provide a more thick and detailed analysis of the data. The findings from the qualitative research study are presented in this chapter. The researcher provided a written format and table format.

The researcher used the case study design of qualitative research because the design provides a more holistic account of current reality (Creswell, 2014). People seek knowledge based on paradigms, patterns, thoughts, and experiences that guide actions (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the researcher used this to examine the study participants' perceptions. The researcher organized data using inductive and deductive thinking to provide rich depth analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher prepared and organized data by looking for patterns and organizing the data into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process is known as coding (Creswell, 2014). Data triangulation was used to increase the validity of the data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher collected data through a survey, open-ended questions, and open questionnaires. The questions

were designed to gather multiple perspectives from the participants.

The researcher started sending out informed consent forms to potential survey participants on October 21, 2021. Initially, three schools were contacted for participation in the study. This process did not yield many results. Then, all secondary schools in Charter Organization were contacted for participation in the study. Eighteen informed consent forms were received, and eight surveys were completed. The researcher received two open-ended questionnaires from an assistant school leader/curriculum coach and teacher. Since there was a limited amount of survey and open-ended questionnaire participants, it was essential to increase validity (Creswell, 2014). This process included the use of member checking. Member checking is performed by participants to review their responses to their research questions (McMillan, 2012). Data triangulation was used to examine codes and themes (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the triangulation of the data enriches the analysis of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, peer debriefing was utilized to help keep bias in check (Creswell, 2014).

### **Qualitative Data Analysis Findings**

The survey consisted of 20 questions including one open-ended question. Survey participants were asked how they contributed to a positive school climate, the voice of key stakeholders, how often school leaders provided communication to key stakeholders, and whether or not they spoke positively about their school site. Additionally, open-ended questions were sent out in the form of a questionnaire to gather rich, detailed information. The use of data triangulation increased the validity of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **Demographics of Participants**

Survey participants were given a numeric ID to help organize data. Next, participants' demographics were organized by: How many years they have been with APEG charter school organization, ethnicity, level of education, and gender depicted in Table 1. 1. The participants included teachers and curriculum coaches. Most participants have the APEG group for more than one year, are Caucasian, have a master's degree, and are female. The APEG organization is a diverse organization. The demographics would suggest that perhaps females felt more comfortable participating in the study and wanted their voices to be heard.



**Table 1. 1***Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Ethnicity	Level of Education	Gender
1	1.5	Teacher	Caucasian	B.A	Female
2	16	Curriculum Coach	Caucasian	M.A	Female
3	4	Teacher	Caucasian	M.A	Male
4	23	Teacher	Caucasian	M.A	Female
5	1.5	Teacher	Caucasian	M.A	Female
6	4	Teacher	*	M.A	*
7	*	Curriculum Coach	Caucasian	M.A	Male
8	5	Curriculum Coach	Caucasian	M.A	Female

\*Choose not to state

**Emergent Themes**

After a careful data analysis of participant survey and questionnaire responses, several codes were identified by the researcher. The codes were narrowed down to four evolving themes depicted in Table 2. 1. These included: Effective Leadership, Positive Climate, Communication, and Key Stakeholder Voice. The researcher examined the data to uncover emergent themes and patterns to help identify what contributes to a positive school climate.

**Table 2. 1***Evolving Themes*

Evolving Themes	
Themes	Codes
Effective Leadership	Consistent and Clear Communication, Trust, strong interpersonal skills, Participation
Communication	Clear, Building and Maintaining Relationships, Good Listener, clarity
Positive Climate	Clear, Communication, Trust, Listen, Staff, Student, and Parent Participation, Recognition, Professional Support, Contributions encouraged
Key Stakeholder Voice	Communication, Listen to parents, Listen, students, Listen to Teachers, Clarity

## Which Leadership Traits Contribute to a Positive school Climate?

### Effective Leadership

The first emergent theme from the data illustrated contributions towards effective leadership. Table 3. 1 illustrates most participants stated they have a positive school relationship with school leaders.

**Table 3. 1**

*My Relationships with the School Leaders are Positive*

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My relationships with the school leaders are positive.

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Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

---

\*Choose not to state

Table 4. 1 illustrates most participants agree that the school leaders' leadership style brings out the best in them. Only two participants state sometimes, while nobody marked disagreed.

**Table 4. 1**

*The School Leaders' Leadership Style Brings Out the Best in Me*

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The school leaders' leadership style brings out the best in me.

---

Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

---

\*Choose not to state

Most participants report school leader(s) visit classrooms as depicted in Table 5. 1

**Table 5. 1**

*The School Leader(s) Visit Classrooms*

Table 5					
The school leader(s) visit classrooms.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

\*Choose not to state

Table 6. 1 illustrates that some of the schools do not have enough materials and supplies.

**Table 6. 1**

*The School Offers Enough Materials and Supplies*

The school offers enough materials and supplies.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach			X

\*Choose not to state

All participants were asked: Which trait (from the list below) makes the most effective school leader and why? The list included: Empathic, Active listener, Morally Courageous, Trustworthy, or Strong Communicator. Most participants identified that the most effective leader trait was a strong communicator, as seen in Table 7. 1. This open-ended question helped the researcher gather important participant perceptions of the most effective leader traits they found in school leaders.

