

SCHOOL CLIMATE COMPONENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO  
ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS  
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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(Under the direction of Charles A. Reavis)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the impact of the school climate components of teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy on student achievement. This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews of both principals and teachers, reviewed information pertaining to the school district's Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation, and from the School Matters website pertaining to one school that made Adequate Yearly Progress, and one that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress.

The sample of eight teachers was selected using a purposive sampling and the accounts of their personal ideas, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions of their feelings of job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy were presented through direct quotes to provide richness in detailing their real world descriptions. The principals at both elementary schools were also interviewed to determine their feelings about the climate within their respective buildings.

Teachers at the both schools indicated that their personal feelings did not influence their professional obligations; however, in the school that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress, the teachers indicated that they wanted to be respected by their principal; therefore, in this study, it appears that feelings of job satisfaction can impact a school's potential to make Adequate Yearly Progress. Findings revealed that teacher morale has the potential to impact a school's ability to

make Adequate Yearly Progress because in the school that made Adequate Yearly Progress, there was a sense of trust, confidence, and enthusiasm that existed among its teachers, whereas, in the school that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress, this type of atmosphere was not fully operational. Teacher efficacy did not appear to have an impact on a school's potential to make Adequate Yearly Progress because teachers at both schools were confident about their ability to successfully teach their students.

School principals and those aspiring to be building level supervisors, may wish to explore the findings of this research to address components of school climate. This information can enable them to foster an environment that is conducive for student learning. Teachers are a valuable asset to the educational profession which includes helping students and building level administrators achieve success.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher job satisfaction, Teacher morale, Teacher efficacy, School climate

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## DEDICATION

Nothing is impossible for You; You hold my whole world in Your hands! (Hillsong)

To my mother, Mrs. Celesfield Miller-Selman, thank you for always believing that I can accomplish anything that I said that I wanted to do. To my father, Anthony Dottin, thanks for the countless advice, which has helped me to become the person I am today. I thank both of you for creating the best in me. Please know that this degree is a testament to your hard work and determination.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	7
LIST OF TABLES .....	11
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	12
Background of the Study .....	13
The Roles of a Principal.....	13
Teacher Job Satisfaction .....	16
Teacher Morale .....	18
Teacher Efficacy .....	20
School Climate.....	23
Previous Quantitative Studies .....	25
Summary of Background Literature .....	26
Statement of the Problem.....	28
Research Questions.....	29
Significance of the Study .....	29
Procedures.....	30
Limitations .....	31
Delimitations.....	31
Definition of Terms.....	32
Summary .....	32
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH .....	34
The Various Roles of the Principal.....	35
The Principal as the Instructional Leader .....	35
A Principal's Leadership Style .....	36
Principals as Contributors to a School's Climate .....	37
Teacher Job Satisfaction .....	39
Definition .....	39
Contributors to Teacher Job Satisfaction.....	40
Rewards of Teacher Job Satisfaction.....	41
Teacher Morale .....	43
Definition .....	43
The Relationship Between Teacher Morale and Student Achievement .....	44
Benefits of High Teacher Morale .....	46
Teacher Empowerment .....	47

Teacher Efficacy .....	49
Definition .....	49
Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement .....	49
Interpersonal Skills .....	51
Academic Emphasis .....	53
School Climate .....	55
Conceptual Definition .....	55
The Relationship Between School Climate and Student Achievement .....	56
School Climate and School Improvement .....	57
School Climate and Academic Emphasis .....	58
The Relationship Between School Climate and Respect .....	59
Summary .....	60
III. METHODOLOGY .....	62
Introduction .....	62
Research Questions .....	63
Procedures .....	63
Research Design .....	63
Setting .....	64
Participants .....	66
Instrumentation .....	67
Data Collection .....	68
Data Analysis .....	70
Trustworthiness .....	71
Triangulation .....	72
Summary .....	75
IV. FINDINGS .....	77
Introduction .....	77
Procedures .....	79
Researcher's Observations at Abbeyville Elementary School .....	81
Researcher's Observations at Doubleville Elementary School .....	81
Researcher's Observations of the Interview Locations .....	82
Trustworthiness and Clarification of Researcher Bias .....	82
Trustworthiness and External Auditing .....	83
Data Analysis .....	83
Profile of Interviewed Teachers at Abbeyville Elementary .....	85
Profile of Interviewed Teachers at Doubleville Elementary .....	87

Summary of the Teachers' Backgrounds .....	89
Teacher Job Satisfaction .....	89
A Principal's Contribution to Teacher Job Satisfaction .....	90
How Teacher Job Satisfaction Impact Student Achievement .....	93
Teacher Morale .....	100
Collegiality as a Benefit to High Teacher Morale .....	100
Staff Expectations .....	106
Teacher Efficacy .....	110
Teacher Confidence .....	110
Individual School Mission Statements as a Guide to Student Interaction .....	118
Interpersonal Skills and Academic Emphasis .....	122
Summary .....	130
V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	132
Introduction .....	132
Discussion of Findings .....	134
The Following Research Findings were Reported for Research Sub-question 1 .....	135
The Following Research Findings were Reported for Research Sub-question 2 .....	137
The Following Research Findings were Reported for Research Sub-question 3 .....	138
Conclusions .....	140
Implications .....	141
Recommendations for Future Study .....	143
Dissemination .....	144
REFERENCES .....	145
APPENDICES	
A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PRIOR TO REVIEW .....	165
B. QUALITATIVE ITEM ANALYSIS PRIOR TO REVIEW .....	166
C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AFTER REVIEW .....	167
D. PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER .....	168
E. INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT .....	169
F. ATTESTATION .....	171
G. IRB APPROVAL .....	173
H. IRB EXTENSION .....	174

## LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE
Table 1: Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question 5(i) .....	90
Table 2: Themes from participants' responses to question 5(i) .....	91
Table 3: Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question 7a.....	94
Table 4: Themes from participants' responses to question 7a.....	95
Table 5: Themes from participants' response to question #7b .....	97
Table 6: Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question #2 .....	101
Table 7: Themes from participants' response to question #2 .....	101
Table 8: Themes from participants' response to question #4 .....	104
Table 9: Themes from principal interviews and SACS report to question #5(ii) .....	107
Table 10: Themes from participants' response to question #5(ii) .....	108
Table 11: Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question #3 .....	112
Table 12: Themes from participants' response to question #3 .....	112
Table 13: Themes from participants' response to question #6 .....	115
Table 14: Themes from principal interviews and SACS report to question #1 .....	119
Table 15: Themes from participants' response to question #1 .....	119
Table 16: Themes from principal interviews and SACS report to question #8.....	123
Table 17: Themes from participants' response to question #8 .....	123
Table 18: Themes from participants' response to question #9 .....	126

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

In this era of accountability, it is imperative that schools address goals that result in their potential to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, which is the assessment component of the No Child Left Behind Legislation. When delineating goals that address accountability, schools often address school climate as a component that can influence student performance. It is widely accepted that a school's climate has the potential to either impede or support learning (Goldring, 2002; Pritchard, Morrow, & Marshall 2005; Smith, Mazzarella, & Piele, 1981; Strahan 2003). The feelings and attitudes about a school expressed by its students, teachers, staff, and parents identify a school's climate (Tableman, 2004; Dennison, 1996; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974).

Principals have a significant impact on determining the climate within their school buildings, (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000a; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000b) which in turn, impacts all aspects of the learning process (Goldring, 2002; Abu-Saad & Hendrix, 1995; Cohen, 1997). Principals also play an essential role in the academic emphasis of their schools. A significant influence on a school's academic success is the school's climate, which can reflect a positive, negative, or neutral effect (Sims, 2005; Henderson, Buehler, Stein, Dalton, Robinson, & Anfara, 2005). This relationship between school climate and student achievement has an impact on a school's potential to be successful in regards to the No Child Left Behind legislation (Adams & Adams, 2000; Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood, & Wisenbaker, 1978).

Teachers also have a significant impact on student achievement because they are responsible for disseminating the content knowledge to students (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Henderson et al., 2005; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). Therefore, the language that teachers use has

the potential to influence student achievement. Henze & Arriaza (2006) wrote that the language used by individuals is a fundamental part of how school climate is viewed by these individuals. Educators have to be proactive in their attempts to educate students, while maintaining a climate that is conducive to learning and the educational process (Jimerson, Pletcher, Graydon, Schnurr, Nickerson, & Kundert, 2006; Picklo & Christenson, 2005).

Without teachers who are motivated by the learning process and educating students, the educational process will be undermined, and effective teaching and learning as it is known will cease to exist. Teacher morale has a significant impact on student achievement and positive student outcome (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Lumsden, 1998). If teachers doubt their efficacy and ability to provide quality instruction to students, this will be reflected in the presence or absence of students' academic success (Henson, 2001; 2002).

Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs and roles as educators will convey their positive attitudes to the students, their colleagues, and others. If teachers are satisfied, then this will be translated through their work ethic and potential to educate their students (Bogler, 2001; Black, 2001; Ho & Au, 2006). The effectiveness of the principal as the instructional leader in the building (Kelley, Thornton, & Daughtery, 2005; Olson, 2000), teacher job satisfaction (Cowdery, 2004; Kreis & Brockopp, 1986; Rinehart & Short, 1994), teacher morale (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Smith, 1966), and teacher efficacy (Edwards, Green, & Lyons, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004) are components of school climate which in turn, have the potential to influence student achievement (Thomas, 1997; Blase & Blase, 1999; Bolin, 2007).

### **Background of the Study**

**The roles of a principal.** Principals have various roles within the school building, but no role is more important than that of the building's instructional leader (Wood, 2005; Witziers,

Bosher, & Kruger, 2003). As the instructional leader of the school, a principal influences the school's climate and the learning process of all individuals within the school building (Mackey, Pitcher, & Decman, 2006; Olson, 2000; Kelley et al., 2005). A principal's vision and leadership style can have a profound impact on school climate, student performance, and provides the direction for the students, faculty, and staff within the school building (Thomas, 1997; Houchard, 2005; Korkmaz, 2007; Mackey et al.). As the visionary leader of the school, principals pave the path for their students, teachers, and parents.

Korkmaz (2006) wrote that leadership is the art of creating a working atmosphere which motivates and directs the members of the organization towards achieving the organization's aims and performance levels (p. 14). In schools, therefore, principals have to be effective change agents who become the key individuals responsible for maintaining a healthy school climate. Korkmaz (2007) defined transformational leaders as those who encourage their staff members by stimulating them intellectually to adopt creative thinking processes, and who push them to reconsider the solution of old problems through new techniques (p. 26). Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen (2006) agree with this idea by stating that transformational leaders have strong effects on teacher job satisfaction, acceptance of the school's goals, and the desire to work for the common good of the school. This capability of transformational leaders has the potential to impact school climate, and hence teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy (Thomas, 1997; Korkmaz, 2007).

Teachers often take their signals from principals regarding the education of the students within their classrooms. Principals lead by example, thereby serving as a role model to those they encounter. When principals are successful in their roles as instructional leaders, this promotes the success of all students in the school building (Mackey et al., 2006; Wood, 2005).

Therefore, principals have to maintain positive attitudes and interactions with students and teachers. Positive teacher support and interactions improve students' academic performance and provide positive school outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Bogler, 2001).

Principals, through their role as the instructional leader within the school building, are held accountable for the quality of instruction within their school (Olson, 2005; Fink & Resnick, 2001). Therefore, the instructional climate established by the principal, impacts the learning process for all students. The effectiveness of this learning process is impacted by the principal's potential to meet the instructional, academic, and emotional needs of students and teachers. Principals have to portray and believe that all students are capable of learning and should provide an atmosphere that embodies this belief (Olson, 2000; Kelley et al., 2005).

Principals provide feedback to the individuals within the school building (Wood, 2005; Evans, 2001), which allows the individuals to monitor and adjust their performance as needed. Principals have to be involved in the intricate fabric of their schools because they provide direction, cohesion, and success for all members within the building. Principals have to ensure that all building members share their leadership philosophy and school vision which will provide cohesion within the school building and has the potential to influence student performance (Wolf, Borko, Elliott, & McIver, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Of all the roles that principals have been tasked with, none is more important than ensuring that students become successful, lifelong learners who are productive members of society.

As the instructional leader, principals set the tone of the building. If students and teachers know that principals are involved and have a personal stake in the educational process, they will devote their efforts to being successful learners and teachers (Henderson et al., 2005; Hoy & Clover, 1986). If all members within the building are working towards a common goal,

cohesion will prove beneficial to the members within the school building, as opposed to each group having their own personal goals.

Wolf et al., (2000) found in their quantitative study of four exemplary schools, principals impact school climate, which in turn impacts student performance. This concept is further validated by Hallinger et al., 1998; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; and Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990. Principals have the potential to influence the programs that will be utilized to aid students in their educational pursuits; therefore, the principal must be well informed about interventions and programs that are utilized within the school (Tannenbaum & Brown-Welty, 2006; Mackey et al., 2006). As the leader of the school building, the principal has a very extensive role which can be beneficial or detrimental to students, teachers, and parents. This unique role has various responsibilities and can be very influential, which can make the educational process easier or more difficult for all of the members of the school building. Thomas, 1997 and Nguni et al., 2006, pointed out that school principals have the potential to impact teacher morale, school climate, teacher job satisfaction, and student achievement. Since the 1960's, it has been asserted that school principals have the propensity to influence teacher job satisfaction, and school climate, which in turn becomes a determining factor on student learning in the schools (Halpin & Croft, 1963; Howell & Grahlman, 1978).

**Teacher job satisfaction.** Teacher job satisfaction is defined as a dynamic construct which is likened to how an individual feels about his or her job and is an indicator of the degree of need fulfillment experienced by the individual (Dinham & Scott, 1998; Hinrichs, 1968; Kreis & Brockopp, 1986). Job satisfaction has the potential to influence the manner in which teachers perform their duties and how they portray themselves to others. Students tend to embrace the

goals of their teachers as (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). Teachers have to express the importance of education, so that students will want to become educated people.

Principals spearhead their school's climate and therefore have the potential to impact teacher job satisfaction and morale (Black, 2001; Bogler, 2001; Dinham & Scott, 1998). When teachers believe that they are being effective educators and this is affirmed by their building level principal, this can have a positive effect on how teachers complete their duties and their interactions with students, colleagues, and others (Blase & Blase, 1996; Edwards et al., 2002). If teachers believe that their services are valued by and helpful to others, they will want to stay in the education profession. As Black reiterates, when teachers feel good about their work, then student achievement rises, because teachers exert maximum effort to ensure that their students are successful academically.

If teachers are satisfied with their roles, they tend to place more emphasis on the educational process (Bogler, 2001; Cemaloglu, 2007). There is a reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and school climate which has the potential to positively influence student achievement. Teaching students can be a difficult, but rewarding job, therefore teachers who are more satisfied in their chosen profession will continue to persevere in the face of adversity (Bogler, 2001; Brunetti, 2001). As Greenlee & Bruner, 2001, and Smirk, 2001, explains that a one size fits all approach to education is not the best way to ensure that all students are successful in their educational endeavors.

Evans (2000) and Bolin (2007) found that job satisfaction is an individual teacher attitude; therefore principals have to be cognizant of their interactions with teachers on an individual and group basis. As Houchard (2005) found in her study of elementary schools in North Carolina, and as stated by Ma & MacMillan (1999) teacher interactions with the principal

have the potential to influence teacher job satisfaction and morale. In turn, these teacher-principal interactions have an impact on student achievement. Teacher job satisfaction is also influenced by teachers' perceptions of their principal's potential to be an effective leader (Kelley, 2005; Zigarmi & Sinclair, 2001; Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995). If teachers believe that the principal is effective in his or her duties and also believes in the teachers' potential to educate students successfully, then the teachers will use this belief to sustain them in the face of adversity.

**Teacher morale.** Another important aspect of school climate is the morale of the teachers who have the duty of educating students. Since the 1970's, Smith, 1976 and Williams & Lane, 1975, explained that morale is situation specific concept that varies from situation to situation. Evans, (1998; 1992) further explained that morale is an extension of satisfaction; however, for the purposes of this study, the researcher will refer to the definition used by Hoy et al., 1991 and Smith, 1966, which indicates that teacher morale is "the sense of trust, confidence, enthusiasm, and friendliness among teachers". Papanastasiou & Zembylas, (2005) and Hausman & Goldring, (2001) stated that teacher morale is a central component of effective policy making to improve teacher job satisfaction. Not only does education have to meet the needs of the students educators are tasked with educating, but the needs of the educators must be fulfilled so that they will feel as though their task is worthwhile and beneficial to society. Teachers need to feel that their needs are being met, so that they can help meet students' needs.

According to Freeman, Gum, & Blackburn (1999), Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer (2004), and Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, teacher beliefs impact students' academic performance and their potential to benefit from intervention strategies. Licata & Harper (2001) and Hoy & Hannum (1997) stated that when teachers embrace the vision of the school, then students benefit

because student academic progress and effectiveness become the focus of all school endeavors. School administrators must make certain that teachers' beliefs are consistent with the vision and focus of the school, as the entire building works together to educate students. Students who are at-risk for academic failure have less belief in their potential for success, and based on their beliefs, they tend to alter their interactions to correlate with that of their tutors (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). Mahoney et al. further asserted that teacher-rated motivational attributes are positively correlated with student academic performance, thereby indicating that teachers are very observant when it applies to the needs of the students they have been assigned to teach. Therefore, teachers have to make sure that they present the art of teaching and the process of learning in such a manner that students will eagerly embrace.

Effective organizations have high staff morale (Jones, 1997; Lumsden, 1998) and morale increases the level of participation of teachers in the learning process. The concept of teacher morale has been investigated since the 1970's by Smith, 1971 and Rempel & Bently, 1970, and more currently by Fullan, 2002 and Mackenzie, 2007, who indicated that high teacher morale increases productivity for everyone within the school building. If teachers and students become more involved in the learning process, they will take ownership in this process, and dedicate their efforts towards being successful teachers and learners. There is a strong positive correlation between teacher morale and student achievement (Ho, 2004; Protheroe, 2006). If students believe that teachers are inherently vested in their educational pursuits and will genuinely aid them in the process, oftentimes, they will devote a higher degree of effort toward achieving the goals of the curriculum. Students who view teachers as supportive are more likely to pursue goals that teachers' value (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mahoney et al., 2005). A positive relationship between teachers and students will impact students' desires and approach to learning

(Hoy et al., 1991; Henderson et al., 2005; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). This positive relationship allows teachers to work closely with students, thus becoming familiar with their strengths, weaknesses, fears, and desires. This close involvement provides valuable information that teachers can use to teach and motivate students to become successful in their academic endeavors.

Hoy et al., 1991 and Smith, 1966 defines teacher morale as the feelings of affiliation and genuine liking for one's coworkers which incorporates a sense of trust, confidence, and the friendliness that maintains feelings of solidarity among teachers (Mackenzie, 2007). This concept of teacher morale has been linked to its impact on student achievement (Smith, 1971; Mackenzie; Fullan, 2002). Furthermore, Zembylas & Papanastasiou (2005) contend that when teachers feel empowered to make the decisions that affect students, they perform their responsibilities more readily. Edwards et al., 2002 and Short & Rinehart, 1993 explain that teacher empowerment is a teacher's opportunity for autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation in the decision making process. This concept of teacher empowerment has also been positively linked to teacher morale (Edwards et al.; Utley, Westbrook, & Turner, 1997; Brodinsky, 1984).

**Teacher efficacy.** Teacher efficacy refers to the extent to which teachers believe that they can help students retain and use the material they teach (Goddard et al., 2000a; Henson, 2002). This alliance makes the assumption that teachers take ownership of the student-teacher relationship, and students, in turn, have to recognize the significance of this bond. Teachers want to know that the material they present is beneficial to students and that the material is presented in a manner in which students can understand and generalize this information. This

relationship is one in which student achievement is impacted because students must be able to use, retain, and make sense of the information that is presented by the teachers.

A teacher's perceptions that their teaching is worth the effort and can lead to academic success for the students they teach (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Henson, 2001; Henson, 2002; Perdue, Reardon, & Peterson, 2007; Poulou, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy, 1998) is defined as a teacher's feelings of efficacy. The relationship between teacher and student fosters a bond, which in turn, teaches the students self-confidence and creates a positive working relationship between students and teachers (Baker et al., 2006; Greenlee & Bruner, 2001). Positive associations between teachers and students tend to foster positive feelings about learning that encourage students to embrace learning. If a school has an emphatic emphasis on learning, students will be more likely to embrace this process and rise to the high expectations that have been set for them (Goddard et al., 2000a; Brown & Medway, 2007; Goddard et al., 2000b). It is further written that this emphasis has an important part in shaping the school's climate and facilitating student learning. Teachers that foster relationships with students tend to create a more personal and long lasting association for the students.

Student achievement is correlated with an instructional support for learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Ho, 2004; Hoy et al., 1990; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Usually an individual does not learn alone and needs the support of others who are knowledgeable about specific topics in order to become successful in mastering curricular requirements and skills. Regardless of a student's background, if a student believes that his or her teacher trusts his or her potential to be successful in mastering academic material; then the student will be more likely to put forth his or her best effort to master the material (Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). The belief that others have confidence in one's potential to be successful academically is a powerful motivator

and determinant in one's educational pursuits. This belief fosters student engagement in the learning process which has the potential to improve their achievement (Ornelles, 2007; Brown & Medway, 2007; Freeman et al., 1999).

Teachers who feel confident in their ability to affect change in the students they teach and in their potential to educate these students, will have a significant impact on school climate and student achievement (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005; Adams & Adams, 2000; Henson, 2001; Klecker & Loadman, 1999). Teacher confidence has an impact on teacher effectiveness in teaching, which in turn affects the students' ability to garner knowledge from the information they are presented. Freeman et al. (1999) and Mahoney et al., (2005) indicate that teachers' beliefs in their students impact student performance. Since teachers' beliefs influence student achievement, teachers have to be careful of the message that they consciously and unconsciously portray to students. Teacher influence can be a detriment to student success or an aid to the process, depending on the relationship between the student and teacher, or lack thereof.

Teachers have to modify their teaching styles in order to make sure that they are adequately educating the students in their classrooms. The material that is presented must be done so in a manner that is easily understood and students have to feel comfortable asking questions for clarification. One size does not fit all (Greenlee & Bruner, 2001; Smirk, 2001), when it comes to educating students. Therefore, teachers have to be confident and comfortable in their roles, be flexible enough to check for understanding, and be able to reteach as needed. Modifying curricular efforts to ensure comprehension of the material impacts a student's ability to understand and benefit from the teacher's efforts (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Goddard et al., 2000b).

Teachers' level of efficacy has a positive effect on student achievement (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003; Henson, 2001; Henson, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). This potential to impact student performance regardless of student socio-economic status is important in the task of educating students. Once schools and communities realize the impact that teachers truly have on the educational process, more programs, and initiatives can be put into place to boost teacher morale and in turn, raise student achievement. Teachers are a vital link to reaching students who are difficult to teach (Goddard et al., 2004; Ho, 2004). This vital link will benefit the community in its entirety by boosting academic achievement.

**School climate.** School climate has been investigated for several decades and has been defined as the physical and psychological aspects of the school that are more susceptible to change and that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place (Tableman, 2004; Marks, 2005). According to Cohen, 2007; Hoy et al., 1991; and Dennison, 1996 definitions of school climate vary; however, all definitions reflect the quality and character of school life. After analyzing the literature on school climate, this researcher has found that teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy are considered to be components of school climate. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher efficacy have been selected as major components of school climate based on the focus of the literature.

Effective schools have many characteristics that promote their success. Of all of these characteristics; however, school climate is more powerful than any formal aspect of leadership (Goldring, 2000; Blase & Blase, 1999). This profound potential of school climate to impact the learning process becomes the underlying fabric of a school building. There is a significant positive relationship between a school's climate and student achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a;

Goddard et al., 2000b). It follows that since administrators are responsible for the school climate within their buildings, they have been commissioned to provide students with the academic tools to be successful members of society. This success will allow students to master academic and pro-social skills.

Principals empower their teachers with the necessary tools to become successful in educating students (Blase & Blase, 1996; Edwards et al., 2002). If teachers work within a school building where they feel powerless to educate students, then they will be unsuccessful in their efforts to promote learning (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Goddard et al., 2000a). Goddard et al. further states that collective teacher efficacy is the belief by teachers that they have an effect on the social milieu of the school and control over the instruction that they provide to the students. Collective teacher efficacy is a significant predictor of student achievement in math and reading (Henson, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Academic emphasis is defined as the extent to which a school pursues academic excellence (Goddard et al., 2000b; Brown & Medway, 2007) and a school climate that exemplifies academic excellence is one that will have a positive impact on student achievement.

Teachers must work collaboratively to ensure that they are focused on the goal of educating students (Strahan, 2003; Henson, 2001). In a school building where the impetus is collaboration towards the common objective of educating students, there is a positive and significant impact on student performance. Students and teachers are more likely to be successful within a school climate that actively fosters the goals of becoming successful teachers and learners. Where there is a climate of all members working towards a common goal, cohesion will provide an attitude of success and camaraderie for all members. A school climate

that is conducive to learning is one in which leaders provide support for innovation and change (Dellar, 1998; Blase & Blase, 1999; Fullan, 2002).

A positive school climate promotes student achievement with high standards, which in turn, provides a positive correlation between school climate and student achievement (Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006; Pritchard et al., 2005). Positive associations tend to foster positive feelings about learning that encourage students to embrace learning. Once students take personal ownership of their learning, they will have a personal stake in their individual success.

Academic optimism is a school's press for academic excellence (Hoy et al., 2006; Sterbinsky, Ross, & Redfield, 2006) which impacts student academic achievement. If all members in the school building are focused on a common goal and motivated to give their best efforts, then the educational process will continue along its prescribed successful course.

The language that is used to define and express the goals of the school has a significant impact on its members (Henze & Arriaza, 2006; Cohen, 2007). Language is a tool that is used for social change which is affected by the beliefs and expectations of the members of the school building. How the members express themselves and their goals will impact how they perceive and approach their endeavors. A school climate with a strong academic emphasis influences student and teacher behavior and reinforces a pattern of collective beliefs that is good for the school and students (Goddard et al., 2000b; Abu-Saad & Hendrix, 1995; Brown & Medway, 2007; Hoy et al., 2006). This pattern of collective beliefs provides cohesion to the learning process.

**Previous quantitative studies.** Several dissertation studies (Benson, 2003; Morrison, 2007; Sims, 2005) have addressed school climate in elementary schools and its impact on student achievement using a quantitative research design. The studies conducted by Benson, Morrison,

and Sims have not addressed school climate using a qualitative research design. These authors have suggested widening the scope of their studies by using different methodological lenses (Sims, 2005) to permit the ability to see the real world differences in climate by allowing teachers to express their opinions (Benson, 2003). Specifically, Benson and Sims have suggested using diverse school populations, rather than concentrating on students in Title I schools, thereby allowing one to pinpoint where climate is most crucial.

Benson, 2003, postulates that school climate and student achievement are positively related. Morrison, 2007, maintains that school leaders need to recognize that school climate variables can be identified and improved to positively impact school climate. Sims, 2005, further agrees that principal leadership has an impact on a school's climate, which in turn, has the ability to impact student achievement. These studies address third grade students and have suggested for their results to be generalized to other school situations, other grades need to be addressed. Benson, Morrison, and Sims have concentrated on school climate using a quantitative research method and have found that there is a relationship between school climate and student achievement, but now are suggesting that a quantitative research design be implemented to deepen the understanding of how a school's climate impacts student achievement. Benson mentioned (personal communication June 5, 2008) that using qualitative research to address the relationship between school climate and student achievement, by allowing teachers to use their own words to explain this relationship will offer information that would be easy to generalize to other school situations.

**Summary of background literature.** As instructional leaders, principals have a significant impact on the climate in their schools. Principals have the potential to positively, negatively, or neutrally impact the individuals within the school building. Principals have to be

careful how they wield this power since this power has the potential to affect teacher job satisfaction, morale, efficacy, student achievement, and as a result, school climate. In this era of accountability and the No Child Left Behind Act, principals have the potential to impact the future of many generations to follow by their influence on student achievement.

Teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate have a significant impact on student achievement as indicated by Adams & Adams, 2000; Henson, 2001, Klecker & Loadman, 1999. Principals and teachers have the potential to create a school climate where students will want to become enmeshed and successful in the learning process. Teachers, who feel confident in their potential to affect change in the students they teach, and in their potential to educate these students, will have a significant impact on school climate, and student achievement (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005; Fullan, 2002; Mackenzie, 2007; Smith, 1971). Teacher confidence has a significant impact on teaching effectiveness, which in turn affects the students' potential to garner knowledge from the information they are presented. It follows, therefore, that teacher morale will have an impact on student achievement. This influence will afford students the opportunity to generalize the skills that they acquire and to utilize these skills successfully.

Job satisfaction has the potential to impact how teachers perform their jobs because if they do not perceive that they are important in the educational process or do not feel a sense of fulfillment from their duties, teachers can approach teaching in a careless and uncaring manner. Teacher efficacy or teachers' potential to feel they can be effective in their duties is correlated with job satisfaction and can affect student achievement. These components of school climate have the potential to affect student achievement which has been found to be true since the 1960's

(Halpin & Croft, 1963; Brookover et al., 1978). School climate continues to be an important element which has the potential to impact student achievement in the twenty-first century.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The relationships among principals, teachers, and students have a significant impact on students' academic performance and achievement. The beliefs and convictions of principals, teachers, and students can impact their perceptions and attitudes, which can then impact school climate. Teachers must concern themselves not only with the process of teaching, but also with ensuring that they promote an environment that is conducive for learning to occur. Such an atmosphere that promotes learning will allow students to feel confident in their potential to ask questions and learn the material that is presented. School climate is defined as the quality and character of school life and as such teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy major components of this construct.

Students tend to want to achieve goals that are important to those individuals they respect, for example, principals, and teachers. It is well documented that teachers' approach to the learning process can have an impact on student achievement. Several quantitative dissertation studies have addressed school climate in elementary schools and its impact on student achievement; however, these studies have not addressed school climate using a qualitative research design. These authors have suggested deepening the scope of their quantitative studies by using a qualitative research design to increase the understanding of how a school's climate impacts student achievement.

As noted in several quantitative studies, teacher job satisfaction, morale, and self-efficacy as aspects of school climate, can have a significant impact on student achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to deepen the understanding of the impact of how teacher job

satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate impacts student achievement as measured by the Adequately Yearly Progress status of two elementary schools located in Flamingo County (pseudonym), Georgia by using a qualitative design.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Overarching question.**

How do the components of school climate contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress status in Flamingo County, Georgia elementary schools?

#### **Sub-questions.**

1. How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
2. How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
3. How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

### **Significance of the Study**

School climate is very important construct because it has the potential to aid or hinder student academic achievement. Not only does the principal play a significant role in a school's climate, but teacher morale, job satisfaction, and efficacy are important in this venture. If teachers do not believe in their effectiveness and potential as teachers, are not satisfied in their roles, or do not believe in the school's ability to meet their needs, this will transfer to the student's ability to believe in their efforts to learn academic material and be successful in their academic pursuits. This study has the potential to influence the manner in which principals and teachers approach their roles in creating a learning environment and educating students. Specifically, the researcher used a qualitative research design to deepen the understanding of how a school's climate can contribute to its achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress.

## **Procedures**

The researcher's purpose for this study was to deepen the understanding of how a school's climate contributes to its Adequate Yearly Progress status. The school system from which these data was obtained represented urban and suburban areas with children from lower to upper-middle class families. According to the district website, there were 37 elementary schools in Flamingo County (pseudonym). During the second semester of the 2008/2009 school year, the researcher applied to Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University for permission to conduct the study. The researcher also obtained permission from Flamingo County to conduct the research study.

This study used a purposive sample of four teachers from one of the county's elementary schools which achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and four teachers from one of the county's elementary schools which did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress to deepen the understanding of how a school's climate contributes to its Adequate Yearly Progress status. These teachers had to have at least five years of teaching experience and had to have taught at their current school for at least three years, which gave them the opportunity to be part of the school culture for a prolonged period of time. The list of elementary schools and their Adequate Yearly Progress status was obtained from the school district's website.

Each school that made Adequate Yearly Progress was matched with a school that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress but which had similar demographic information. This demographic information included the number of students, number of teachers, ethnicity of the students, and the number of students who received free and reduced lunch during the 2007/2008 school year at each elementary school. Once the pairs were identified, the researcher randomly chose a pair of schools from this purposive selection.

Interviews were conducted with this group of eight selected teachers in a neutral location away from the school grounds which created a non-threatening environment. The interviews were conducted after the participants granted their permission to be involved in the study. They were told that their involvement in the study was totally voluntary, and their answers would be kept confidential. Additional data sources include a thorough review of the information pertaining to both schools located on the Governor's website of accountability, the school district's SACS accreditation report, and telephone interviews conducted with each principal.

### **Limitations**

Limitations to this study included:

1. The researcher had no control over the honesty or integrity of the responses that were given by the participants.
2. The researcher may have been unintentionally biased in seeking themes and patterns reflected in the data, for example, the labeling of the themes.
3. The researcher had no control over the Adequate Yearly Progress status of the schools.
4. The researcher had no control over the gender of the participants of this study.

### **Delimitations**

1. The population of this study was two elementary schools that were located in Flamingo County.
2. The purposive sample was limited to teachers who had taught at the same school for three years and this study did not take into consideration how long the principals had been administrators at the respective schools.

### **Definition of Terms**

- Teacher job satisfaction was defined as an individual's perception of the extent to which his/her job related needs were being met (Evans 1997a; 1997b; 2001).
- Teacher morale was defined as the sense of trust, confidence, enthusiasm, and friendliness among teachers (Hoy et al., 1991; Smith, 1966).
- Teacher efficacy referred to a teacher's perceptions that their teaching was worth the effort and could lead to academic success for the students they taught (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Henson, 2001; Henson, 2002; Perdue et al., 2007; Poulou, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).
- School climate referred to the quality and character of school life, which was unique to individual organization (Cohen, 2007; Hoy et al., 1991; Dennison, 1996).
- Respect was defined as a signal that someone was worthy of your own good behavior (Glover & Hannum, 2008; Middleton, 2004; Hajji, 2006; Lysaught, 2004).

### **Summary**

One of the most important duties of a principal is that of instructional leader. As such, a principal is responsible for the school's climate which impacts the learning atmosphere and the potential of students to learn. Teacher job satisfaction, efficacy, and morale are significant aspects of the construct of school climate, and can have a significant impact on student achievement. School climate can impact the learning process by creating relationships and practices which students will embrace throughout their academic pursuits.

A school's academic climate also has the potential to influence the relationship between students and teachers. Students' beliefs and attitudes are key contributors to the success of their educational efforts. Student engagement in the learning process produces success; however,

students will not be engaged if they are being taught by individuals who are unmotivated and do not believe in their potential to adequately educate others. The confidence students have of knowing that teachers believe in their potential to be successful goes a long way toward their achieving academic success.

The researcher conducted a study using qualitative methods to deepen the understanding of how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate contribute to the Adequate Yearly Progress status in two Flamingo County elementary schools. The results from this study have the potential to influence how principals and teachers create a climate that promotes an environment that is conducive to student learning.