**Table 7. 1***Most Effective Leader Traits*

Most Effective Leader Traits			
Participant	Years at APEG	Trait	Response
2	16	Strong Communicator	“Vision for the school- with daily consistency- and strong communication skills with all.”
3	4	Empathic	“A school leader can relate from experience and use that knowledge to encourage, build relationships, and be an exemplar for both students and staff.”
4	23	Active listener	“A leader should listen to staff, teachers, and students to recognize their needs and wants. The tricky part is the activeness... There is a diverse group of people, with a wide array of needs and wants. The leader must constantly weigh the priorities of each and how best to actively listen.”
5	1	Active Listener	“I think that it is a combination between an active listener, but also someone who has input and helps you to build plans of action. I often feel a need for a list of possible outcomes and solutions when issues arise. This is how I feel best supported by my school leaders and it helps me build that relationship of trust with administration.”
7	No Answer	Strong Communicator	“There are so many choices and decisions being made around campus that a school needs a leader who can communicate with all staff and stakeholders. They need to both know what is going on their campus and know how to communicate their policies and decisions with the staff. Without clear communication, the staff is left having to make decisions on their own or feel like they are not being supported.”
8		Trustworthy	“You can only have a positive campus climate if the staff and students trust that the school leader is going to do what is best for the campus and is going to support their students and teachers.”

## What are Effective Traits of Communication Between school leaders and teachers?

### Communication

The second emergent theme was Communication. Table 8. 1 illustrates most participants feel comfortable speaking to school leader(s).

**Table 8. 1**

*I Feel Comfortable Speaking to the School Leader(s).*

I feel comfortable speaking to the School Leader(s).					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

\*Choose not to state

Table 9. 1 illustrates only three participants feel their school leader(s) effectively communicate while four stated sometimes, and one participant disagreed with the statement.

**Table 9. 1**

*The School Leader(s) Effectively Communicates with Staff*

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The school leader(s) effectively communicates with staff.

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Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach		X	
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach			X

---

\*Choose not to state



**Table 9. 2***Communications*

Communication	
Participants	Responses
1A	“Our primary method for communicating school goals is through our weekly staff meetings. We hold these meetings every Monday afternoon and share relevant school data and information with all staff members. In addition to our staff meetings, we also share goals individually with teachers, in order to get their feedback and discuss how these goals impact their specific classrooms, and with specific groups of staff members through group meetings, PLCs, and PD sessions.”
2A	“We have weekly and monthly meetings to communicate general goals.”

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

In Table 10. 1, all participants with the exception of one, feel school leader(s) recognize them for doing something well.

**Table 10. 1***I Am Recognized When I Do Something Well*

I am recognized when I do something well.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

\*Choose not to state

**Table 10. 2**

*Staff Celebrations and Recognitions*

Staff Celebrations and Recognitions	
Participants	Responses
1A	<p>“In our weekly staff meetings, we will celebrate successful lessons, classroom/school activities and student growth. We also celebrate staff birthdays and other significant life events. Privately, I try to also let teachers know whenever I see improvement in their teaching or simply a lesson or activity that deserves praise.</p>

**What Actions do School Leaders/Curriculum Coaches Need to Implement to Establish a Positive School Climate?**

**Positive School Climate**

The emergent theme was Positive School Climate. Most participants feel their school is a place of trust as depicted in Table 11. 1.

**Table 11. 1**

*My School Climate is a Place of Trust*

---

My school climate is a place of trust.

---

Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach			X

\*Choose not to state

**Table 11. 2***Community of Trust*

Community of Trust	
Participants	Responses
IA	“Our admin team focuses on maintaining consistent, open communication with teachers and always allowing them to have a say in school decisions. Teachers understand that they have a voice, and also that we will listen to them. As an admin team, we never single out teachers or call out staff in front of other staff members. We try to handle any staff issues privately and fairly. We also do our best to leverage our experienced teaches and social worker in order to assist our teachers. That way, there is a community of help and our newer staff members develop trust in our experienced staff members, and our experienced staff know that they are trusted by leadership.”
2A	“Constant communication, roaming, weekly meetings, open door, follow through on ideas and programs.”

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

Table 12. 1 depicted most staff speak positively about their school

**Table 12. 1***I Speak Positively About My School*

I speak positively about my school.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach	X		

\*Choose not to state

**Table 12. 2***Happiness in the Workplace*

Happiness in the Workplace	
Participants	Responses
1A	<p>“While the last two years have been extremely tough on educators, I truly believe that our staff enjoys working at our school. We have maintained a very low turnover rate over the last few years and those staff members who left either left for family reasons or were let go due to performance issues. Our staff members get along very well and significant interpersonal conflict is very rare on our campus.”</p> <p>“I think that overall, the teachers and staff enjoy working here because they come back each year and show appreciation in their communication on how we can make a difference in their lives.”</p>
2A	<p>“He feeds us as often as possible and tells us he appreciates what we do. Also, we get bonuses and raises when available.”</p>

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

Most participants contribute to a positive school environment, one stated only sometimes as depicted in Table 13. 1

**Table 13. 1***I Contribute to a Positive School Environment by Contributing in Some Way*

I contribute to a positive school environment by contributing in some way.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