## Chapter II

### Review of Research and Related Literature

The concept of school climate has been investigated for several decades and although definitions vary, as noted by Cohen, (2007); Hoy et al., (1991); and Dennison, (1996), most definitions connect climate to the quality and character of school life, which reflect the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. Principals are one of the most important determinants of a school's climate as found by Hallinger & Heck, (1998); Cohen, (2007); MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, (2008); and Smith et al., (1981), as they have the opportunity to interact with all members within the school building. Principals influence a school's climate which can indirectly impact student achievement (Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Nguni et al., 2006; Thomas, 1997) and in this era of the No Child Left Behind Act, this can have significant ramifications for the entire school.

The definition of school climate has been expanded to include perceptions of those within the school community; for example, teachers can have a profound impact on the construct of school climate as found by Johnson & Stevens, (2006); Keefe, Kelly, & Miller, (1985); and Homana, Barber, Torney-Purta, (2005). Various aspects of teachers' interactions with their colleagues (Hoy et al., 1991; Smith, 1966), their students (Henson, 2001; Henson, 2002; Poulou, 2007), and their feelings about their jobs (Evans, 1997a, 1999b, 2001) have been shown to have an impact on the climate within schools.

How teachers feel about their jobs and the degree of need fulfillment they experience in their positions (Dinham & Scott, 1998; Maidani, 1991; Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1976; Perdue et al., 2007) can influence the manner in which they perform their duties. Teacher morale can also be a significant aspect of how teachers carry out their duties and their ability to teach their

students (Thomas, 1997; Lumsden, 1998; Hoy et al., 1991). Teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate have the potential to influence a school's climate (Caprara et al., 2003; Kelly, 1981; Evans, 2000; and Marks, 1995).

### **The Various Roles of the Principal**

**The principal as the instructional leader.** Korkmaz, (2006) wrote that leadership is the art of creating a working atmosphere which motivates and directs the members of the organization towards achieving the organization's aims and performance levels (p. 14).

Principals have various roles within the school building, and one of their most important roles is that of the building's instructional leader. As the instructional leader of the school, a principal is in a position to influence a school's climate and the learning process of all individuals within the school building (Mackey et al., 2006; Olson, 2000). When principals are successful in their roles as instructional leaders, this can contribute to the success of all students in the school building (Mackey et al.; Abu-Saad & Hendrix, 1995).

Through their role as the instructional leader within the school building, principals are held accountable for the quality of instruction within their school (Olson, 2000; Fullan, 2002; Mackey et al. 2006). Principals can influence the programs that will be utilized to aid students in their educational pursuits; therefore, the principal must be well informed about interventions and programs that are utilized within the school (Tannenbaum & Brown-Welty, 2006; Wood, 2005). The effectiveness of this learning process is impacted by the principal's ability to meet the instructional, academic, and emotional needs of students and teachers. Principals should portray that they believe that all students are capable of learning and should provide an atmosphere that embodies this belief. As Fink & Resnick (2001), noted on p. 606 in their study, an effective

instructional leader establishes a learning environment and develops the social capital that allows people to trust, depend on, and learn from one another.

**A principal's leadership style.** A principal's vision and leadership style can have a profound impact on school climate, student performance, and provide the direction for the students, faculty, and staff within the school building (Thomas, 1997; Houchard, 2005; Korkmaz, 2007; Mackey et al., 2006). As the visionary leader of the school building, principals serve as a model for students, teachers, and parents. Principals should ensure that all building members share their leadership philosophy and school vision which will provide cohesion within the school building and has the potential to influence student performance (Wolf et al., 2000; Wood, 2005). This cohesion can unify the school's stakeholders as noted by Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech, & Leaf, (2007); and Dellar, (1998).

Korkmaz, (2007) defined transformational leaders as those who encourage their staff members by stimulating them intellectually to adopt creative thinking processes, and who push them to reconsider the solutions of old problems through new techniques (p. 26). Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, (2006); Evans, (2001); and Blase & Blase, (1991) agree with this idea by stating that transformational leaders have strong effects on teacher job satisfaction, acceptance of the school's goals, and the desire to work for the common good of the school. This potential of transformational leaders to influence building level members to embrace the common good of the school can influence teacher job satisfaction, morale, efficacy, school climate, expectations, and student achievement (Thomas, 1997; Korkmaz, 2007; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003).

Nguni, et al., (2006) and Thomas, (1997) concur that a transformational leader is one who improves and promotes teacher job satisfaction by requiring a higher level of performance from their teachers. This ability of such transformational leaders will allow them to create a climate

that promotes job satisfaction and reduces stress (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Teaching assignments which promote stress for teachers can lead to high teacher burnout rates (Jorde-Bloom, 1986) which can affect a teacher's sense of job satisfaction. Principals can help reduce the feelings of stress felt by their teachers by finding ways to lower the levels of teacher stress (Black, 2001). Jorde-Bloom further states that people create their social milieu and are in turn created by it, so principals can do their part by promoting an environment that alleviates stress as opposed to one that adds stress.

When teachers believe that they are being effective educators and this is affirmed by their building level principal, this can have a positive effect on how teachers perform their duties and their interactions with students, colleagues, and others. As noted by Black, (2001); Korkmaz, (2007); Nguni et al., (2006); Abu-Saad & Hendrix, (1995); and Ma & MacMillan, (1999), a principal's leadership style is a dominant factor in schools which has far-reaching effects on teacher job satisfaction, student achievement, and all areas that encompass the school building. As Black reiterated, when teachers feel good about their work, then student achievement rises, because teachers exert maximum effort to ensure that their students are successful academically. Cemaloglu, (2007) contends in his quantitative study, that job satisfaction is higher among teachers who have good interpersonal relations with principals. When principals provide a healthy educational training environment, this has the potential to improve teacher job satisfaction and student achievement (Bogler, 2001; Black, 2001).

**Principals as contributors to a school's climate.** Since the 1960's, it has been asserted that school principals have the propensity to influence teacher job satisfaction, and school climate, which in turn becomes a determining factor on student learning in the schools (Halpin & Croft, 1963; Howell & Grahlman, 1978). This has been confirmed by Protheroe, (2006) when

she indicated that when principals provide a nurturing environment that is focused on learning, they can support high levels of teacher performance and student success by listening to teacher concerns and being supportive.

As the leader of the school building, the principal has a very unique and influential role which can be beneficial or detrimental to students, teachers, and parents. Principals have the potential to influence the school's climate, which in turn impacts student performance (Wolf et al., 2000; Marks, 1995; Cowdery, 2004). Kottkamp, Mulhern, and Hoy, (1987) agree with this contention and in their quantitative study of elementary schools found that there are aspects of principal leadership and teacher interactions that help to determine a school's climate. This potential of the principal to influence the school climate can affect the overall character and quality of life within the school building (Cohen, 2007; Smith, Mazarella, & Piele, 1981; Utley, Westbrook, & Turner, 1997) which can, in turn, affect teachers and students alike.

Hoy, Sabo, & Barnes, (1996) and Abu-Saad Hendrix, (1995) affirmed that the principal is the single most important individual in the development of a school's climate. In schools, therefore, principals can become effective change agents who are responsible for creating a healthy school climate. As noted by Cemaloglu, (2007) and Witziers et al., (2003) in their quantitative studies, elementary school teachers who had good interpersonal relations with their building level principals tended to endorse the statement that the organizational health of their schools was healthy. Cemaloglu continued by saying that principals should provide a healthy educational-training environment for teachers by integrating the school's objectives with that of the teachers' objectives. Cohesion between teacher and school objectives could only prove to be advantageous to everyone who is involved in the education process.

Several quantitative studies (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Kelley et al., 2005) have affirmed that school principals have the potential to impact student achievement and the climate within the school building. Positive teacher support and interactions improve students' academic performance and provide positive school outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Dinham & Scott, 1998). Therefore, principals have to maintain positive attitudes and interactions with students and teachers. As found by Thomas, (1976); Kelley et al., (2005); Sims, (2005); and Smith et al., (1981) principals have a profound effect on the organizational climate of schools. Principals should be careful about the manner in which they interact with others because as Howell & Grahlman, (1978) noted the school principal is the most catalytic agent and influence in a school's climate. Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, (1996) concurred with these results when they found that elementary school principals have an impact on a school's instructional and organizational climate which indirectly impacts student achievement.

### **Teacher Job Satisfaction**

**Definition.** Teacher job satisfaction is defined as a state of mind determined by the extent to which an individual perceives his/her job related needs are being met (Evans 1997a; 1997b; 2001). Ho & Au, (2006) and Abu-Saad & Hendrix, (1995) expand on this definition by noting that teaching satisfaction is a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and what one perceives teaching offers or entails. In the performance of their duties, teachers have to interact with students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors; therefore, how satisfied teachers feel about their jobs can have the potential to influence the manner in which they perform their duties and their interactions with others. These interactions have the potential to shape the lives of the teachers and these other individuals in a positive or

negative manner (Thomas, 1997; Paredes, 1991; Evans, 2000). It's beneficial for teachers to make sure that they create healthy interactions with others which could increase the sense of need fulfillment that teachers experience during the execution of their duties.

**Contributors to teacher job satisfaction.** As Houchard (2005) found in her quantitative dissertation study, and as stated by Ma & MacMillan (1999), teacher interactions with the principal have the potential to influence teacher job satisfaction and morale, and in turn, these teacher-principal interactions can influence student achievement. Teacher job satisfaction is also influenced by teachers' perceptions of their principal's ability to be an effective leader (Kelley et al., 2005; Castelli Kalis, 1980). If teachers believe that the principal is effective in his or her duties and also believes in the teachers' ability to educate students successfully, then this belief will sustain teachers in the face of adversity, acknowledging that teaching is a group process, not an individual journey.

As noted by Mays Woods & Weasmer, (2004); Churchill et al., (1976); and Hausman & Goldring, (2001), collegiality in the work place is a strong contributor to teacher job satisfaction. Papanastasiou & Zembylas, (2005); White & Stevens, (1998); and Mackenzie, (2007) argue that teacher job satisfaction is shaped by work place conditions which include administrator support and student discipline and behavior. Results from Mertler's quantitative study (2002), of 710 teachers, indicated that those teachers who are dissatisfied with their jobs, did not provide the highest quality of education. If teachers are dissatisfied then this is translated into the services that they provide to the students that they have been tasked to teach.

If teachers are satisfied with their roles, they tend to place more emphasis on the educational process (Bogler, 2001; Cemaloglu, 2007). There is a reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and school climate which can positively influence student achievement.

Teaching students can be a difficult but rewarding job; therefore teachers who are more satisfied in their chosen profession will continue to persevere in the face of adversity (Bogler, 2001). As Greenlee & Bruner, (2001) and Smirk, (2001) explained that a one size fits all approach to education is not the best way to ensure that all students are successful in their educational endeavors. Therefore, teachers should use creative ways to enhance the material they present so that students can be successful in their educational pursuits which in turn increases the teacher's sense of fulfillment from performing their duties in a successful manner.

Students tend to embrace the goals of their teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Freeman et al., 1999; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002); therefore, teachers have to express the importance of education, so that students will want to become stakeholders in the educational process. In conveying the importance of an education, teachers should also engage students in the process of learning which complements the final goal of obtaining an education. This becomes a way for teachers to feel a sense of job satisfaction (Paredes, 1991; Dinham & Scott, 1998; Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006) because when students achieve academic success, it affects the job satisfaction of their teachers. This symbiotic relationship has the potential to influence both teacher job satisfaction and student academic achievement by validating the need for the continued positive interactions between teachers and students, which can prove beneficial for students and teachers.

**Rewards of teacher job satisfaction.** Teacher job satisfaction is an individual and subjective construct which can be influenced by different entities which vary from teacher to teacher. Therefore, principals have to be assiduous in their efforts to interact with their teachers and ensure that the job of teaching supplies teachers with intrinsic rewards to increase their feelings of job satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Mays Woods & Weasmer, 2004). This may appear to be an impossible role, but nonetheless, principals should make every effort to offer working

conditions that support job satisfaction (Jorde-Bloom, 1986; Nguni et al., 2006). Having a principal who monitors teacher levels of job satisfaction can be beneficial and rewarding for teachers because this allows teachers to know that the principal is concerned about whether or not teacher job-related needs are being met.

Even though teachers care about their salaries, researchers have found that intrinsic rewards such as a sense of accomplishment can prove to be very gratifying to teachers (Papanastasiou & Zembylas, 2005; Caprara et al., 2003; Evans, 2000; Black, 2001; Abu-Saad & Hendrix, 1995). This gratifying process can be beneficial for both teachers and students because when teachers feel validated in the provision of their duties, this can translate into positive and more involved instructional methods for children which can increase student academic achievement. As Abu-Saad & Hendrix discovered, even as one's values differ over time, job satisfaction is caused by the relationship between one's values, one's perceptions of the job, and the environment at the job. These three aspects can work together to produce a rewarding or dissatisfied feeling for teachers which has the potential to influence their duties and the performance of these duties.

School based factors which include school leadership and school climate can influence a teacher's sense of job satisfaction (Mertler, 2002; Hallinger et al., 1996; Evans, 2001; Bolin, 2007). Therefore, since principals are the instructional leaders within the school building (Olson, 2005; Fullan, 2002), it would be in their best interest to monitor their teachers' feelings of satisfaction, since these teacher feelings have the potential to impact how teachers perform their duties as they educate students. A school's climate has the potential to impact all areas of the school building (Cohen, 2007; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Kallestad, Owens, & Alsaker, 1998; Lindahl, 2006), so making sure that the environment within the school

building is one that is conducive for learning to take place and one that promotes teacher satisfaction, would aid principals in their aspirations of promoting a healthy school climate that promotes teacher and improves student achievement.

Principals have the ability to support teachers in performing their duties in classrooms if they handle student discipline effectively to promote favorable learning environments (Paredes, 1991; Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006). If teachers are assured that principals handle discipline efficiently, then they are able to teach without student disruptions. When teachers believe that the climate within the school and their classrooms are advantageous to the learning process and misbehavior is decreased, they are able to devote their efforts to increasing student achievement (Cemalogu, 2007; Kelley et al., 2005; Polirstok & Gottlieb). This increased vigilance to student achievement can have significant positive effects for all within the school building especially in regards to the dictates of the No Child Left Behind Act.

### **Teacher Morale**

**Definition.** In addition to teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale is another component which should be addressed when one is studying school climate. Evans (1997a; 1997b; 2001), defined teacher morale as a state of mind determined by an individual's anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of those needs which she/he perceives as significantly affecting his/her total work situation and as such, is an extension of job satisfaction. Evans (personal communication February 11, 2009) explained that morale is future oriented concept; however, for the purpose of this research study, the researcher will use the Hoy et al., 1991 and Smith, 1966 definition of morale which explains that morale is the sense of trust, confidence, enthusiasm, and friendliness among teachers. Papanastasiou & Zembylas, (2005); Evans, (1992); Rinehart & Short, (1994) stated that teacher morale is a central component of effective policy making to improve teacher

job satisfaction. Although the concepts of teacher morale and teacher job satisfaction are closely related, and are sometimes used interchangeably, they do not have the same meaning, but can exist in conjunction with each other.

**The relationship between teacher morale and student achievement.** Educators have been tasked with educating students, but the needs of the educators must be fulfilled so that they will feel as though their task is worthwhile and beneficial to society. This premise is reiterated by Lumsden, (1998) and Thomas, (1997) who stated that teachers need to feel that their needs are being met, so that they can help meet students' needs. Thomas discovered that higher teacher morale tended to translate into better student achievement. This relationship between teacher morale and student achievement can be beneficial for teachers, students, and schools in general, because if teachers believe that their job situation will produce positive outcomes, they will readily address the needs of their students (Korkmaz, 2006; Black, 2001).

According to Freeman, et al., (1999) and Mackenzie, (2007), teacher beliefs impact students' academic performance and their ability to benefit from intervention strategies. As Polirstok & Gottlieb (2006), and Adams & Adams, (2000), contend, to be successful in school, students need a positive classroom climate which can be perpetuated by teachers who believe in them and this can optimize their performance in school over time. The knowledge that someone else believes that an individual can be successful in their endeavors can prove to be very motivational as one pursues their dreams.

Licata & Harper, (2001) and Hoy & Hannum, (1997) stated that when teachers embrace the vision of the school, then students benefit because student academic progress and effectiveness become the focus of all school endeavors. School administrators should check and to ensure that teachers' beliefs are consistent with the vision and focus of the school. If all staff

members do not embrace and advance the vision and focus of the school, this can have a detrimental effect on the educational process, and as Jones, (1997) and Protheroe, (2006) suggested, teachers should be involved in the school's decision making process which can lead to a more effective organization and increased teacher morale. Lumsden (1998), and Zembylas & Papanastasiou (2005), agree with this premise and stated that people who feel empowered in the decision making process tend to have higher morale, which will be translated into a greater dedication to their duty of educating students.

Black (2001), explained that when teachers feel good about their work, student achievement rises. This symbiotic relationship is one that can be beneficial for students, teachers, and the overall atmosphere in the classrooms which can influence the climate in the entire school building. Mahoney et al., (2005) further asserted that teacher-rated motivational attributes are positively correlated with student academic performance, thereby indicating that teachers are very observant when it applies to the needs of the students they have been assigned to teach, and as Hamre & Pianta (2005) stated, students who view their teachers as being supportive are more likely to pursue goals valued by the teachers. Students who are at-risk for academic failure have less belief in their potential for success, and based on their beliefs, they tend to alter their interactions to correlate with that of their tutors (Mahoney et al., 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Students who are at-risk for academic failure need opportunities to become successful in their educational pursuits (Baker, Reig, & Clendaniel, 2006); thus this becomes a committed duty for teachers to provide these students with the opportunity to be successful. Teachers make decisions on a daily basis, which have the potential to influence the lives of the students they teach. If teachers are not motivated towards the goal of instructing students, this can have a

significant impact on the academic optimism of the school and its members (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). One of the duties of teachers is to instill the desire to learn within their students by making sure that the learning process relates to the needs of students and engrosses them in the institution of learning.

Since teacher morale has the potential to influence student achievement, it would be beneficial for the schools with low morale to address these teacher concerns (Tsui & Cheng, 1999; Henze & Arriaza, 2006). Addressing these concerns will allow teachers, students, and principals to analyze their deficit areas, and address the contributors to low morale. Schools can use these data to find ways to boost teacher morale and positively impact student learning.

**Benefits of high teacher morale.** Since the 1970's, it has been proven that effective organizations have high staff morale (Smith, 1971; Smith, 1976) and morale increases the level of participation of teachers in the learning process. The concept of morale is further investigated by Jones, (1997) and Kelly, (1981), who indicated that high teacher morale increases productivity for everyone within the school building. If teachers and students become more involved in the learning process, they will take ownership in this process, and dedicate their efforts towards being successful teachers and learners, which will increase their productivity. There is a strong positive correlation between teacher morale and student achievement (Ho, 2004; Protheroe, 2006). If students believe that teachers are inherently vested in their educational pursuits and will genuinely aid them in the process, oftentimes, they will devote a higher degree of effort toward achieving the goals of the curriculum.

Students who view teachers as supportive are more likely to pursue goals that teachers value (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mahoney et al., 2005). A positive relationship between teachers and students will impact students' desires and approaches to learning. This positive relationship

allows teachers to work closely with students, thus becoming familiar with their strengths, weaknesses, fears, and desires. This close involvement provides valuable information that teachers can use to teach and motivate students to become successful in their academic endeavors. As Marks (1995), indicated, working conditions, job demands, and the atmosphere within classrooms between students and teachers can influence student achievement. This focus in schools lends itself towards increased student achievement and teacher morale can play an important role in this endeavor. Once schools and communities realize the impact that school climate factors have on the educational process, more programs, and initiatives can be put into place to boost teacher morale and in turn, impact student achievement.

Licata & Harper, (2001) and Wolf et al., (2000) indicated that high levels of teacher morale have the potential to contribute to the creation of a robust school vision. Such a school vision will help to guide all those within the school building towards the same goals which can contribute to congeniality and a common purpose within the school building. A high level of teacher morale is also a central component of effective policy making (Papanastasiou & Zembylas, 2005). Having high levels of teacher morale can provide the basic for creating policies that will further the goals of the organization and improve student achievement.

**Teacher empowerment.** Teacher empowerment is defined as the opportunities an individual has for autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation in decision making in organizations (Short & Rinehart, 1993; Cowdery, 2004). Short & Rinehart expand on this definition by indicating that teacher empowerment is an aspect of teacher morale which can have an impact on a school's climate. As teachers become more empowered, they assume ownership of a school's problem solving process which can be beneficial for all members within the school building because when teachers believe that they can make a difference with students, they do

(Edwards et al., 2002). The relationship between teacher empowerment and teacher morale, also encompasses job satisfaction. Rinehart & Short, (1994); Cowdery; and the Education.com article found that teacher empowerment is also a good predictor of a teacher's feelings of job satisfaction.

Teacher morale impacts student achievement as is reflected in the contention by Zembylas & Papanastasiou, (2005) that when teachers feel empowered to affect the decisions that students make, they perform their responsibilities more readily. Happier people perform their job responsibilities more readily and take ownership for the decisions that they make (Black, 2001; Thomas, 1997; Kelley, 1981). Teacher empowerment can improve teacher morale because when teachers believe that they have a participative role in the decision making process, then they can feel a greater sense of control about the decisions that are being made within the schools, which have the potential to affect their working environment (Short & Rinehart, 1993). If teachers feel empowered, and this attitude is portrayed to the students, then the students will feel empowered to learn.

A school's effectiveness can be linked to the morale of the teachers on the staff which has the potential to influence student achievement and the climate of the school (Edwards et al., 2002; Short & Rinehart, 1993). Therefore, teacher morale is an important aspect that should be addressed to make sure that the vision and focus of the school fulfills the needs of its students and faculty members. So, it would probably be helpful for the building level principal to help teachers with this area of school morale to provide teachers with an atmosphere that will foster an environment that promotes a sense of confidence, enthusiasm, and friendliness among colleagues.

## **Teacher Efficacy**

**Definition.** Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's perceptions that their teaching is worth the effort and can lead to academic success for the students they teach (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Henson, 2001; Henson, 2002; Perdue et al., 2007; Poulou, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This teacher belief impacts the manner in which teachers approach their duties and responsibilities. If a teacher believes that he/she is not being effective in their ability to educate students, this can undermine their efforts, and reduce their feelings of effectiveness (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005; Caprara et al., 2003). This concept of teacher efficacy can have an impact on student achievement and a teacher's ability to gain satisfaction from their duties (Caprara et al., 2006; Freeman et al., 1999).

**Teacher efficacy and student achievement.** A teacher's belief in a student's ability to benefit academically from the course matter that they teach has the potential to influence students' academic achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a; Goddard et al., 2004). The reciprocal nature of student achievement and teacher efficacy produces a symbiotic relationship in which teacher efficacy and student achievement are intertwined and thus are highly interrelated and can create a positive relationship. Students want to be successful in their academic pursuits and when they believe that teachers share this common goal and provide the avenue for them to achieve these goals, and then students tend to put forth their best efforts (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005; Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995).

Teachers, who feel confident in their ability to affect learning in the students they teach, and in their ability to educate these students, will have a significant impact on school climate and student achievement (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005; Henson, 2001, 2002). Teacher confidence has an impact on teacher effectiveness in teaching, which in turn affects the students'

ability to garner knowledge from the information they are presented. Freeman et al., (1999); Adams & Adams, (2000); and Mackenzie, (2007) indicate that teachers' beliefs in their students impact student performance. Since teachers' beliefs influence student achievement, teachers have to be careful of the message that they consciously and unconsciously portray to students. Teacher influence can be a detriment to student success or an aid to the process, depending on the teachers' belief that he/she can academically reach the students in their care.

Student achievement is correlated with instructional support for learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Usually an individual does not learn alone and needs the support of others who are knowledgeable about specific topics in order to become successful in mastering curricular requirements and skills. Regardless of a student's background, if a student believes that their teacher trusts their ability to be successful in mastering academic material; then the student will be more likely to put forth his or her best effort to master the material (Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). The belief that others have confidence in one's ability to be successful academically is a powerful motivator and determinant in one's educational pursuits. This belief fosters student engagement in the learning process which has the potential to improve their achievement (Ornelles, 2007). During teaching, if a teacher translates their ability to educate students effectively, then the students will use this teacher belief in their ability to learn to become successful in mastering the curriculum that is taught.

This teacher-student alliance makes the assumption that teachers take ownership of the student-teacher relationship, and students, in turn, have to recognize the significance of this bond (Edwards et al., 2002; Short & Rinehart, 1993). Teachers want to know that the material they present is beneficial to students and that the material is presented in a manner in which students can understand and generalize this information. This relationship is one in which student

achievement is impacted because students must be able to use, retain, and make sense of the information that is presented by the teachers, which, in turn, can increase teacher efficacy because students will generalize the information they receive from their teachers to other situations, thereby providing evidence to teachers that they have been successful in their teaching efforts (Caprara et al., 2006; Freeman et al., 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Teachers' level of efficacy has a positive effect on student achievement (Caprara et al., 2003; Henson, 2001; 2002). This potential to impact student performance regardless of student socio-economic status is important in the task of educating students. Teachers are a vital link to reaching students who are difficult to teach (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). This vital link will benefit the community in its entirety by boosting academic achievement.

Teacher self-confidence can go a long way in fostering long lasting teacher bonds and improving a student's ability to retain the material that they are taught (Goddard et al., 2000a; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). Edwards et al. (2002) found that when teachers believe they can make a difference with students, they are able to see positive results from their efforts which fuel their efforts to work closely with their students. Capa Aydin & Woolfolk Hoy, (2005) found that high levels of teacher efficacy were correlated with positive mentor relationships between students and their teachers. Goddard et al., 2000a concur with these statements by indicating that student achievement is significantly and positively correlated with teacher efficacy.

**Interpersonal skills.** Interpersonal skills refer to the social interactions that individuals use to communicate with each other. As Schoenfeld, Rutherford, Gable, & Rock, (2008) and Mays Woods & Weasmer, (2004) indicated that student success depends, in part, on adequate social-interpersonal skills between teachers and students, so in order for teachers to be effective,

they must find ways to merge academic and social skills as they instruct their students.

Therefore, to increase a teacher's feelings of efficacy, a certain level of interpersonal skills must be achieved, so that the teacher can adequately communicate with their students throughout the instructional process.

Teachers' interpersonal skills can also affect their ability to help students gain information from the curriculum that they are taught (Cemalogu, 2007; Albanese, 2004). A teacher's ability to relate to their students and the manner in which they instruct the students can have long lasting effects on the students' desire and capacity to learn the information that they are provided. Capa Aydin & Woolfolk Hoy, (2005); Brunetti, (2001); and Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, (2004) found that positive teacher student relationships create a greater sense of teacher efficacy.

In order for teachers to foster relationships with their students, there must be a level of interpersonal skills that have to be in place so that these individuals can communicate effectively with each other. This level of communication has the potential to influence a teacher's feelings of efficacy because if students are unable to communicate their understanding of the concepts that they are being taught, then, teachers will be unable to gauge whether or not they are effective in their efforts to convey the material. Albanese, (2004), further noted that interpersonal skills define who we are and for teachers, it distinguishes their ability to be average, good, or outstanding in their interactions with their students, and in their ability to teach the curriculum.

Henze & Arriaza, (2006), indicated that language is a fundamental aspect when one wants to create social change. Teachers should modulate their language to ensure that they are communicating effectively with their students in regards to their teaching efforts. The relationship between teachers and students fosters a bond, which in turn, teaches the students self-

confidence and creates a positive working relationship between students and teachers (Baker et al., 2006; Greenlee & Bruner, 2001). Positive associations between teachers and students tend to foster positive feelings about learning that encourage students to embrace learning. If a school has an emphasis on learning, students will be more likely to embrace this process and rise to the high expectations that have been set for them (Goddard et al., 2000; Roney, Coleman, & Schlicting, 2007; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). It is further written that this emphasis plays an important part in shaping the school's climate and facilitating student learning. Teachers that foster relationships with students tend to create a more personal and long lasting association for the students (Ho, 2004; Freeman et al., 1999; Hoy et al., 2006). These relationships between students and their teachers solidify the teachers' beliefs that students will become successful learners, which has the ability to affect a student's academic performance (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

**Academic emphasis.** Academic emphasis is defined as the drive for academic excellence by Goddard et al. (2000b); Hoy et al., (1990); and Hoy et al., (2006). Teachers should use this emphasis as a guiding force as they teach their students because if they are not focusing on academic excellence, then this can undermine their teaching efforts, which can have an impact on their belief about their ability to help students retain and use the information that they teach. Hoy et al., further noted that an emphasis on academic endeavors and obtaining success in educational pursuits has the ability to impact student performance. If a student knows that high expectations and standards are in place and are required, oftentimes, they will rise to the occasion and perform in a satisfactory manner. This ability of students to rise to the occasion has the potential to impact a teacher's feelings of efficacy. Teachers who see positive academic student change will probably attribute this change to their teaching abilities. Most people enjoy

when accolades are bestowed upon them and will do anything in their power to receive recognition for a job well-done (Roney et al., 2007).

Academic emphasis also has the profound ability to affect a teacher's commitment to the educational process (Jimerson et al., 2006; Picklo & Christenson, 2005). Thomas, (1976) found and Goddard et al., (2000a) ascertained that teacher efficacy is context specific and has the potential to influence student achievement and the social milieu of a school which can have an impact on a teacher's approach to their duties. In this age of accountability, a teacher's ability to influence the foundation of the educational process creates a profound environment which can have far reaching effects on the education of students. Such a situation can aid or be a detriment to the educational process and should be cultivated in such a manner that is beneficial to furthering the educational pursuits of all children.

The bond that is formed between students and teachers can create long lasting relationships which have the ability to cultivate or diminish the academic emphasis of a school. Hamre & Pianta, (2005) and Tschannen-Moran & Barr, (2004) indicated that students, who view teachers as supportive, are more likely to pursue goals that teachers deem valuable. If students embrace teacher goals, then they will try to be successfully academically, which will correlate with teachers' feelings of efficacy. This teacher-student relationship can also have the capacity to shape a school's climate and facilitate student learning (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974; Hoy et al., 1990; Hoy et al., 2006). The belief that teachers have confidence in a student's potential can be a motivational factor for some students and can thus propel them towards successful endeavors. There is a reciprocal relationship between student achievement and teacher efficacy which can then influence a school's climate. This relationship has the potential to meliorate a school's climate or influence it toward one that will demoralize the overall cohesiveness of a school.

## School Climate

**Conceptual definition.** The concept of school climate has been investigated for several decades and although definitions vary, as noted by Cohen, (2007); Hoy et al., (1991); Dennison, (1996) most definitions connect climate to the quality and character of school life, which reflect its norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures (p. 18). Johnson & Stevens (2006) in their quantitative study along with Keefe, Kelly, & Miller (1985), and Homana, Barber, & Torney-Purta (2005) expand on this definition by writing that the perceptions of those within the school community, for example, teachers have a profound impact on the construct of school climate (George & Bishop, 1971).

As Anderson, (1982) and Brown & House, (1967) noted, by completing a review of the research on school climate, it was determined that school climate is a complex construct that is unique to individual organizations and understanding this construct will improve the understanding of how schools function and impact student learning. Marks, (1995); Keefe et al., (1985); and Tableman, (2004) expands on this definition by indicating that a school's climate describes the atmosphere, working conditions, and job demands at a school. Dennison (1996), and Hellriegel & Slocum, (1974) agree that climate is an individual phenomenon and studies of this construct are usually quantitative in nature. However, Benson (2003), Morrison (2007), and Sims (2005), noted in their quantitative dissertation studies that widening the scope of their studies by using different methodological lenses (Sims, 2005) and permitting others with the ability to see the real world differences in school climate by allowing teachers to express their opinions about the relationship between school climate and student achievement (Benson, 2003) would deepen the understanding of the construct of school climate and its impact on student achievement.

**The relationship between school climate and student achievement.** School climate can have a profound impact on student achievement and a school's potential to be successful in regard to the No Child Left Behind legislation (Adams & Adams, 2000; Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood, & Wisenbaker, 1978; Strahan, 2003; Bevans et al., 2007; Pritchard et al., 2005). Several studies (Adams & Adams, 2000; Brookover et al., 1978; Goddard et al., 2000a; Brown & House, 1967; Goldring, 2002) have found that school climate impacts student achievement. As noted by Goddard et al. (2000b); Hoy et al. (2006); Hoy et al. (1990), academic emphasis or the extent to which a school pursues academic excellence can create a climate of learning which has the potential to influence a school's overall climate and teacher and student commitment to learning. Brown & Medway (2007), agreed with this statement because in their quantitative study, they found that a school climate that emphasizes academics is successful in raising students' test scores.

Van Horn (2003) found in his quantitative study that school climate was an important component of a successful school and an influential predictor of a child's academic success. Webster & Fisher (2001) validated this premise with their quantitative study in Australian schools, which found that school climate plays a part in student achievement. Woodman & King, (1978); Korkmaz, (2007); and Smith et al., (1981) found that a healthy school climate was one that was associated with higher student achievement and improved attitudes within the school building. Roney, Coleman, & Schlichting, (2007) and Tsui & Cheng, (1999) defined a healthy school as one in which all the aspects of the school building work in harmony to promote student achievement. Since various studies have validated a need for a healthy school climate that promotes student achievement, principals should want to pursue such an enterprise that

exemplifies academic excellence so that student achievement will be impacted in a positive manner.

A positive school climate promotes student achievement with high standards, which in turn, provides a positive correlation between school climate and student achievement (Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006; Pritchard et al., 2005). Positive associations tend to foster positive feelings about learning that encourage students to embrace learning. Once students take personal ownership of their learning, they will have a personal stake in their individual success.

Academic optimism is a school's press for academic excellence (Hoy et al., 2006; Sterbinsky et al., 2006) which has the potential to influence student academic achievement. If all members in the school building are focused on a common goal and are motivated to give their best efforts, then the educational process will continue along its prescribed successful course.

**School climate and school improvement.** Kallestad et al., (1998) and Lindahl, (2006) found in their quantitative studies that school climate is positively related to school improvement. Therefore, if one wants to invoke change in a school building, it would be beneficial to address the school climate in the building before one can put school improvement efforts into practice. The profound nature of school climate has the potential to influence all areas of a school's functioning and operation (Hernandez & Seem, 2004; Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Hallinger & Heck (1998); Cohen (2007); MacNeil, Prater, & Busch (2008); and Smith et al. (1981), noted that the principal also has the potential to influence a school's climate and can affect the overall character and quality of life within the school building; therefore, the principal should study the climate within the school building and use the results to make necessary improvements within the organization.

All members within a school building should work collaboratively to ensure that they are focused on the goal of educating students (Strahan, 2003; Tannenbaum & Brown-Welty, 2006) and promoting a healthy school climate that promotes learning. In a school building where the impetus is collaboration towards the common objective of educating students, there is a positive and significant impact on student performance. Students and teachers are more likely to be successful within a school climate that actively fosters the goals of becoming successful teachers and learners (Bevans et al., 2007; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Pritchard et al., 2005). Where there is a climate of all members working towards a common goal, cohesion will provide an attitude of success and camaraderie for all members. A school climate that is conducive to learning is one in which leaders provide support for innovation and change (Dellar, 1998; Hallinger et al., 1996).

**School climate and academic emphasis.** A school climate with a strong academic emphasis has the potential to influence student and teacher behavior and reinforces a pattern of collective beliefs that can be beneficial for the entire school community (Goddard et al., 2000a; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974; Hoy et al., 1990). This pattern of collective beliefs can bring cohesion to the learning process and the school building. The focus of the No Child Left Behind Act is primarily one that promotes student achievement; for that reason, principals have been tasked as the instructional leader within the school and should promote and enhance an environment and attitude of academic excellence for all students within the building.