\*Choose not to state

**Table 13. 2***Contributions Towards a Positive School Climate*

Contributions towards a positive school climate	
Participants	Responses
1A	<p>There are three main ways that I try to contribute to our positive school climate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I try to be respectful and positive in all of my interactions with students. I always approach students by presenting what they can accomplish, rather than focusing on previous mistakes or failed classes.</li> <li>2. I do everything I can to check in frequently with staff members and ensure that they are heard and that their needs are being met. In coaching conversations, I try to start with what they are doing well and focus on how we can improve their teaching in order to cover areas that aren't being done as well. I never start with their gaps or flaws as that will ensure that the conversation is negative and any praise that comes later will not have the same level of importance. I also try to end on a positive note by always ending a coaching session with a clear plan forward and concrete strategies for them to implement.</li> <li>3. I often will work in the background to try to help build positivity on campus without the teachers knowing what I am up to. For example, if I have a struggling new teacher, I will go to a trusted staff member and ask them to check up on the struggling teacher. That way, the new staff member feels supported and part of our school community. I also helped spearhead a "secret elf" game where we would leave gifts and tokens for our teachers in order to spread positivity without them knowing who was behind the effort."</li> </ol>
2A	"I try to teach with a positive attitude and communicate my care and concern for my students as well as coworkers."

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

Table 14. 1 depicts a diverse response to the school having a healthy balance of academics, clubs, and activities. CC mentioned, the schools are limited on resources and are focused on academics.

**Table 14. 1**

*The School Has a Healthy Balance of Academics, Clubs, and Activities*

---

The school has a healthy balance of academics, clubs, and activities.

---

Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher		X	
4	23	Teacher		X	
5	1.5	Teacher	*	*	*
6	4	Teacher			X
7	*	Curriculum Coach		X	
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

---

\*Choose not to state



Table 15. 1 displays how all participants believe their school is a safe space for students to learn and grow.

**Table 15. 1**

*Students Have a Safe Space to Learn and Grow*

Students have a safe space to learn and grow.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach			X

\*Choose not to state

**How Can a Positive School Culture be Maintained Over Time by its Leadership?**

Participants mostly felt their school leader contributed to a positive school environment as depicted in Table 16. 1.

**Table 16. 1**

*My School Leader Contributes to a Positive School Environment*

---

My school leader contributes to a positive school environment.

---

Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach		X	
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher		X	\
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		X
8	5	Curriculum Coach			X

---

\*Choose not to state

**Table 16. 2***Maintaining Positive School Climate*

Maintaining Positive school climate	
Participants	Responses
1A	<p>“There are several important results of a positive climate: As previously mentioned, we have a low turnover rate. Our enrollment continues to increase despite the many issues affecting education. Staff enjoy working on our school. Students and staff have positive relationships across campus.”</p> <p>“Our admin team is able to monitor our school climate through frequent check-ins with students and staff. Because of our focus on respect, our students and staff are very open with us and they will let us know when the school’s climate is not meeting our expectations.”-</p>
2A	<p>“It helps make our daily work lives to have value.”</p> <p>“I try to talk to students and staff members about the climate of our school and try to do what I can to help.”</p>

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

**Table 16. 3***Establishing Positive School Relationships with Staff*

Establishing Positive school relationships with staff	
Participants	Responses
1A	“We focus on developing trust, supportive relationships, and openness in our communication with staff. Staff issues are handled professionally and privately so that no one feels picked on or embarrassed in front of their peers. In contrast, we openly celebrate successes and staff milestones in our staff meetings and PDs. In my own relationships, I try to focus on positive improvements first and give them specific examples so that my words have weight. I will also stay late to work with my teachers when needed and try to always attend their events/lessons when asked.”
2A	“Communication and gratitude.”

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

Table 17. 1 depicts most participants are encouraged to seek professional growth.

**Table 17. 1***The School Leader(s) Encourage Professional Growth*


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The school leader(s) encourage professional growth.

---

Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher	X		
6	4	Teacher	X		\
7	*	Curriculum Coach		X	
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

---

\*Choose not to state

**Table 17.2***Typical Day at School*

Typical Day at school	
Participants	Responses
1A	<p>“Our school opens at 7:30 and students arrive between 7:30 and 8:00. Our school day starts at 8:00 with first period and that lasts for 110 minutes. After first period, students have a short 4-minute passing period and then they go to their second hour. Second hour starts with announcements that are done over the intercom by our announcements team (receptionist and student volunteers). After announcements, students are in the second period until lunch begins. Lunch runs for 30 minutes and students eat around campus or in designated classrooms where the teachers are present at all times. When there is four minutes left of lunch, the bell rings and our admin team and teachers begin moving students into their final class. Fourth hour lasts until 2:04 when the school day ends. Most of our students take the bus or drive, so the majority of students leave through the back gate to get to our student/bus parking lot. After school, some students will stay for clubs on certain days or will stay to work on online classes or receive tutoring from students. Teachers use this time to prepare for the following day or to attend staff meetings, PLCs or safety meetings.”</p>
2A	<p>“I get here, last minute prep, get coffee, and teach my online class to a sister middle school          -Bell work, Kahoot, introduce activity, they work on it, I monitor progress, introduce next activity, they work on it, I monitor progress, they work on it, introduce final activity, we work on it as a class, exit          2nd hour- YE - greet at door with incentive dollars, bell work, go over bell as a class, introduce activity, put students in groups, do an activity, I roam and monitor, then they present or pitch results, debrief, exit ticket.          3rd hour World- Bell work, go over bell work, notes on peardeck, review notes in some capacity: highlight, questions and summary, cartoon strip, foldable. Next activity, introduce, they work on their own, I roam, they turn it in, offer extra credit, exit ticket.”</p>

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

## Key Stakeholder Voice

The final emergent theme included key stakeholder voice. Table 18. 1 illustrates most participants agree the school leader(s) listen to student ideas, while two participants stated school leader(s) felt students' ideas were heard sometimes.