Brown & Medway, (2007); Strahan, (2003); Webster & Fisher, (2001) found that a school climate that emphasizes academics is successful. If schools want to be successful in their primary duty of educating students, then they must promote an environment that promotes academic pursuits. Cohen, (2007), agrees with this premise by noting that teaching and learning is one of the major areas of a school's climate. If principals use this information to promote an

environment that values academics, then schools can be successful in promoting academic endeavors to their students, which will have a positive impact on the school's climate (Dellar, 1998; Witziers et al., 2003).

Academic emphasis promotes a climate that is conducive to learning which has the profound ability to influence student achievement and teacher commitment to the educational process (Goddard et al., 2000b; Henderson et al., 2005; Brown & Medway, 2007). As Goldring, (2002); Benson, (2003); and Adams & Adams, (2000) found there is a positive correlation between a school's climate and student achievement. Promoting a climate that embraces strong academic success and goals can go a long way with helping students become successful in their educational pursuits and schools triumphant in their efforts to produce life-long learners.

**The relationship between respect and school climate.** Lysaught, (2004), wrote that when people hear the word "respect," they know what it means; however, depending on the usage, the term respect can adapt itself to the situation in which the term is being used. The term respect can be expressed in many different ways; however, all expressions of respect have the common elements of attention, deference, valuing, and appropriate conduct (Hajii, 2006; Middleton, 2004; Glover & Hannum, 2008). For the purpose of this research study, the researcher will define respect as a signal that someone is worthy of your own good behavior (Glover & Hannum; Middleton; Hajii; Lysaught).

As noted by Cohen, 2007; Hoy et al., 1991; Dennison, 1996; school climate refers to the quality and character of school life, which is unique to an individual organization. As such, school climate can be impacted by the many things that happen within the school building. Authentic respect occurs in the school building when people know each other (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1999), which involves an understanding among the building members (Hajii, 2006),

that leads to motivated and happier teachers and students (Kent, 2009). The impact of such a relationship between the principal's ability to express his or her respect for their staff, allows the employees to perform up to their real capabilities (Lauer, 2005).

A school climate that represents an atmosphere where positive interpersonal relationships exist (Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Manning & Saddlemire, 1996) has a positive impact on the school environment and all of its inhabitants. This sense of community where everyone in the building gives their best can also create a situation where collegial relationships abound and student achievement is affected in a positive manner (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1999; Hajji, 2006; Kent, 2009). When principals want their buildings to be a place where teachers, parents, and students want to come to work and learn, it would be in their best interest to provide an environment where the members of the building feel respected, valued, and appreciated. Such a sense of community where the members work together towards a common goal can only prove beneficial to the overall climate of the building and the students that matriculate in that building.

### **Summary**

As the instructional leader within schools, principals have the potential to positively, negatively, or neutrally impact the individuals and climate within the school building. Principals should be careful about their interactions with others because their interactions affect teacher job satisfaction, efficacy, morale, and student achievement. In this era of accountability and the No Child Left Behind Act, principals have the potential to influence the future of many generations to follow by their influence on student achievement.

Teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate can have a significant impact on student achievement. Principals and teachers have the potential to create a school climate where students will want to become enmeshed and successful in the learning

process. Teachers who feel confident in their potential to affect change in the students they teach and in their potential to educate these students, will have a significant impact on school climate, and student achievement. Teacher confidence has a significant impact on teaching effectiveness, which in turn affects the students' potential to garner knowledge from the information they are presented. It follows, therefore, that teacher morale has the potential to influence student achievement. This influence will afford students the opportunity to generalize the skills that they acquire and to utilize these skills successfully.

Job satisfaction has the potential to impact how teachers perform their jobs because if they do not perceive that they are important in the educational process or do not feel a sense of fulfillment from their duties, teachers can approach teaching in a careless and uncaring manner. Teacher efficacy or teachers' potential to feel they can be effective in their duties is correlated with job satisfaction and can affect student achievement. Teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate have the potential to affect student achievement which has been found to be true since the 1960's (Halpin & Croft, 1963; Brookover et al., 1978). School climate continues to be an important element which encompasses all areas of the school building, and has the potential to impact a school's efforts to be successful and can be a predictor of a student achievement in the twenty-first century. Therefore, principals should want to address this construct to ensure that their buildings are promoting an attitude that personifies strong academic success for all students. In addition to providing such an atmosphere, principals should also make sure that the inhabitants of their buildings feel respected, valued, and appreciated.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The relationships among principals, teachers, and students can have a significant impact on students' academic performance and achievement. The beliefs and convictions of principals, teachers, and students can impact their perceptions and attitudes, which can then impact school climate. Teachers must concern themselves not only with the process of teaching, but also with ensuring that they promote an environment that is conducive for learning to occur. Such an atmosphere that promotes learning will allow students to feel confident in their ability to ask meaningful questions and learn the material that is presented.

Students tend to want to achieve goals that are important to those individuals they respect, among whom can be principals, and teachers. It is well documented that teachers' approaches to the learning process can have an impact on student achievement. Several dissertation studies (Benson, 2003; Morrison, 2007; Sims, 2005) have addressed school climate in elementary schools and its impact on student achievement; however, these studies have not addressed school climate using a qualitative research design. These authors have suggested widening the scope of their studies by using a qualitative research design and a diverse population, rather than just concentrating on students that attend Title I schools as they did in their quantitative studies, to deepen the understanding of how components of a school's climate impacts student achievement.

Teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate, can have a significant impact on student achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of

school climate impact student achievement as measured by the Adequately Yearly Progress status of two elementary schools located in Flamingo County (pseudonym), Georgia.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this qualitative research study.

#### **Overarching Question:**

How do the components of school climate contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress status in two Flamingo County elementary schools?

#### **Sub-questions:**

1. How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
2. How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
3. How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

### **Procedures**

**Research design.** This research study used a qualitative design. Multiple sources of information were used as data for this case study. As noted by Creswell, (1998) (p. 61) and Glesne, (2006) (p. 13) a case study is defined as an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection which involved multiple sources of information rich in context. It was further explained by Creswell, that the bounded system was bounded by time and place, and in this research study the event being studied was school climate and its impact on the Adequate Yearly Progress of two elementary schools in Flamingo County.

The researcher gathered data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with four elementary teachers from a school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and four teachers from an elementary school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress in Flamingo County.

The researcher also conducted thorough reviews of the schools' report cards, the school district's SACS accreditation report, telephone interviews conducted with both principals and the literature related to teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate. As noted by Glesne, (2006), triangulation allows the researcher to use multiple sources to provide corroborating evidence. Interviews allowed the teachers in this study with the opportunity to use their own words to describe their perceptions of teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate. A case study investigation (Glesne; Creswell) enabled the researcher to deepen the understanding of how a school's climate contributed to its Adequate Yearly Progress status.

This research study used a purposive sample of eight teachers from two of Flamingo County's elementary schools to better understand how school climate components contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status. Four of the teachers taught at a school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, and four teachers taught at another school, which did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress. These teachers had to have at least five years of teaching experience and taught at their respective school for at least three years, thereby giving them the opportunity to be part of the school building for an extended period of time. The list of elementary schools and their Adequate Yearly Progress status was obtained from the district's website.

**Setting.** Updated information concerning the Adequate Yearly Progress status of Flamingo county's schools was obtained from their website on October 1, 2008. This information indicated that six elementary schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress due to their academic performance in math, and that all elementary schools met or exceeded standards in Reading/English Language Arts.

Each elementary school that made Adequate Yearly Progress in Flamingo County was matched with a school with similar demographic information that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress. This demographic information included the total number of students, number of teachers, and the number of students who received free and reduced lunch during the 2007/2008 school year. Once all the pairs were determined, the researcher randomly chose one pair of schools from this purposive selection.

Information regarding the setting of Abbeyville Elementary (pseudonym for the school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress) and Doubleville Elementary (pseudonym for the school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress) was obtained from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement website, the Flamingo County website, and in telephone interviews conducted with both principals.

The pair of schools that was chosen both serviced fewer than 500 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with attendance rates in excess of 95%. Both elementary schools had identical teacher-to-administrator ratios and student enrollment to all teacher ratios. In addition, both Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary have similar teacher/staff ratios and teacher support person ratios.

The teachers at both elementary schools were predominantly female and African-American who had been teaching less than ten years. Both schools were considered to be Title I schools with less than 40% of their populations being enrolled in special education and EIP compensatory programs; however, in conversation with one of Flamingo County's Title I facilitators, it was noted that the superintendent increased the rate of poverty, so Doubleville Elementary did not receive Title I services during the 2007/2008 school year (Personal Communication June 5, 2009). Both Abbeyville and Doubleville were considered to be small

buildings which had friendly staff members who knew many of the students and parents by name. Student work was displayed throughout the halls in both buildings, and the halls were usually free of noise, and pedestrian traffic.

**Participants.** The population for this study was a total of eight elementary school teachers who taught in Flamingo County. Four of the teachers worked at Abbeyville Elementary, which made Adequate Yearly Progress during the 2007/2008 school year and four teachers worked at Doubleville Elementary, which did not make Adequate Yearly Progress during the 2007/2008 school year. These teachers had to have at least five years of teaching experience and had to have taught at their current school for at least three years, thereby giving them the opportunity to be part of the school building for a prolonged period of time. The schools had similar numbers of enrolled students and certified teachers.

Before the study was completed with the eight individual participants, three elementary school teachers reviewed the interview questions and their responses were used to determine whether or not the questions would garner the answers to the questions being asked and this information was used to help formulate follow-up questions. Endacott & Botti, (2007) wrote that selecting five to eight participants for qualitative inquiry was usually sufficient for a homogenous sample. The size of the group was chosen after the researcher read Sandelowski, (1995) and Endacott & Botti, who explained the procedures for choosing the number of participants for qualitative studies. Sandelowski stated that sample size was the judgment call of the researcher, but insisted that an adequate sample size was one that permitted—by virtue of not being too large—the deep, case-oriented analysis that was a hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that resulted in—by virtue of not being too small—a new and richly textured understanding of experience (p. 183). As a part of this qualitative design, the researcher herself was also an

instrument in this study. She engaged with the teachers about their perceptions of school climate components and in being an observer, became a research instrument (Farber, 2006).

Additionally, the researcher also interviewed the principals of both schools via the telephone to determine their feelings about the climate in their respective buildings. The questions used for the principal interviews were found in the Georgia Assessment of Performance on Schools Standards manual.

**Instrumentation.** The content validity of the interview questions was established by allowing three elementary school teachers to review the interview questions prior to administration. These three teachers were drawn from the target population and they were informed that the purpose of their review was to answer the questions that the interviewer asked with the intent of improving the questions by determining the appropriateness of the questions asked. Responses from these three teachers were used to determine whether or not the questions would elicit the answers to the questions being asked and helped formulate follow-up questions.

The researcher reviewed the Staff Development School Climate Questionnaire (Zigarmi & Sinclair, 2001), the School-Level Environment Questionnaire (Rentoul & Fraser, 1983; Johnson & Stevens, 2001), the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (Kottkamp, Mulhern, & Hoy, 1987; Hall, 1972; Finlayson, 1975; Halpin & Croft, 1963; Gentry & Kenney, 1967; Hoy & Forsyth, 2000), the Revised School-Level Environment Questionnaire (Johnson, Stevens & Zvoch, 2007), the Charles F. Kettering scale (Johnson, Dixon, & Robinson, 1987; Dixon, Johnson, & Toman, 1991), the Organizational Health Inventory for Elementary Schools (Hoy & Forsyth), the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire-Revised (Hoy & Clover, 1986), the School Organisational Health Questionnaire (Hart, Wearing, Conn, Carter, & Dingle, 2000), the Job Satisfaction Survey (Bellingham, 2004), the Collective Efficacy Scale (Hoy &

Forsyth), the Organizational Climate Index (Hoy & Forsyth), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form (Weiss, Davis, England, & Lofquist, 1967), and the My Class Inventory (Fraser & O'Brien, 1985) and various other questionnaires concerning school climate, job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher efficacy to examine their questions to help in the creation of interview questions. The research questions were analyzed to make sure that they were related to the review of literature in the areas of school climate, job satisfaction, teacher morale, efficacy, and the study's research sub-questions. The interview questions' analysis is provided with an overview of the interview questions as they related to the literature and the research sub-questions. The researcher used this process to strengthen confidence in the conclusions that were drawn from the results of the study.

**Data collection.** During May 2009, the researcher sent the Participant Consent Letter (see Appendix D) to all teachers at Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary to explain the requirements of the research study and obtain demographic information from the respective participants. Once this information was received, the researcher made sure that the prospective participants had been teaching for the required period of time and they were contacted to set up an interview session, where the teachers signed the Informed Letter of Consent (see Appendix E) to secure their participation in the research study.

The individual interviews were conducted with the selected teachers in a neutral location to create a non-threatening environment. As noted by Farber, (2006), a semi-structured approach is best, where the researcher has a set of open-ended questions, which would allow the researcher to stay attuned to the research questions while gaining a deeper understanding of the participants, and at the same time allowing the researcher to be open to hearing information that she did not anticipate learning about. Additionally, probing questions for example, "Can you tell me

more?”, and “Give me an example”; were used to extend answers and gain more in-depth understanding of the participants’ answers. The interviews were taped and transcribed after the interview sessions were completed. The participants were allowed the opportunity to review their individual transcripts to determine the accuracy and clarity of the transcript.

The researcher conducted thorough reviews of the school’s report cards, the literature related to teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate. The researcher also used anecdotal records while noting any observations of the participants as a way to achieve triangulation in the research study, and increase confidence in the research findings. This information included the contributions of sighs, laughs, lengthy pauses, and other types of behavior, to note the participants’ responses to the questions asked. Additionally, telephone interviews were conducted with each principal via telephone.

As noted by Rabiee, (2004), this observational data would allow the researcher to immerse herself in the details and get a sense of the interview as a whole, before breaking it down into parts. Rodgers & Cowles, (1993) expanded on this idea on p. 220 of their article, by noting that the investigator may record fieldnotes that include a description of the setting, descriptions of the nonverbal behaviors of the participants, while noting distractions, interruptions, or other occurrences, which would serve as contextual data during the analysis phase of the research, and would add significantly to the thick description necessary in the reporting of qualitative research. It was further noted that the researcher could incorporate this data directly into the fieldnotes, or may simply make reference to its existence and potential relevance to the study.

Farber, (2006) continued in this vein, by writing that the purpose of observational data was to describe the setting that was observed, those activities that took place in that setting, the

people who participated in those activities, and the meanings of what was observed from the perspective of those observed (p. 10), because this process of observation allowed the researcher to collect less visible data. In addition, the researcher was advised to keep a journal (the observer's tool) to record everything she observed that was relevant to the research questions which would allow for invisible data to become visible. The researcher analyzed this observational data as it related to the research questions.

**Data analysis.** After the transcripts were transcribed, the researcher read them numerous times as a way to immerse herself in the data and to identify common themes and trends, using the definition of terms as a guide. First, the researcher read the transcripts in their entirety, without taking any notes, as a way to immerse herself in the data that was obtained. After the first reading, then, the researcher used Microsoft Word to group the participants' responses to each research question, and charted the results by question and by school. The researcher read the responses in the resulting charts and used the definition of terms as a guide to make notes in the margins of the transcripts to aid with the development of the codes, in addition to using the anecdotal notes obtained during the interviews. The researcher then used Microsoft Word to analyze the qualitative text by creating columned tables to separate the responses of each speaker. As noted by La Pelle, (2004) and Ryan, (2004), Microsoft Word can be used to create a codebook to assign codes to the data. The researcher used different colors to highlight text, in addition to using the bold, italics, and underline features to aid in coding the participants' answers to the interview questions. During this process, the researcher was able to display, reduce, verify, and draw conclusions from the data; thereby allowing her to synthesize, analyze, and summarize what the participants said. The researcher conducted thorough reviews of the

school's report cards and the literature related to teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate to aid in this process.

As described by Glesne (2006), a thematic analysis consisted of coding and segregating the data in such a manner that it can be synthesized, categorized, and analyzed according to the patterns that emerged. This technique was used to determine common themes and trends found in the participants' responses and nonverbal methods of communication, which was used to determine the climate of the respective schools, and how this contributed to the school's Adequate Yearly Progress status. As a coding strategy, the researcher read the notes in her journal, and reviewed the definitions of job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy to ascertain specific words, phrases, and terminology that stood out. The find function in Microsoft Word allowed the researcher to conduct database searches to identify text passages that met the identified codes.

**Trustworthiness.** Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the findings are an authentic reflection of the personal or lived experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Carlson & Johansson, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000). In regards to this study, trustworthiness refers to whether or not a reader can have confidence in findings of the study. Trustworthiness can be established by eight verification procedures as indicated by Glesne, 2006. These eight procedures are as follows: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, negative case analysis, clarification of researcher bias, member checking, external audit, and rich, thick description.

Sikes addressed these eight procedures further in 2000, by writing that anecdotal records to describe the interview session, give the qualitative researcher the ability to address their own personal biases by allowing them to concentrate on their own epistemological assumptions,

interpretations, and understandings. Tuckett, (2005) and Newbill & Stubbs, (1996) explained several methods to obtain trustworthiness in qualitative research. At the top of the list was the recording of group discussions and in-depth interviews to facilitate the credibility and dependability of the data collection procedures so that the bias during the analysis stage can be minimized.

Having a rich thick description process contributes to trustworthiness in a qualitative research study (Anfara Jr., Brown, & Mangione, 2002). This researcher implemented this process by describing the interviewees' environments. The researcher used observations to provide a rich thick description of the interview setting, the participants, and all occurrences during the interviews.

Negative case analysis refers to cases that deviate from the norm (Tuckett, 2005; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher examined all data even if it was not consistent with or disconfirmed the identified themes. Member checking refers to providing the participants of the study the opportunity to read, comment on, and contribute to the findings of the study (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Creswell & Miller; Tuckett). This researcher allowed the individual interview participants an opportunity to review transcripts, themes, and provide feedback, as they deemed necessary.

As a way to establish conformability and provide an attestation to the trustworthiness of this research study, the researcher's field notes, transcribed interviews, and obtained themes were given to an external auditor. The ensuing audit trail was reviewed by the external auditor and an attestation to the findings was presented (see Appendix F).

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is another important aspect of qualitative research which allows for obtaining richer and more rigorous data and providing a better understanding of the

research questions and their context (Lennie, 2006; Rose & Web, 1997; Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006). Triangulation is an aspect of trustworthiness which brought credibility, dependability, and transferability (Curtin & Fossey, 2007) to this study.

Glesne, (2006), defined triangulation as relying on the use of multiple-data collection methods to contribute to the trustworthiness of the findings (p. 36). It was further stated that although multiple data-collection methods is the most common form of triangulation that is used in qualitative research, using triangulation to increase confidence in research findings can be achieved by incorporating multiple data sources for example; students and parents, multiple investigators, and multiple theoretical perspectives. As Tobin & Begley, (2004), noted on p. 393, triangulation is not used to confirm existing data, but as a way to enlarge the landscape of the inquiry, thereby offering a deeper and more comprehensive picture of the study.

There are three dominant types of data-gathering techniques that are utilized in qualitative research: participant observation, interviewing, and document collection (Glesne, 2006). As a means to achieve triangulation in the research study, the researcher investigated several data sources rather than just relying on the interviews that were conducted with the teachers. During October 2007, Flamingo County was awarded district accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); therefore, individual schools did not receive SACS accreditation. The SACS report indicated that Flamingo County was a district whose strengths included being a system that embraced diversity and one that promoted professional development that was embedded in teaching, learning, and professional growth. A National PTA parent survey was distributed to all parents of children who attended Title I schools, within the Flamingo County school district. Since Doubleville Elementary did not receive Title I services, their parents were not asked to complete these surveys.

The researcher searched the Georgia Department of Education website for additional data sources that would reflect the climate of Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary schools. The researcher found information pertaining to the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards, which is being utilized across the state of Georgia to assist schools that are not achieving Adequate Yearly Progress. Evidence or lack thereof of these school keys are described as: not addressed, emergent, or fully operational. Interview questions were listed which are administered to all the stakeholders connected to schools. Subsequently, the responses to the questions asked are used to notify school of the climate within their respective buildings. Both principals were interviewed via telephone regarding the following questions: (1) How are the accomplishments of students celebrated in the building? Adults? (2) How does the school reach out to foster a sense of belonging among all individuals and groups? (3) How do you ensure an atmosphere of trust and openness to foster risk-taking and change? Based on the responses provided by the principals during the telephone interviews, they believed that their school climates were conducive to student learning and growth that provided environments where students and teachers were openly recognized for their accomplishments, anyone was permitted to have their ideas heard by approaching the principals, other members within the school building, and the school council members. Both principals indicated that their schools were open to visitors and suggestions to help student progress and the turn-over rate of the staff was virtually nonexistent, since most faculty members had taught at the school for at least the past four years. The manual defines school climate as the tone or atmosphere that is reflected within school buildings which is created and sustained through the interactions of norms, values, relationships, structures, and interaction patterns among members of the learning community (p. 85). Data obtained from the School Matters website indicated that both Abbeyville and

Doubleville Elementary were safe schools based on the number of disciplinary referrals throughout 2007/2008 school year.

### **Summary**

The researcher conducted a study utilizing qualitative research methods to determine how teacher morale, job satisfaction, and efficacy as components of school climate, contribute to the Adequate Yearly Progress status of elementary schools in Flamingo County. Four teachers from Abbeyville Elementary, which achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, and four teachers from Doubleville Elementary, which did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, were interviewed to allow them the opportunity to express their opinions, and permit the researcher the opportunity to see the real world differences in school climate to deepen the understanding of how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy, as components of school climate impact student achievement.

As a way to achieve triangulation which increased the confidence in the research findings, rather than using a single technique like interviews during the qualitative design, the researcher used the responses of the information provided in the SACS report. Trustworthiness was strengthened by providing a rich thick description process, and this researcher implemented this process by maintaining a journal to record her own impressions of the interview setting and to separate her responses from that of the participants, to enhance self-reflection and record any biases that might have occurred during the theme labeling phase or during the asking of the interview questions. Telephone interviews were conducted with both principals to determine their beliefs about the school climate in their respective buildings. An external audit was also conducted of the research process to establish conformability and trustworthiness in the research findings. School climate is a very important construct that has the potential to aid or hinder student academic achievement and in the era of the No Child Left Behind Act, the information

garnered from this study has the potential to influence the manner in which principals and teachers approach their roles in creating a learning environment and educating students.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

The literature clearly states that a school's climate is an essential component of healthy schools which has the potential to impede or support learning (Goldring, 2002; Pritchard et al., 2005; Smith et al., 1981; Strahan 2003). This relationship between school climate and student achievement has an impact on a school's potential to be successful in regards to the No Child Left Behind legislation as noted by Adams & Adams, 2000 and Brookover et al., 1978. As components of school climate; teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy have a significant impact on student achievement, therefore as the instructional leader of the building, principals will want to focus on these components of school climate to ensure that the students, parents, and teachers in their building are being successful.

### **Introduction**

Principals who want to ensure that their schools are meeting the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act have several areas in which they can concentrate; however, school climate can have a profound impact on student achievement and a school's potential to be successful in regard to the No Child Left Behind legislation (Adams & Adams, 2000; Brookover et al., 1978; Strahan, 2003; Bevans et al., 2007; Pritchard et al., 2005). It is imperative that principals address this concept of school climate to ensure the academic success of the students within their buildings.

In this study, the researcher interviewed eight teachers to understand how the school climate in two elementary school buildings, where one school achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and one school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, to deepen the understanding of how school climate impacts student achievement. The research questions focused on teacher

job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate, and allowed teachers to use their own words to permit the researcher with the opportunity to see the real world differences in school climate which deepened the understanding of how these components of school climate impact student achievement. Telephone interviews were conducted with both principals to aid in this process, in addition to a thorough review of both schools' report cards, and the researcher used anecdotal records to note the participants' responses to the questions that were asked. The following research sub-questions guided the study:

1. How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
2. How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
3. How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

Chapter Four details an analysis of the data collected during semi-structured interview sessions with eight elementary school teachers; four elementary teachers from a school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and four teachers from an elementary school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress in Flamingo County, Georgia. A qualitative research design was utilized, which allowed the researcher to gather details for a full, rich understanding of how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate impact student achievement in Flamingo County Georgia elementary schools. To achieve triangulation, data were collected from responses to the interview questions found in Appendix A, the researcher conducted a thorough review of the schools' report cards, the literature related to teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate, reviewed information from school district's website, SACS accreditation, school matters website, and the Georgia Department of Education website. Additionally, the researcher used anecdotal records to note

the participants' responses to the questions that were asked, visited and observed within each school building, and conducted telephone interviews with each respective building principal.

Three elementary school teachers reviewed the interview questions prior to their use with the sample population to assist in reviewing the interview questions and provided suggestions to establish question clarity. As a result of the suggestions of the three teachers, the researcher changed the order of the questions administered and understood the need to probe for greater details on some questions and to ask follow-up questions (see Appendix A and C).

The researcher learned a great deal during her interactions with the three teachers prior to using the questions, which included formulating notes on how to ask the questions which were misunderstood by the three teachers. The three elementary teachers helped the researcher tremendously and indicated that the questions were specific enough to garner the information about school climate that the researcher desired.

## **Procedures**

In this study, the researcher utilized a purposive case sampling of eight elementary school teachers; four elementary teachers from an elementary school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and four teachers from an elementary school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress in Flamingo County, Georgia to deepen the understanding of how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate impact student achievement. Of the participants who responded to the Participant Consent Letter (see Appendix C), those who had been teaching for at least five years, and had been teaching at their respective schools for at least three years, were contacted to secure their participation in the study and schedule an interview session.

Six of the eight participants were African-American females, one was an African-American male, and one was a Caucasian female. Each of the participants was assured that their participation was voluntary and confidential; therefore, each of the participants was given a fictitious name in the study.

All of the interview participants were assigned pseudonyms. The participants from Abbeyville were all female; Ashley spent four of her more than ten years teaching at Abbeyville; Amber spent all of her twenty-plus year career teaching at Abbeyville; Amanda, a Caucasian female, spent all of her less than ten career teaching at Abbeyville; and Allison, spent the past five years of her twenty-plus year career, teaching at Abbeyville. The participants from Doubleville Elementary were all African-American: Dawn spent all of her less than ten year career teaching at Doubleville; David, taught at Doubleville for ten years of his career; Donna, taught for all of her five-plus years at Doubleville; and Denise, spent four of her ten-plus career teaching at Doubleville. To further maintain confidentiality among the participants and the locations of the schools, the researcher edited the data contents to eliminate any specific details relative to individual names and the names of other individuals, schools, districts, and geographic regions. As necessary, the researcher also edited the transcribed interviews to remove repetitive and personally identifiable information that was not relevant to the research questions.

The data from the interviews, review of the schools' report cards, the data obtained from the School Matters website, information reviewed from school district's website, SACS accreditation, school matters website, the Georgia Department of Education website, telephone interviews conducted with the principals, and observations noted by the researcher, were sorted in relation to the three research sub-questions. Coded data, trends, and patterns gathered from the transcribed interviews and data collected were analyzed by the researcher to deepen the

understanding of how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy, as components of school climate impacted student achievement as measured by the Adequate Yearly Progress status of two elementary schools in Flamingo County, Georgia.

Seven of the eight interviews were conducted during the month of July, and the eighth was conducted on August twelfth, which occurred during the summer vacation; therefore the researcher did not conduct the interviews within the school buildings, instead the interviews were conducted in the conference rooms of various public libraries within Flamingo County. Prior to the end of the 2008/2009 school year, the researcher visited both Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary schools to observe the physical features of each building and the resulting atmosphere.

**Researcher's observations at Abbeyville Elementary School.** Upon entering Abbeyville Elementary school, the researcher was immediately greeted by the front desk staff, and asked to sign in. The researcher had spoken previously to the principal about the visit, so that she could walk around the grounds, and get a feel for the school. As the researcher entered the building the school cafeteria was directly to the left and students were seen entering and leaving the lunchroom. The students tended to walk quietly down the halls but teachers were visible. The halls were clean and student work was displayed in the hallways. As the researcher walked, she noticed that most doors were closed and the halls at the back of the building were free of traffic.

**Researcher's observations at Doubleville Elementary School.** When the researcher entered Doubleville Elementary, she was greeted by a volunteer who was sitting at the round table in the entranceway. The volunteer was very friendly and helpful and offered to show the researcher around the building, but the offer was declined. The researcher was not asked to sign

in at Doubleville and walking down the hall, several children were seen in the halls unattended. Student work was displayed in the halls, and the Georgia Performance Standards were listed on top of the student displays. The noise of students eating in the lunch room could be heard down the hallway. Physically, Doubleville appeared to be much larger than Abbeyville, even though their student populations were almost identical.

**Researcher's observations of the interview locations.** The interviews were conducted in the conference rooms of several local libraries located in Flamingo County. These conference rooms proved to be non-threatening environments where the participants were free to disclose their thoughts and ideas without censure. The rooms were all located away from the main activity and the doors were closed for privacy and relatively quiet to allow for taping of the interview sessions. Before the actual taping of the interviews, the researcher engaged in casual conversation with the respondents to reaffirm their participation in the study, and indicated that the session was going to be tape recorded.

**Trustworthiness and clarification of researcher bias.** As a part of a qualitative research design; the researcher was an instrument in this study, and as such, the researcher acknowledges that it was impossible for her to remain outside of the subject matter, since she was mainly responsible for conducting the interviews, transcribing the interviews, and organizing the ensuing data. The findings of the research changed the researcher's opinion on how one prepares to be a leader within a school building, because the researcher now realizes that ensuring student success starts with providing an atmosphere in which teachers feel successful in their ability to educate students and interact with their colleagues. As a former teacher, the researcher knows that teachers are assiduous in the provision of their duties, and as such, the researcher is empathetic towards teachers. As an aspiring leader, implications from this

research study, have made the researcher aware that she has to find creative ways for teachers to interact inside and away from school about all matters and she has to provide ways to intrinsically motivate students and teachers.

**Trustworthiness and external auditing.** The researcher's field notes, transcribed interviews, and obtained themes from the transcribed interviews comprised an audit trail which was given to an external auditor. The external auditor reviewed these items as a way to establish conformability and provided an attestation of the findings (see Appendix F). The external auditor informed the researcher that there was continuity to the transcribed interviews, and the researcher's use of probes was effective in clarifying responses that were provided. The themes that the researcher discovered were supported by the transcribed interviews. The external auditor questioned why the researcher did not make sure that all of the participants answered all parts of question 5, and wanted to know why there were not an equal number of sub-questions that related to the three research questions.

### **Data Analysis**

Prior to the initial interview session, the researcher reviewed the literature pertaining to teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher efficacy as components of school climate. Additionally, information from the School Matters website, interviews with the principals, and information from Flamingo's County SACS report was also reviewed. The researcher felt that since her observations of the interview participants was conducted away from their school buildings, the observations that she conducted did not contribute any additional meaning to this study. The responses to the teacher interview questions were sorted by the three research sub-questions in order to establish a foundation for analysis. The researcher analyzed the transcripts and identified common themes, viewpoints, thoughts, and recurring patterns that might have a

bearing on the participants' beliefs about their feelings of job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy.

The researcher organized and coded the data from the transcripts with the aid of Microsoft Word.

After the initial session with the three elementary school teachers who reviewed the interview

questions for clarity, the order of the questions was changed (see Appendix A and C), so the

interview questions were organized into the three research study sub-questions in the following

way:

1. How does your school mission promote the best interests of the children in this school?

(Sub-question 3).

Initially, question number one was related to sub-question number one; however, once the researcher included the actual mission statements from Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary

schools into the question, the participants' responses were more aligned with sub-question

number three.

2. What are the benefits of working here for you and your colleagues? (Sub-question 2)

3. How do you motivate students to do their best? (Sub-question 3)

4. Describe your relationship with your colleagues. (Sub-question 2)

5. (i) What do you expect from the principal? (Sub-question 1) (ii) Your colleagues? (Sub-question 2) (iii) Your students? (Sub-question 3) (iv) Your parents? (Sub-question 1) (v)

Your community? (Sub-question 1). Please respond to one or all of these.

6. What difference can you and your colleagues really make in the lives of students? (Sub-question 3)

7a. How do your feelings of job satisfaction compare with other jobs that you have had? (Sub-question 1)

7b. Have these feelings affected your willingness to teach? (Sub-question 1)

8. How do you help the students in your classroom make significant progress? (Sub-question 3)
9. How do you get through to the hard to reach and unmotivated students in your room? (Sub-question 3)

The overarching research question, “How do components of school climate contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress status in Flamingo County, Georgia elementary schools?” was answered through the research sub-questions, personal accounts given by the participants, review of the schools’ report cards, data obtained from the School Matters website, information reviewed from school district’s website, SACS accreditation, school matters website, the Georgia Department of Education website, telephone interviews conducted with the principals, and observations noted by the researcher.

### **Profile of Interviewed Teachers at Abbeyville Elementary**

#### **Respondent number one—Ashley**

Ashley is an African-American female who lives in a neighboring state and has taught third grade at Abbeyville for the past four years. She is currently in the process of completing a degree in another education area and has taught in two other states for more than ten years. Abbeyville is the only school in Flamingo County where Ashley has taught and she has only worked for one principal in the district.

Throughout the interview, Ashley sat across from the examiner with her arms folded. She responded readily to the research questions, but her responses included few words, and oftentimes, the researcher had to ask for clarification on the responses, and probing questions were used to garner more information.

Respondent number two—Amber

Amber is an African-American female who lives in Flamingo County where she taught exclusively at Abbeyville for all of her twenty-plus year career. She worked for six different principals in those years. Amber related that she has always wanted to be a teacher, and has never had any other full-time jobs. Amber has taught first, second, and third grade at Abbeyville. The 2008/2009 school year was Amber's first year teaching fourth grade.

Amber was very friendly throughout the interview session where she sat next to the examiner and spoke directly into the tape recorder. Usually, Amber would use hmm to preface her responses, as though she was gathering her thoughts, before she responded to the questions.

Respondent number three—Amanda

Amanda is a Caucasian female who lives in Flamingo County where she began her teaching career at Abbeyville less than ten years ago. Amanda had only worked with one principal in the district, but teaching was her second career, since she was previously involved in restaurant management. At the beginning of Amanda's teaching career, she taught fifth grade for six weeks before moving to kindergarten.

Amanda appeared to be very friendly throughout the interview session; she related personal experiences and anecdotes to clarify her responses, laughed easily and often, and would often ask the researcher if the researcher truly understood she was trying to say, and waited for the researcher to explain her understanding of Amanda's responses. Amanda easily asked for clarification, if she was in doubt of her response to the questions.

Respondent number 4—Allison

Allison is a twenty-plus year teaching veteran who lives in Flamingo County, and she taught at Abbeyville for the past five years. Allison taught in two other counties in Georgia, and

did not have any other careers besides teaching. Abbeyville was the only school in Flamingo County where Allison had taught. Allison taught second grade for her first three years, and she had just completed her second year teaching pre-kindergarten students. Allison has only worked for one principal in Flamingo County, but she has worked for several principals previously in other counties.

Allison appeared to be nervous during the interview session and she indicated that she did not like to be recorded. The researcher reassured her of the confidential nature of her responses. Allison had a difficult time formulating her responses to the questions, so the researcher often had to repeat the interview questions. Allison tended to laugh nervously throughout the session, her responses were prefaced with responses of ugh, huh, and hmm, and she indicated that she had a difficult time thinking of answers to the questions. The researcher frequently asked for clarification of Allison's responses because oftentimes, she indicated that she did not know, in response to the interview questions.