**Table 18. 1**

*Students Have Multiple Opportunities to Voice Their Ideas*

Students have multiple opportunities to voice their ideas.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

\*Choose not to state

Table 19. 1 illustrates most participants agree that the school leader(s) listens to the ideas of other stakeholders.

**Table 19. 1**

*The School Leader(s) Listens to the Ideas of Other Stakeholders*

The school leader(s) listens to the ideas of other stakeholders.					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher	X		
2	16	Curriculum Coach	X		
3	4	Teacher	X		
4	23	Teacher	X		
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach	X		
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	



Participants stated that parents/guardians have some ways for involvement as illustrated in Table 20. 1.

**Table 20. 1**

*I Have Observed Ways for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) to be Involved*

I have observed ways for parent(s)/guardian(s) to be involved					
Participant	Years at APEG	Position	Agree	Sometimes	Disagree
1	1.5	Teacher		X	
2	16	Curriculum Coach		X	
3	4	Teacher		X	
4	23	Teacher		X	
5	1.5	Teacher		X	
6	4	Teacher		X	
7	*	Curriculum Coach		X	
8	5	Curriculum Coach		X	

\*Choose not to state

**Table 20. 2***Stakeholder Communication and Community*

Stakeholder Communication and Community	
Participants	Responses
1A	<p>“Our important stakeholders would describe our school climate as supportive, positive and very different from the typical public school.</p> <p>There are three main methods of communications:            Our school leader sends out weekly newsletters with information on current events, upcoming activities and important messages/updates.            Our student mentor calls struggling students and their parents daily in order to try to establish communication and help them to develop a plan for success.            Our teachers are asked to make calls each week to those students that they are concerned about or those who deserve praise for their successes in class.”</p>
2A	<p>“Students come first- I think overall they are happy- well, as happy as teens are going to be.”</p>

*Assistant School/Curriculum Coach=1A Teacher=2A*

### Qualitative Data Analysis Summary

This qualitative case study utilized research procedures of data collection to examine the impact of school leadership on school climate in the 21st century. Additionally, this study gathered data to enable the researcher to explore how interpersonal communication and relationships between school leaders and teachers impact school climate. The narrative emerged from the data collection and analysis of the case study (Creswell, 2014). Patterns and themes emerged using qualitative research methodology and provided additional layers of multilayered analysis (Creswell, 2014). This process allowed the researcher to understand the researcher's interpretations better, providing a more objective and in-depth analysis (Stakes, 2010).

The researcher used codes and themes to write the rich, detailed findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used the following questions to guide the qualitative data analysis: This process allowed the researcher to hone in on emergent themes. The following themes emerged from the participants; responses: effective leadership, communication, positive school climate, and stakeholder's voice. The themes illustrated a relationship between leadership, communication, and school climate. The survey and open-ended questionnaire results illuminated the participants' perceptions on contributing factors of maintaining a positive school environment. These findings help inform descriptions and themes to understand better the dynamic relationship between leadership and school climate (Creswell, 2014).

#### Summary

Purposeful sampling was used to gather the most important to help best comprehend the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2014). The sampling came from secondary school sites under one Charter School Organization. The secondary school sites share similar settings. Each secondary school in the organization includes a school leader curriculum coach, and some also include an assistant school leader. Thus, the findings provide a unique insight into leadership and school climate perceptions.

The first emergent theme was effective leadership. A pattern of the importance of communication and interpersonal skills was discovered. Participant 7 stated:

There are so many choices and decisions being made around campus that a school needs a leader who can communicate with all staff and stakeholders. They need to know what is going on their campus and how to communicate their policies and decisions with the staff. Without clear communication, the staff is left having to make decisions on their own or feel like they are not being supported.

Table 8. 1 illustrates that most participants feel comfortable speaking to their school leaders, while two stated they sometimes feel comfortable speaking to their school leaders. This data reveals that trust is essential in maintaining a positive school climate. Participant 1A reported: "Our admin team focuses on maintaining consistent, open communication with teachers and always allowing them to have a say in school decisions.

Positive School climate factors include trust. Most participants in Table 7. 1 stated their schools are a place of trust, while one disagreed. Participant 2A added: "I try to be respectful and positive in all of my interactions with students. I always approach students by presenting what they can accomplish, rather than focusing on previous mistakes or failed classes." Participant 1A stated:

We focus on developing trust, supportive relationships, and openness in our communication with staff. Staff issues are handled professionally and privately so that no one feels picked on or embarrassed in front of their peers. In contrast, we openly celebrate successes and staff milestones in our staff meetings and PDs. In my own relationships, I try to focus on positive improvements first and give them specific examples so that my words have weight. I will also stay late to work with my teachers when needed and try to always attend their events/lessons when asked.

Trust includes maintaining a positive relationship that adds to a positive school climate.

Maintaining a positive relationship is an ongoing process. Participant 1A stated: "There are several significant results of a favorable climate: As previously mentioned, we have a low turnover rate. Our enrollment continues to increase despite the many issues affecting education. Staff enjoys working on our school. Students and staff have positive relationships across campus." Participant 2A stated: "Constant communication, roaming, weekly meetings, open

door, follow through on ideas and programs." Participant 1A stated: "Our admin team is able to monitor our school climate through frequent check-ins with students and staff. Because of our focus on respect, our students and staff are very open with us and they will let us know when the school's climate is not meeting our expectations." Key stakeholder communication supports maintaining a positive school climate.

Table 19. 1 depicts that most schools listen to key stakeholders. However, Table 20. 1 illustrates that all participants believe their schools need to communicate more to critical stakeholders such as parents and guardians. Participant 1A stated: "Our important stakeholders would describe our school climate as supportive, positive, and very different from the typical public school. There are three main methods of communications: Our school leader sends out weekly newsletters with information on current events, upcoming activities, and important messages/updates. Our student mentor calls struggling students and their parents daily in order to try to establish communication and help them to develop a plan for success. Our teachers are asked to make calls each week to those students that they are concerned about or those who deserve praise for their successes in class." Participant 2A stated: "Students come first- I think overall they are happy- well, as happy as teens are going to be." Even though teachers sometimes need to purchase their materials and supplies, teachers, like school leaders, want students to be happy and successful.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This qualitative case study aimed to examine the relationship between school leaders and teachers and how these relationships impact school climate. Such relationships impact the school climate that can augment or hamper an inclusive school environment, thus impacting student success (Hay, 2013). This chapter presents a summary and essential conclusions from the study drawn from the data in the Chapter 4 findings. It discusses the research inferences and implications on the educational profession. This chapter will conclude with recommendations on further research endeavors.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 has impacted school relationships between school leaders and teachers and has exacerbated the teacher shortage in the US (Flannery, 2020; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). With all the leadership books and theories available as guidance for educators, school leaders and teachers often experience a disjointed relationship that impacts the school climate (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Unresolved conflict between school leaders and teachers can result in an adverse school climate. (Shields, 2018). Negative relationships between school leaders and teachers create a toxic environment for students and impede student success (Shields, 2018). Therefore, the researcher explored two fundamental relationships that impact school climate.

To examine the relationship between school leaders and teachers and how these relationships impact school climate, a qualitative case took place in late Fall 2021 and early Winter 2021. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Which leadership traits contribute to a positive school climate?
2. What actions do school leaders/ curriculum coaches need to implement to establish a positive school climate?

3. What are effective traits of communication between school leaders and teachers?
4. How can a positive school climate be maintained over time by its leadership?

The researcher examined the traits in transformative and servant leadership styles best suited to creating a positive school climate and better school performance during the case study. Essential characteristics include fluid communication, empathy, self-awareness, and vulnerability (Brown, 2015). A leader must maintain fluid communication, listen to the needs of others, and provide support and guidance (McChrystal, 2011; TED 2011). A leader needs to serve and lead by example to inspire trust (Greenleaf, 2002). Brown (2018) adds that influential leaders are open to change, lead with integrity, and establish trust through vulnerability through showing and being seen. Hence being an effective leader, an action leader, and a change leader is not an easy task and takes time, experience, openness, interpersonal communication skills, trust, and motivation (Brown, 2018; Goleman, 2011; Sinek, 2019).

The conceptual framework for this study included examining how the traits of transformative and servant leadership positively influence school climate. Both leadership styles emphasize establishing positive relationships through effective communication (Keith, 2012, Shields, 2018). This qualitative case study uncovered the perceptions of school leaders and teachers about effective leadership and a positive school climate through the lens of transformative and servant leadership (Creswell, 2014).

The study used purposeful sampling to gather participants' perceptions, thoughts, and insights regarding school leadership and school climate. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection came from The AP Educational Group (APEG) Charter Organization, Arizona, United States. APEG has 27 schools in the state of Arizona. The participants included an assistant school

leader, curriculum coaches, and teachers. The study was restricted to secondary school sites in a Charter School organization in Arizona with similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

The researcher sent an informed consent form with a description of the study to the school leaders, curriculum coaches, and teachers across APEG. Once informed consent was received from participants, a survey link was sent electronically to participants via Google forms. The survey settings were kept anonymous by unclicking the "collect emails." The researcher invited school leaders and curriculum coaches with four years of leadership experience to complete an open-ended questionnaire. The school leaders' perceptions, thoughts, and experiences provided a more profound insight that will help identify themes and patterns in the research (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative data was collected using multiple-choice and open-ended questions on the survey. The researcher designed a questionnaire to collect data for this qualitative and case study for the research design (Creswell, 2014). The architect of the questions allowed the researcher to gather unbiased data from participants while covering multiple topics, such as essential leader traits, communication, and positive school environment contributions (Creswell, 2014). Member checking and data triangulation was used to increase the validity of the data (McMillan, 2012). The triangulation of the data enriched the analysis of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; State, 2010). Most participants revealed that leaders are more effective with solid communication skills, empathy, courage, and engaging key stakeholders with shared decision-making.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

The findings in the study echoed the research conclusions in the literature review. School leaders and educators have a demanding job, and school leaders must lead by example (Keith, 2012; Palmer, 2004; Shields, 2018). The tasks of educational stakeholders are never truly



complete, such as maintaining a positive school climate; it takes continuous cultivation. Practical, authentic, and meaningful leadership is ongoing (Fullan, 2011; Palmer, 2004). School leaders who are open, authentic, and have strong communications skills empower their staff to shine and thrive in an ever-challenging environment (Fullan, 2011; Hallowell, 2011). Therefore, influential leaders are more likely to cultivate and sustain positive school relationships (Hauserman & Stick, 2013).