### **Profile of Interviewed Teachers at Doubleville Elementary**

#### Respondent number 5—Dawn

Dawn is an African-American female who lived in Flamingo County and Doubleville was the only school where she taught in the district. Dawn taught fifth grade as a part of a team for less than ten years. Dawn usually taught language arts/reading and only during her first year was she responsible for teaching all core academic subjects. Dawn had a previous career working in the public sector. Dawn has worked for three principals at Doubleville Elementary.

Dawn used personal experiences to clarify her responses to the interview questions. She tended to laugh easily and responded effortlessly to all of questions. Dawn's answers tended to be succinct and did not require further probing questions.

Respondent number 6—David

David is an African-American male who retired from his first career, and lives in neighboring county. He taught in two prior states and has spent the last ten years of his career at Doubleville. Previously David taught fifth grade, but during the 2008/2009 school year, he taught fourth grade. David has worked for three principals at Doubleville.

David responded easily to the research questions and tended to use the word well, to preface his responses the questions. His posture was very relaxed and he tended to look outside at the scenic view through the library's windows. He laughed easily and explained that because he was one of the few males in his school setting, that afforded him the unique opportunity to speak for the male students by because he viewed situations through their eyes, and he indicated that he brought that unique male perspective to his interactions with his female colleagues.

Respondent number 7—Donna

Donna taught third grade at Doubleville Elementary in the same room for in excess of five years. She did not have any other careers outside of teaching and lives in Flamingo County. She has worked for three principals at Doubleville.

Donna smiled easily throughout the interview session and related personal experiences to clarify her responses to the questions. She sat next to the researcher and tended to speak softly and interspersed the words, "you know" into her responses. When the researcher asked for clarification of statements that were ambiguous, Donna would laugh, and said, "I knew that you were going to say that." Donna was very candid in her responses.

Respondent number 8—Denise

Denise is a ten-plus year teaching veteran who lives in and graduated from Flamingo County. She taught third grade at Doubleville for the past four years; however, she taught other

grades at four other elementary schools in Flamingo County. She worked for four different principals at her previous schools in the county and two additional principals while working at Doubleville.

Denise used the researcher's name in her responses as she gave examples to validate her answers. Denise used her hands as she talked, while using personal experiences to explain her point-of-view. She used analogies in her responses and used terms that were unfamiliar to the researcher, but she was able to explain the terminology, and how it related to her education and personal experiences.

### **Summary of the Teachers' Backgrounds**

The data gathered indicated that the teachers had been teaching at their respective schools ranging from four to more than twenty years. The total years of teaching experience ranged from five years to in excess of twenty years. One of the participants was an African-American male; there was one Caucasian female, whereas, the other six participants were African-American females. Two of the participants from Doubleville and two of the participants from Abbeyville had only taught at their current schools. Only one participant, Amanda did not have the experience of working with more than one principal. Three of the participants taught third grade, two taught fourth grade, one taught fifth grade, one taught kindergarten, and one taught pre-kindergarten. Overall, the participants interacted easily with the researcher and made sure that their opinions, thoughts, feelings, and ideas were conveyed to the researcher.

### **Teacher Job Satisfaction**

*How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?*

(Research Sub-question 1)

**A principal's contribution to teacher job satisfaction.** As noted in the Flamingo County's district SACS Council report, effective governance and leadership was essential to any successful organization. During the telephone interviews, the principals of both Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary indicated that they believed that their respective school climates were conducive to student learning and growth, and their staff turn-over rate was low, since most of their faculty had taught at their schools for the past four years. Additionally, data obtained from the School Matters website indicated that staffing trends at both elementary schools had remained constant over the past five years. The theme of principal support was prevalent during the interview responses to question 5(i) which asked the respondents what they expected from their principal. Table 1 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals, information from the School Matters website, and from the Flamingo County's district SACS report; whereas, Table 2 details all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 1.** Themes From Principal Interviews, School Matters Website, and SACS Report To Question 5(i):

Principal Interviews	School Matters website	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School climate is conducive to student learning and growth</li> <li>Staff turnover rate is low</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing trends at both schools were constant over the past five years</li> </ul>	Essential items for a successful organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective governance</li> <li>Effective leadership</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** Themes From Participants' Responses To Question 5(i):

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Great student disciplinarian</li> <li>• Supportive of the school's mission</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Approachable</li> <li>• Facilitator/guide to teachers</li> <li>• Knowledgeable about being an administrator (<b>KA</b>)</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Knowledgeable about their staff e.g. personalities (<b>KS</b>)</li> <li>• Loves their job</li> <li>• Good interpersonal/conflict resolution skills</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Knowledgeable about curriculum (<b>CK</b>)</li> <li>• Disciplinarian</li> <li>• Provides guidance</li> <li>• Has a vision</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Flexibility (<b>FX</b>)</li> <li>• Empathy towards teachers</li> <li>• Respect their staff (<b>RS</b>)</li> <li>• Respect instructional time</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Knowledgeable</li> <li>• Addresses all teacher concerns</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility (<b>FX</b>)</li> <li>• Respect teacher knowledge and creativity (<b>KS</b>)</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledgeable about curriculum (<b>CK</b>)</li> <li>• Great communication skills (<b>GCS</b>)</li> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Knowledgeable about being an administrator (<b>KA</b>)</li> <li>• Is understanding</li> <li>• Trusts teachers</li> <li>• Facilitator between faculty members</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of the staff (<b>SS</b>)</li> <li>• Respectful (<b>RS</b>)</li> <li>• Flexibility (<b>FX</b>)</li> <li>• Appreciative of teachers</li> <li>• Honest</li> <li>• Empathy towards teachers</li> <li>• Goal oriented</li> <li>• Strong leader</li> <li>• Has a vision</li> <li>• Staff motivator</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question 5(i):*

**Amber:** (hesitating) well I expect for the principal to be supportive of the staff. You know, stand behind your teachers. You know, I do expect that and also be a great disciplinarian to the students and push our mission statement that we have going on at Abbeyville. (p. 3) (**SS**)

**Ashley:** principal, hmm, a lot of support, a lot of guidance. Let me know what your

guidelines are, and once I know what they are I can follow it. Give me the support when I go to you about a child. I want a principal that really knows the curriculum. (p. 3) (**SS; CK**)

**Amanda:** I expect her to trust me, to know what I'm doing. I think that; I think that the principal's job is to make sure that that there's good communication on all levels in the school, and I want her to communicate with me, with the other faculty. I want her to facilitate communication between the faculty. (p. 7) (**SS; KA; GCS**)

**Allison:** ahmm, what I expect for the principal is to, ahmm, help us with whatever we need, when we go to her about anything. I feel that she should be able to help. Just help us with anything that we need. (p. 5) (**SS**)

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question 5(i):*

**Denise:** I believe administrators should be cognizant of their staff. I believe it's an administrator's role, to be a facilitator, a guide. They have to be supportive. So I believe, and I expect my administrators to be very savvy about their staff, savvy about what the information that they know. I expect administrators to be trained knowledgeable professionals at administrating; you need that. (p. 5-6) (**SS; KA**)

**Dawn:** I expect my principal to support what I want to do in my classroom; if I know that something has worked for me, let me do that. Mainly, just support me, let me teach my class. (p. 3) (**SS; FX**)

**David:** well, from my principal, if they give me a job, permit me to have the time to do it the way I want to, as long as I'm not, you know, I'm not violating any kind of school policies or interrupting the school in any great way. I like a principal that's gonna give you some space for creativity. (p. 3) (**FX**)

**Donna:** from my principal, I expect support, mainly supportive of my classroom and in discipline, just supportive, and respect. I'm going to give you respect, so I expect some in return. Giving us respect as teachers, like sometimes it's like we're not valued much. (p. 3) **(SS; FX; RS)**

All of the interviewed teachers with the exception of David, the lone male; indicated that they wanted their administrator to be supportive of them as staff members, regarding any specific concerns that they may have e.g. discipline, interactions with parents. Abbeyville's teachers, where the school achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, identified themes that pertained to the principal's ability to be the leader in the school, which included the principal's ability to communicate effectively with their staff, and to be a disciplinarian. At Doubleville Elementary, where the school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, the interviewed teachers' responses related to the principal's ability to address the social emotional needs of their faculty, by being flexible, appreciative of teachers, and being empathic towards their teachers. Additionally, Doubleville's teachers related that they wanted their principals to respect them.

**How teacher job satisfaction impacts student achievement.** How teachers feel about their jobs and the degree of need fulfillment they experience in their positions can influence the manner in which they perform their duties. Researchers have found that even though teachers care about their salaries, intrinsic rewards such as a sense of accomplishment can prove to be very gratifying to teachers. As noted previously, the principals of both elementary schools indicated that their staff turnover rate was low, since most of their faculty had taught at their schools for the past four years. Information gathered from the School Matters website indicated that the number of teachers employed at both schools had remained very consistent over the past five years. As found in Flamingo County's district SACS Council report, one of the strengths of

the district was its committed teachers and principals who were focused, willing to be innovative in implementing learning strategies for children, and had a passion, courage, and vision for greatness. The participants' responses to question 7a, asked them to compare their current feelings of job satisfaction to other jobs that they have had, and additionally, their responses to question 7b, detailed their willingness to continue to teach. Table 3 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals, information from the School Matters website, and from the Flamingo County's district SACS report; whereas, Tables 4 and 5 detail all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 3.** Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question 7a:

Principal Interviews	School Matters website	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff turnover rate is low</li> <li>• Most of the faculty had taught at both schools for the past five years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of teachers employed at both schools is very consistent over the past five years</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths of the district</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed teachers and principals who were focused and willing to be innovative in implementing learning strategies for children</li> <li>• Professional staff that has a passion, courage, and vision for greatness</li> </ul>

**Table 4.** Themes from participants' responses to question 7a:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfied/likes working with the students (<b>ES</b>)</li> <li>• Dedication to student success (<b>SU</b>)</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfied teaching students (<b>ES</b>)</li> <li>• Teaching is a rewarding career</li> <li>• Job satisfaction is related to student success</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissatisfaction with the school system (<b>DS</b>)</li> <li>• Misuse of teacher time</li> <li>• Job related needs are not being met (<b>NJS</b>)</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfied teaching students (<b>ES</b>)</li> <li>• Inflexibility of the teaching schedule (<b>IS</b>)</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher accountability (<b>AT</b>)</li> <li>• Feelings of dissatisfaction with the school system (<b>DS</b>)</li> <li>• Unavailability of materials/supplies (<b>UN</b>)</li> <li>• Long range education goals (<b>LTG</b>)</li> <li>• Lack of appreciation for teachers, students, and parents (<b>LC</b>)</li> <li>• Job related needs are not being met (<b>NJS</b>)</li> <li>• Enjoys teaching students (<b>ES</b>)</li> <li>• Lack of communication</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of being overwhelmed</li> <li>• Teacher accountability</li> <li>• Lack of support for teachers (<b>LT</b>)</li> <li>• Unavailability of materials/supplies (<b>UN</b>)</li> <li>• Inflexibility of the teaching schedule (<b>IS</b>)</li> <li>• Enjoys teaching students (<b>ES</b>)</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissatisfaction with the school system (<b>DS</b>)</li> <li>• Feelings of isolation</li> <li>• Unavailability of materials/supplies (<b>UN</b>)</li> <li>• Lack of communication</li> <li>• Job related needs are not being met (<b>NJS</b>)</li> <li>• Does not feel appreciated (<b>LC</b>)</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys the social elements of teaching</li> <li>• Enjoys teaching students (<b>ES</b>)</li> <li>• Teaching is a rewarding career</li> <li>• Job satisfaction comes from working with students not from colleague interactions</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question 7a:*

**Allison:** this system is totally different from the other districts I have taught in. Like in this school, I feel like I'm in prison. It's hard to get supplies. We don't have anything; we have to look for everything. I miss the communication. Here doesn't compare to the other places I've been. (p. 7-8) (**DS; UN**)

**Amanda:** my needs do not get met at all in Flamingo County. I am not as satisfied working in Flamingo County. I feel like everything gets blamed on teachers. I want be appreciated. I don't want everything dumped in my lap. Show me that you care about me, but show me also that you care about these kids! Not just what their scores are, because I don't care what their stupid scores are! We're forgetting the kids, and we're forgetting the teachers. (p. 10-13) **(DS; LC; AT)**

**Ashley:** my problem isn't with Abbeyville, it's with the district. The district is very far behind. Uhm, there are things that I came to Flamingo County that I had to do, but I never had to do before because, because this district is so far behind. My job related needs here are not as good as compared to other jobs that I've had. (p. 5) **(DS)**

**Amber:** I still think my satisfaction is better, is better, at Abbeyville compared to other jobs that I've had because number one, I haven't had any of the other schools to compare to, uhmm, which was fine, but me myself, I like working with children. I know what my job is, what is being expected of me from my job, and I know where my heart is and it's in teaching, that's what it's all about; it's about working with those children. (p. 4-5) **(ES)**

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question 7a:*

**Denise:** when I got Johnny to finally read his four syllable words, using his decoding, that's my joy. I look for my satisfaction to my children. When I think of my personal satisfaction in regards to my job. It is not based on my relationships with my colleagues. It's about my ability to impart; it's all about the learning experiences with children. That is how I get my own personal growth, how I grow in my own instruction. (p. 11) **(ES)**

**Dawn:** I can say that I'm happy now doing what I'm doing. I've always wanted to work with kids. I do, I just don't like being; I feel like I'm locked in that classroom from eight to four. (p. 5-6) **(ES; IS)**

**David:** as far as job satisfaction of teaching; I like the success of even just one student; you know, if just one student (laughing) shows me a lot of progress, then that's enough job satisfaction for me. Sometimes, I can live off of that one student and not be so downhearted, if say, half of my class is not doing well or something like that. It takes that one student to keep me going and coming up with better ideas, to keep it interesting. (p. 5) **(ES)**

**Donna:** I really enjoy it overall, but I feel like sometimes it can be overwhelming, especially just teaching. I guess, being at Doubleville, it is overwhelming. By April, we're just drained. I think there's so much that comes with it. It can be overwhelming! I guess for us, just so much pressure is put on classroom teachers! There's everything else that comes with it. It's so overwhelming! (p. 5) **(IS; LT; ES)**

**Table 5.** Themes from participants' responses to question #7b:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loves teaching students <b>(ES)</b></li> <li>Not the best job</li> <li>Comfortable teaching <b>(ES)</b></li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains a positive outlook <b>(MP)</b></li> <li>Inflexibility of the teaching schedule <b>(IS)</b></li> <li>Feelings of being overwhelmed</li> <li>Personal feelings do not influence professional obligation <b>(PO)</b></li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of teaching time <b>(DS)</b></li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains a positive outlook <b>(MP)</b></li> <li>Personal feelings do not influence professional obligation <b>(PO)</b></li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedication to student success <b>(SU)</b></li> <li>Personal feelings do not influence professional obligation <b>(PO)</b></li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inflexibility of the teaching schedule <b>(IS)</b></li> <li>Personal feelings do not influence professional obligation <b>(PO)</b></li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedication to student success <b>(SU)</b></li> <li>Personal feelings do not influence professional obligation <b>(PO)</b></li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal interactions with colleagues</li> <li>Personal feelings do not influence professional obligation <b>(PO)</b></li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question 7b:*

**Allison:** no, no, I'm gonna find a way and get through it and do. I may complain but it don't get in the way of me doing my best to prepare my kids. (p. 9) **(SU)**

**Amanda:** I wouldn't go to another county! If the best county in the country wanted me to come and be a kindergarten teacher, I wouldn't leave Flamingo County, because I'd rather be somewhere that I'm needed. (p. 14) **(SU)**

**Ashley:** I think it decreases the amount of effectiveness because you spend so much time with needless uhm paperwork. I know that you have to document it, but there's just certain things that Flamingo County does that I don't understand. (p. 5-6) **(DS)**

**Amber:** If I was looking it wouldn't be the best job, but you know, I feel like I know what my job is, I know what I was put here for, and I knew when I was in elementary school that I wanted to be a teacher. (p. 5) **(ES)**

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question 7b:*

**Denise:** no, I've had; no, definitely not! I think that the only time I've ever really not wanted to come back and start another year, had nothing to do with the children. When I thought about not coming back, it was more the dynamics with colleagues and administrator than it was with the children, and I think that's just me personally. (p. 12) **(ES)**

Angeline: (prompt) have these feelings of satisfaction affected your willingness to teach? Have the feelings of being locked-in affected your willingness to teach? **Dawn:** to the extent of making me want to get out of the classroom, because I feel that if I can get out of the classroom, I might be more willing to stay; okay, I can take a day off, but when I'm

with those kids, I got to be there! Just to the extent of me getting out of the classroom, I'll feel, I won't feel as obligated, I would say. (p. 6) **(IS)**

**David:** yeah, yeah, you gotta start off everyday kinda new, and not let anything in the past drag you down. Try to wake up with a good attitude; and because kids can pick up on that in a second. They take cues from us, and I try to give them positive cues all the time. (p. 5) **(MP)**

**Donna:** I don't think it has affected my willingness to teach, but sometimes, I guess I feel like I kinda shutdown, you know, like in my classroom. Sometimes it's discouraging, you know, I really try not to let my kids be affected by it, but you know, by all the pressures that we have but; yeah, sometimes it does affect my willingness. (p. 6) **(IS; MP)**