### **Answers to Research Questions**

Question one sought participants' perceptions of leadership traits that contribute to a positive school climate. Most participants stated that communication was the most effective trait contributing to a positive school environment as illustrated in Table 7. 1. Question 2 sought participants' perceptions of the actions of school leaders/curriculum coaches that help establish a positive school climate. Effective communication and trust were vital components of establishing a positive school climate—question three sought participants' perceptions of effective communication between school leaders and teachers. Participants identified traits and behaviors that promote trust and communication. The final question sought perceptions on how leaders can maintain a positive school climate. Again, having strong communication was a leading theme in the study.

### **Which Leadership Traits Contribute to a Positive School Climate?**

Effective communication between school leaders and teachers contributes to effective change (Hord & Roussin, 2017). Table 9. 1 illustrates that participants believe strong communication is essential to maintaining a positive school climate. Effective communication begins with leaders (Schmuck et al., 2012). When school leaders can effectively manage the

communication process, they significantly contribute to teachers' and students' feelings of support (Brown, 2021). Participant 7 stated:

They need to both know what is going on their campus and know how to communicate their policies and decisions with the staff. Without clear communication, the staff is left having to make decisions on their own or feel like they are not being supported.

Effective leader traits include fluid communication, empathy, self-awareness, and vulnerability (Brown, 2015). A leader needs to keep fluid communication, listen to the needs of others, and provide support and guidance (McChrystal, 2011; TED 2011). Participant 4 stated:

A leader should listen to staff, teachers, and students to recognize their needs and wants. The tricky part is the activeness... There is a diverse group of people with many needs and wants. The leader must constantly weigh the priorities of each and how best to listen actively.

A leader must have the self-awareness to reflect on the challenges and successes of the organization (Goleman, 2011).

### **What Actions do School Leaders/ Curriculum Coaches Need to Implement to Establish a Positive School Climate?**

School climate refers to the safety and stability of an educational organization (Cohen et al., 2009). Schools are where collaboration, positive professional relationships, and teamwork prosper and thrive, with trust vital to building a positive school climate (Cohen et al., 2009). Positive relationships between school leaders cannot exist without trust (Greenleaf, 2002). School leaders have power, and staff needs to trust that leaders have the best intentions for the school (Greenleaf, 2002). Table 3. 1 depicts that most participants believe their relationship is positive with school leaders. Participant 8 stated: "You can only have a positive campus climate

if the staff and students trust that the school leader will do what is best for the campus and is going to support their students and teachers." A climate includes key stakeholders sharing a shared vision and goals that enhance student engagement and success (Zullig et al., 2011).

### **What are Effective Traits of Communication Between School Leaders and Teachers?**

Important vital stakeholders such as school leaders and teachers need effective communication to maintain a positive school climate (Goleman, 2011; Shield, 2018). School leaders need to pave the path. Participant 4 stated: "A school leader can relate from experience and use that knowledge to encourage, build relationships, and be an exemplar for students and staff." Thus, having vital emotional intelligence contributes to more effective communication between school leaders and teachers and can be learned sincerely. (Goldman, 2004). Table 9. 1 illustrates that no participants felt comfortable speaking to their school leaders. Therefore, leaders and teachers who lack emotional intelligence can learn from them, thereby enhancing their overall communication process. Interpersonal communication is key to having harmonious communication and building positive relationships (Goldman, 2004; Shields, 2018). School leaders who create trust, communication, and positive relationships contribute to a more positive school climate and equitable education.

### **How Can a Positive School Climate be Maintained Over Time by its Leadership?**

Listening to the needs of the teachers leads to better collaboration, thereby empowering teachers and giving them more of a voice, and creating trust in the organization (Greenleaf, 2002 & Keith, 2011). Participant 1A stated: "Our admin team focuses on maintaining consistent, open communication with teachers and always allowing them to have a say in school decisions." Influential leaders help maintain a positive climate by building a shared vision and mission (Shields, 2018). Participant 1A stated: "Our important stakeholders would describe our school

climate as supportive, positive, and very different from the typical public school." When crucial stakeholders such as leaders and teachers have a shared vision and mission with the school leaders, then a positive school climate is more likely to occur (Shields, 2018; Sinek, 2019). Additionally, holding each other accountable using continuous reflection on a shared vision and mission ensures that the critical stakeholder does not lose sight of the task at hand, providing an equitable education to students. Participant 2A stated: "I try to teach with a positive attitude and communicate my care and concern for my students and coworkers." The willingness to serve and be mindful of creating safe, secure, and equitable educational opportunities for students will help the whole organization thrive and grow.

### **Unexpected Findings**

Most participants agree they contribute to a positive school environment, as illustrated in Table 13. 1. However, Table 14. 1 describes that most participants stated their schools do not always have a healthy balance of academics, clubs, and activities. Table 15. 1 illustrates that most participants believe their school is a safe space for students to learn and grow. One of the cornerstones of servant and transformative leadership is creating a sense of community and trust (Keith, 2012, Shield, 2018). School leaders can establish community and confidence by providing healthy academics, clubs, and activities (Keith, 2012, Shield, 2018). The data show a positive school climate in the absence of resources. Participant 1A stated:

Our admin team can monitor our school climate through frequent check-ins with students and staff. Because of our focus on respect, our students and staff are very open with us, and they will let us know when the school's climate is not meeting our expectations.

Teachers can become distracted by a lack of supplies and materials, as depicted in Table 6. 1; therefore, it is imperative to create an environment where they feel supported. Additionally,

this positive mindset can help students feel safe and secure when there is no healthy balance of clubs and activities, as depicted in Table 14. 1. Table 15. 1 illustrates that most participants think students have a favorable climate.

### **Implications for Practice**

Educational organizations across the United States have their own distinctive set of challenges, whether due to physical environment, population proximity or socioeconomic status, a nationwide teacher shortage, or pandemic-related issues (Coffin & Meghjani, 2020; Flannery, 2020). Key school stakeholders will benefit from this critical study because school leadership or lack of leadership plays a significant role in establishing school climates. An adverse school climate negatively impacts school climate and teacher retention, thereby harming student learning and success (Ravitch, 2016). Most participants in the study felt school leaders play a crucial role in creating and maintaining a positive climate. Therefore, the leadership sets the tone and needs to model proactive communication and involve key stakeholders in creating a shared vision. Effective leadership is crucial for maintaining a positive school climate and creating equitable education.

The methodology of school leadership has shifted in the 21st century, making it challenging to land on the most effective approach to leadership (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013). Servant and transformative leadership traits such as trust, integrity, empathy, and shared decision-making positively influence school climate. Both features of servant and transformative leadership theories lead to effective communication between key stakeholders. Traditionally, leaders value their communication skills (Spears, 2004). The school leaders' effective leadership style and decision-making lead to a positive school environment.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study aimed to examine how the relationships between school leaders and teachers influence a positive school environment. With the plethora of research surrounding effective and evolving leadership, there still seems to be a significant disconnect between school leaders and teachers, as evident in the growing teacher shortage that began before the pandemic. Most participants agreed they have a positive relationship with their school leaders, as identified in Table 3. 1. However, Table 9. 1 illustrates that only a few participants felt school leaders effectively communicate with the staff. Additionally, Participant 8 was overly dissatisfied with the school leadership and school climate; thus, it would be beneficial to examine the factors that influenced Participant 8 responses. Exploring the elements of current workplace dissatisfaction may provide further insight that would better inform the profession.

While the research findings help to inform and improve school leadership and teachers, it is also important to note that a Second Wave of the COVID Pandemic may have impacted data collection. Many teachers were required to take on additional duties such as substitute teaching while accommodating the needs of students who have missed school due to COVID. Further research studies on how school leaders navigated communication and maintained relationships would benefit the profession during a significant crisis such as the pandemic.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The study took place during the Fall and early Winter of 2021-2022 amid a global pandemic. Social distancing was required for safety measures. The pandemic has also added a significant extra workload to school leaders' and teachers' responsibilities. Thus, the researcher did not receive as many participants as initially desired. Additionally, the researcher was prohibited from recording any interviews because the corporate leadership was fearful of legal

liabilities and time constructions. Therefore, the study included online surveys distributed via Google forms and open-ended questionnaires. The researcher also works for an educational organization that operates the school sites of the case study, which may inhibit the validity of the participants' responses because some participants may not feel secure providing honest feedback (Creswell, 2014). Conversely, delimitations of this study included specific boundary locations, age groups, and pandemic considerations; however, the researcher believes that the data collected was a cross-section of valid data in which to format a conclusion.

### **Conclusions**

One of the most imperative influences on school effectiveness is the school leader (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Effective leadership supports a positive school climate. School leaders navigate district-wide policies, academic goals, and school-level performance supports and nurtures teachers, and set the tone for the school climate (Hauserman & Stick, 2013). Being an effective leader means doing what is best for your constituents and fostering their growth, thereby creating a canvas for growth (Shields, 2018). Effective leadership and a positive school climate stem from unified communication, transparency, and a shared vision for the school (Brown, 2012; Keith, 2012; Shields, 2018). In doing so, leaders establish a climate of positive production and working relationships (Fullan, 2011). Cultivating and maintaining positive relationships can improve with time and effort, contributing to a more positive and inclusive learning environment (Shields, 2018). Thus, effective communication plays a crucial role in navigating the multifaceted dimensions of human variables in education (Fullan, 2011).

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Teacher and Curriculum Coach -Part Survey

**Teacher and Curriculum Coach** Dissertation Questionnaire

Years in organization \_\_\_\_\_ Gender (circle one): Female or Male

Years in a position \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity (please state): \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Education (check most accurate) Less than B.A. \_\_\_\_ B.A. \_\_\_\_ M.A. \_\_\_\_ Other (be specific) \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: Teacher or Curriculum Coach

Directions: Read each statement thoroughly. Please place an X under the column that best describes statements about your school. You may only circle one number per question.

Questions	Disagree	Sometimes	Agree	Neutral
1. My relationship with the school leader is positive.				
2. I am recognized when I do something well.				
3. I speak positively about my school.				
4. I contribute to a positive school climate by being involved some way.				
5. The school leader's leadership style brings out the best in me.				
6. Our school climate is a place of trust.				
7. The leader visits classrooms.				
8. The school has a healthy balance of academics, clubs, and activities.				
9. Students have multiple opportunities to voice their ideas.				
10. I have observed ways for parent(s)/guardians(s) to be involved.				

11. The school offers several opportunities for stakeholders to become involved.				
12. The school provides diverse opportunities to establish relationships.				
13. The school leader listens to the ideas of other stakeholders.				
14. The school leader effectively communicates with staff.				
15. The school leaders contributes to a positive school climate.				
16. The school leader encourages professional growth.				
17. I feel comfortable speaking to the school leader.				
18. The school leader listens to student ideas.				
19. The school offers enough materials and supplies.				
20. Students have a safe space to learn and grow.				

Open-ended Questions:

1. Circle the trait that make an effective school leader and explain why.

Traits: Empathic, Active Listener, Moral Courageous, Trustworthy, or Strong

Communicator.

## Appendix B: School Leader Part Survey

**School Leader/Assistant School Leader** Dissertation Questionnaire

Years in Organization\_                      Gender (circle one): Female or Male

Years in a position\_\_\_\_\_                      Ethnicity (please state):\_\_\_\_\_

Level of Education (check most accurate)      Less than B.A.\_\_\_\_      B.A.\_\_\_\_      M.A.\_\_\_\_      Other (be specific)\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read each statement thoroughly. Please place an X under the column that best describes statements about your school. You may only circle one number per question.

Questions	Disagree	Sometimes	Agree	Neutral
1. My relationship with the stakeholders is positive.				
2. There are opportunities to improve school culture so as to increase the sense of importance and significance of teachers and students.				
3. I speak positively about my school.				
4. I serve as an instructional leader within the school.				
5. My leadership style brings out the best in others.				
6. Our school climate is a place of trust.				
7. I really believe all students can learn at high levels.				
8. The school has a healthy balance of academics, clubs, and activities.				
9. Students have multiple opportunities to voice their ideas.				
10. I encourage ways for parent(s)/guardians(s) to be involved.				
11. The school offers several opportunities for				

stakeholders to become involved.				
12. The school provides diverse opportunities to establish relationships.				
13. I listen to the ideas of other stakeholders.				
14. The school leader effectively communicates with staff.				
15. I ensure maintain a positive school climate.				
16. I encourage professional growth.				
17. The school has a positive school culture, and many are involved.				
18. The school does not have sufficient materials and supplies.				
19. Teachers, staff, and students speak positively about the school.				
20. Students have a safe space to learn and grow.				

1. Circle the trait that make an effective school leader and explain why.

Traits: Empathic, Active Listener, Moral Courageous, Trustworthy, or Strong

Communicator.

### Appendix C: School Leader Questionnaire

1. How do you communicate macro and micro school goals to staff?
2. What does a typical day look like at the school?
3. How do you build a community of trust?
4. What contributions have you made to cultivate and sustain positive school climate?
5. How do you know that your school climate is being maintained?
6. Do you feel you your staff enjoys working at the school, why or why not?
7. What have you specifically done to create a positive school climate?
8. What are the most important results of having a positive school climate?
9. How do you establish positive school relationships with staff?
10. How would important stakeholders describe the school climate at your site?
11. What are some ways you connect with the school community?
12. What celebrations and recognitions do you provide to staff?

## Appendix D: Teacher Questionnaire

1. How do you feel macro and micro-school goals are communicated to staff?
2. What does a typical day look like at school?
3. How does your School Leader build a community of trust?
4. What contributions have you made to cultivate and sustain a positive school climate?
5. How do you know that your school climate is being maintained?
6. Do you feel the staff enjoys working at the school, why or why not?
7. What has the School Leader done to create a positive school climate?
8. What are the most important results of having a positive school climate?
9. How does the School Leader establish positive school relationships with staff?
10. How would important stakeholders describe the school climate at your site?
11. What are some ways the School Leader connects with the school community?
12. What celebrations and recognitions does the School Leader provide to staff?

Appendix E: National Institute of Health-Dr. Deborah Collins



Completion Date 22-Aug-2020  
Expiration Date 22-Aug-2023  
Record ID 37824814

This is to certify that:

**Deborah Collins**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

**Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher** (Curriculum Group)  
**Social & Behavioral Research** (Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course** (Stage)

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Under requirements set by:

**Concordia University Irvine**



Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we8b57766-8bf2-4cce-acaf-41b4c8448d9d-37824814](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we8b57766-8bf2-4cce-acaf-41b4c8448d9d-37824814)



Completion Date 06-Jan-2021  
Expiration Date 05-Jan-2025  
Record ID 40250237

This is to certify that:

**Lisa Lopez**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification  
through CME.

**CITI Conflicts of Interest**

(Curriculum Group)

**Conflicts of Interest**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - Basic Course**

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Concordia University Irvine**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w5ed26a07-103c-492b-99ac-6b6b13456b09-40250237](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w5ed26a07-103c-492b-99ac-6b6b13456b09-40250237)



## Appendix F: National Institute of Health-Lisa Lopez



Completion Date 14-Mar-2021  
Expiration Date 13-Mar-2024  
Record ID 40250236

This is to certify that:

**Lisa Lopez**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research**

(Curriculum Group)

**Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - RCR**

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Concordia University Irvine**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w4520deb1-260a-49ae-9142-da11dce43bfe-40250236](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w4520deb1-260a-49ae-9142-da11dce43bfe-40250236)



Completion Date 22-Feb-2021  
Expiration Date N/A  
Record ID 40250235

This is to certify that:

**Lisa Lopez**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Information Privacy Security (IPS)**

(Curriculum Group)

**Researchers**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - Basic Course**

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Concordia University Irvine**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w0fa58f61-0e31-405b-b71b-0236729466a9-40250235](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w0fa58f61-0e31-405b-b71b-0236729466a9-40250235)