When comparing their current feelings of job satisfaction to other jobs held, the majority of teachers at Abbeyville (achieved Adequate Yearly Progress), indicated their dissatisfaction with the Flamingo County school system; however, when asked if these feelings affected their willingness to teach children, they talked about their dedication to student success, and specifically two teachers mentioned that their personal feelings did not influence their professional obligations. So, it appeared that their dissatisfaction with the school system did not affect their willingness to perform their duties. At Doubleville (did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress), the teachers indicated that they were satisfied teaching students; however, two of the teachers noted the inflexibility of the teaching schedule, and that they maintained a positive outlook. When asked if these feelings have affected their willingness to teach, the interviewed teachers indicated that their personal feelings did not influence their professional obligations; however, they indicated that they wanted to be respected by their principals. Respect in a building has the potential to influence an employee's feelings of being appreciated and as a

result, the overall school climate can be impacted. In this study, it appears that feelings of job satisfaction can impact a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

### **Teacher Morale**

*How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?* (Research Sub-question 2)

**Collegiality as a benefit to high teacher morale.** Teacher morale, defined as the sense of trust, confidence, enthusiasm, and friendliness among teachers and various aspects of teachers' interactions with their colleagues, has been shown to have an impact on the climate within schools. It was found that collegiality in the workplace is an aspect of teacher morale and that high levels of teacher morale have the potential to contribute to the creation of a robust school vision, which helps to guide all those within the school building towards the same goals and can contribute to congeniality and a common purpose within the school building. As found in the Flamingo County's district SACS Council report, the district's staff morale reflected a positive attitude toward the system, schools, and stakeholders. During telephone interviews, both principals indicated that their teaching staff showed low turn-over rates; therefore, the teaching staff remained very consistent. This information was verified by the School Matters website, which stated that the number of teachers employed at both schools remained very consistent over the past five years. Information regarding the interviewed teachers' interactions with their colleagues was garnered from their interview responses to question 2, which asked the benefits of working at each specific school for the respondents and their colleagues, and the interviewed teachers also described their relationship with their colleagues in responses to question 4. Table 6 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals, information from the School Matters website, and from the Flamingo County's

district SACS report; whereas, Tables 7 and 8 detail all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 6.** Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question #2:

Principal Interviews	School Matters website	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff turn-over rate is low</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing trends at both schools were constant over the past five years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district's staff morale reflects a positive attitude toward the system, schools, and stakeholders</li> </ul>

**Table 7.** Themes from participants' responses to question #2:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close knit community (collegiality) <b>(CC)</b></li> <li>• Enjoys the working atmosphere, students, &amp; other teachers <b>(WA)</b></li> <li>• Great colleagues</li> <li>• Dedication to student success <b>(DED)</b></li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse population <b>(DP)</b></li> <li>• Colleagues learn from each other</li> <li>• Differences exist <b>(DE)</b></li> <li>• Is a male role model for students</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close knit community (collegiality) <b>(CC)</b></li> <li>• Desire to impact students positively <b>(PS)</b></li> <li>• Enjoys the working atmosphere, students, &amp; other teachers <b>(WA)</b></li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of family <b>(FAM)</b></li> <li>• Differences exist among faculty <b>(DE)</b></li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to impact student learning &amp; the community <b>(PS)</b></li> <li>• Enjoys the working atmosphere, students, &amp; other teachers <b>(WA)</b></li> <li>• Satisfaction with the teaching profession &amp; its rewards</li> <li>• Monitors previous students <b>(PS)</b></li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys the diverse student population <b>(DP)</b></li> <li>• Colleagues learn from each other</li> <li>• Physical location of the school</li> <li>• Personal aspects of colleagues &amp; students</li> <li>• Differences exist among faculty <b>(DE)</b></li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witness student potential (success) <b>(PS)</b></li> <li>• Desire to interact positively with the students <b>(PS)</b></li> <li>• Monitors previous students <b>(PS)</b></li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family atmosphere <b>(FAM)</b></li> <li>• Differences exist among faculty <b>(DE)</b></li> <li>• Feels affection for colleagues</li> <li>• Good parental support</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses Question #2:*

**Ashley:** Well I guess the reason why I've stayed at Abbeyville so long is because it's a school where they need teachers that care. They need teachers because there are a lot of teachers at Abbeyville who can choose to go somewhere else but they choose to stay here and do what they can for the kids that are here. That's the only reason I've been there that long. (p. 1) **(WA; CC; PS)**

**Amber:** well number one, I have been working at Abbeyville all my teaching career. I enjoy the atmosphere. I just like the school. I've never seen a reason to move away from that school. I like it. I enjoy working there. I enjoy working with the students and my colleagues are great, also. (p. 1) **(WA; CC)**

**Amanda:** Ahmm, working with teachers like Alice, who has been a teacher for, this is her twenty-third year, and she's been in kindergarten at Abbeyville for 23 years and to be able to work with someone like that. She's so special to me. I love; I love the kids at Abbeyville. That's what I get at Abbeyville. (p. 4-5) **(WA; CC; PS)**

**Allison:** Well the benefits for me, is to see how successful our children are going to be. There is a student that I taught that is being very successful. She left pre-k to kindergarten, and Alice told me that she was reading 25 books or more, and she could comprehend what she was reading. (p. 3) **(CC; PS)**

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses Question #2:*

**Denise:** professionally, ughh, the diversity of children. So professionally we have the gains of interacting with children from a bigger base of demographics. Now I really feel colleagues grow from colleagues; if you work with people of certain mindset, you pick up, or you develop from them. It's a really close knit kind of staff. You still have your

dissensions, your cliques. But for the most part, interaction is pretty even keel. (p. 1-2)  
**(DP; DE)**

**Dawn:** I think it creates a sense of family there, where everybody really tries to help each other. I feel it's the support in and out of the classroom, personal, and professional. It's really a family, and I think it helps us be successful, and we really; when things start falling apart, it's because something got out of line. (p. 1) **(FAM)**

**David:** well the benefit for me working at Doubleville is the kinda of different environment; me being a male, but it makes me be able to communicate with the teachers who have the same ideas, and also different ideas, you know; so it's been very beneficial to me. (p. 1-2) **(DP; DE)**

**Donna:** I think the benefit is family, the fact that we're close, you know, like family; even though we all have our differences, we all come together. I think that's the best thing about it, yeah. I say that because that is one of the biggest things about it, me staying there. I like the people I work with, ugh; because if you don't like the people you work with. That and the parents. I think we have a lot of good parental support. (p. 1-2)  
**(FAM; DE)**

**Table 8.** Themes from participants' responses to question #4:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good colleague relationships (GC)</li> <li>• Interacts with all faculty (GC)</li> <li>• Friendly &amp; shares ideas &amp; materials with other faculty (STU)</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loves to interact with others</li> <li>• Good colleague interactions (GC)</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interacts with everyone, but focuses on interactions with team members (TM)</li> <li>• Very close team member interactions (TM)</li> <li>• Socialize in &amp; away from school about personal &amp; professional matters (GC)</li> <li>• Shares ideas &amp; materials with colleagues (STU)</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good colleague interactions (GC)</li> <li>• Mutual respect for faculty (FR)</li> <li>• Tries to help as needed</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent relationships with colleagues (esp. team) (GC; TM)</li> <li>• Communicate &amp; socialize with team members away from school (GC)</li> <li>• Work together for the common good of the students (STU)</li> <li>• Trusts her team members &amp; is enthusiastic about working with them</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable interacting with others</li> <li>• Welcomes diversity (DP)</li> <li>• Mutual respect for faculty (FR)</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has an excellent relationship with colleagues (GC)</li> <li>• Communicate &amp; socialize with colleagues away from school (TM)</li> <li>• Shares info about students &amp; how to motivate them (STU)</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual respect for faculty (FR)</li> <li>• Likes colleagues</li> <li>• Socializes with a few faculty members away from school (TM)</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question #4:*

**Ashley:** hmm, I speak to everybody. I work mainly with my team members. Ahmm [we're] very close; hmm, we to go out to lunch. Yeah, we talk about personal triumphs and failures. We come together and we talk. We spend a lot of time everyday talking. Planning lessons or sometimes just unwinding. Just sharing tips or whatever. (p. 3) (TM; GC; STU)

**Amber:** I think I have a good relationship with them, so I feel like I have a good relationship with umm. Well, I try to be friendly, that's one of the things. I try to be

friendly and try to share, if anyone comes to me. I do share what I have. (p. 2) (GC; STU)

**Amanda:** we are, we are the best kindergarten team in Flamingo County. We are and I love my kindergarten team. I love Alice and Alisha and Alana, and I'm going to her wedding. Hmm, we just, we have fun, we laugh. I love my team, I wish, I hope, that we can stay a team. I get along with my team very well. (p. 7) (TM; GC)

**Allison:** ahmm, excellent. As far as I know, to my knowledge. Ahh, we communicate, socialize. Angeline: (prompt) so like after hours, you're talking to each other? Allison: yes a few. Ahmm, we may go out to eat. Ahmm; we may talk about how we can help. Uhmm, what can we do to help out our kids, to motivate them; we share information about our children. (p. 5) (TM; GC; STU)

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #4:*

**Denise:** ahmm, my relationship with my colleagues. Ahmm, my relationship with my colleagues, I believe most of my colleagues will tell you that I'm easy to get along with, talk a lot of times. But a very good listener. (p. 5) (GC)

**Dawn:** I've always felt like I got along with them pretty good. I think that they respected me. (p. 2) (GC; FR)

**David:** pretty good. I like it; makes me respect a lot of the opinion of females and understand their way of thinking sometimes on a subject, and which kinda rounds me a little bit better. (p. 3) (FR; GC)

**Donna:** pretty much, hmm, respect; so basically we respect each other. I haven't had any big problems. I like them. (p. 3) (FR; GC)

Abbeyville's teachers, where the school achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, noted that they enjoyed the working atmosphere at Abbeyville, in addition to working with the other teachers, and the students. The interviewed teachers also mentioned their desire to impact their students in a positive manner, in response to the benefits that working at Abbeyville provided them. Whereas, in response to this same question, the teachers at Doubleville, where the school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, indicated that a family atmosphere existed at Doubleville, where differences existed among the faculty. Additionally, the ability to interact with the diverse student population at Doubleville was a benefit for these teachers. When the teachers were asked to describe their relationships with their colleagues, Abbeyville's teachers indicated that they had very close relationships with their team members, where they socialized in and away from school about personal and professional matters. Abbeyville's interviewed teachers also mentioned collegial relationships, but mainly focused on specific interactions with their team members. At Doubleville, where the school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, the interviewed teachers indicated that they and their colleagues had a mutual respect for each other and good collegial interactions existed among the faculty members, but only Donna mentioned that she socialized with other faculty members away from school.

**Staff expectations.** Teacher morale can be a significant aspect of how teachers carry out their duties, and their ability to teach their students and as noted in Flamingo County's district SACS Council report, Flamingo County has schools that provide a warm and caring atmosphere in which learning and success can take place; however, there was a level of disconnect with the district level leadership, which was communicated during the stakeholder interview sessions. During the telephone interviews with the researcher, both principals said that teachers were openly recognized for their accomplishments; however, no concrete examples were provided,

and neither principal mentioned the relationships or lack thereof that existed among the teachers, which was addressed during the individual teacher interview sessions. During the teacher interview sessions, the teachers responded to question 5 (ii), which asked what they expected from their colleagues, and resulted in a theme of collaboration among colleagues. Table 9 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals and from the Flamingo County's district SACS report; whereas, Table 10 details all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 9.** Themes from principal interviews and SACS report to question #5(ii):

Principal Interviews	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are openly recognized for their accomplishments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools provide a warm and caring atmosphere in which learning and success can take place</li> <li>• Level of disconnect between district level leadership and the schools</li> </ul>

**Table 10.** Themes from participants' response to question #5(ii):

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborates with colleagues (<b>KC</b>)</li> <li>• Professional interaction with students</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team effort (<b>TE</b>)</li> <li>• Knowledgeable about teaching</li> <li>• Collaboration (<b>KC</b>)</li> <li>• Common goals b/w 8 am &amp; 4 pm regardless of personal feelings (<b>PW</b>)</li> <li>• Not become separated by the pressures of the NCLB Act</li> <li>• Respect for the teaching profession</li> <li>• Long range goal planning (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborates with colleagues (<b>KC</b>)</li> <li>• Dedication to curriculum (<b>DED</b>)</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of each other</li> <li>• Respect for each other's ideas (<b>RS</b>)</li> <li>• Work together to positively impact student progress (<b>PW; TE</b>)</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication &amp; teamwork (collaboration) (<b>KC</b>)</li> <li>• Dedication to student learning (<b>DED</b>)</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good working relationships to positively impact student progress</li> <li>• Share ideas &amp; materials</li> <li>• Meet as a grade level to plan (<b>TE</b>)</li> <li>• Common goals regardless of personal feelings (<b>PW</b>)</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards based instruction</li> <li>• Dedication to teaching &amp; student achievement (<b>DED</b>)</li> <li>• Differentiation (<b>TA</b>)</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team player (<b>TE</b>)</li> <li>• Work together as a grade level team (<b>PW; TE</b>)</li> <li>• Share ideas</li> <li>• Group accountability</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question #5(ii):*

**Amber:** we work together, collaborate together. Work together, to try to get along. That is the biggest thing. (p. 3) (**KC**)

**Ashley:** I like a staff that shares ideas. I'm not one for a whole lot of gossip, busybody stuff, if you have something related to curriculum, that's fine. (p. 4) (**KC; DED**)

**Amanda:** I expect them to, ahmm; teach the standards to the greatest of their ability. Teach every child, ahmm; I expect them to have a method in their class, where they're able to control their classroom, ahmm; at all times, even when they're away from um. I teach all the standards, so I want them to teach all ways, all standards, and bump up their standards. (p. 8-9) (**DED**)

**Allison:** what I expect from them? The key thing to me is communication, work together as a team. I believe in team, ahmm. (p. 6) **(KC)**

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #5(ii):*

**Denise:** colleagues; that whole team effort. Angeline: (prompt) you mean like grade? Denise: no, period. We're all in this thing together you know. We all know what our job it is to do and I, I expect my teachers, my colleagues, to be knowledgeable. Hmm, I also expect for my colleagues to have a sense of camaraderie at getting their work done. There should be some level of just professional courtesy and support among us in this building that we're able to draw from each other and to learn from each other and sometimes lean on each other to help us get to a common goal. You understand what I'm saying? We don't have to be best friends, but we should work well together and able to get what we need done. I don't know; sometimes this whole testing thing; this can bring out the worst in people. (p. 7-8) **(KC; PW)**

**Dawn:** I expect them to be, give me the support that I need. Willing to be open to my ideas; because, you know, we're going to have to work together. Just don't work against me, just let's be on one accord about this (laughing), so we can help these kids. We're going to have to work together as a team. (p. 3) **(PW; TE)**

**David:** colleagues; a good working relationship, exchanging ideas, not holding in good ideas when they could be a passing it on to someone, some one on the grade level, especially with my grade level. Exchanging of materials, things like that. I like a good relationship. They don't really have to like my personality, but we pretty well get along, pretty much together and see things the same way. (p. 3-4) **(PW; TE)**

**Donna:** With my colleagues, be a team, a team player; being able to work together, is my

biggest thing, especially on a grade level, you have to be able to work together. We can't do it by ourselves. (p. 3-4) (PW; TE)

Although the interview participants indicated that they worked together with their colleagues and wanted their colleagues to work with them, there were some definite differences between the two groups of teachers. At Abbeyville, where the school achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, the participants indicated that they collaborated with other faculty members by sharing ideas and worked with each other to teach the students and to ensure that the students' needs were being met. The interviewed teachers also responded that they were dedicated to student learning, achievement, and teaching. Whereas, at Doubleville, where the school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, the interviewed teachers indicated that they expected their colleagues to be open to working with them during the school day for the common good of the students, regardless of their personal feelings about individual faculty members. The theme of being a team player was also prevalent in Doubleville's teachers' responses. It seemed as if the teachers at Abbeyville were a step ahead of the teachers at Doubleville in that they had an established atmosphere of trust, confidence, and friendliness among the teachers, whereas at Doubleville this type of atmosphere was not fully operational; thereby indicating that morale can be impacted by a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

### **Teacher Efficacy**

*How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?* (Research Sub-question 3)

**Teacher confidence.** The emphasis on learning is an important component in the shaping of a school's climate and the student learning process. Teachers who foster relationships with students tend to create a more personal and long lasting association for their students. As

noted previously, teachers who felt confident in their ability to affect change in the students they taught and in their potential to educate these students, had a significant impact on school climate and student achievement. Since teachers' beliefs influence student achievement, teachers have to be careful of the message that they consciously and unconsciously portray to students. As written in the Flamingo County's SACS Council report, the system established and communicated a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system; however, during the individual and group interviews with various leadership groups, it was not evident that the district's vision, mission, and goals were internalized by all groups, which indicated to the SACS committee that the district's vision and mission may not have guided the teaching and learning process. During the telephone interviews that the researcher conducted with the principals it was indicated that there was an atmosphere of trust and openness to foster risk taking and change within the school buildings; however, no indication of how the principals ensured that this atmosphere was present, was supplied to the researcher. During the teacher interview sessions, their responses to question 3, which asked how they motivated their students to do their best, and question 6, which asked what difference could they and their colleagues truly make in the lives of children, revealed the theme of using positive thoughts and beliefs to instill confidence in students. Table 11 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals and from the Flamingo County's district SACS report; whereas, Tables 12 and 13 detail all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 11.** Themes from principal interviews, School Matters website, and SACS report to question #3:

Principal Interviews	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools have an atmosphere of trust and openness which fosters risk taking and change within the school buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School system established and communicated a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of the students and the system's effectiveness</li> <li>Not evident that the district's vision, mission, and goals are internalized by all groups</li> </ul>

**Table 12.** Themes from participants' responses to question #3:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instill student confidence (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>Teacher assistance to accomplish student goals (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Create a safe &amp; judgment free learning environment (<b>WT</b>)</li> <li>Differentiation (<b>TA</b>)</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher as a facilitator (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Accept student limitations/any gains (<b>AL</b>)</li> <li>Teach students to identify with the learning process (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Teach students to own their own learning (<b>EL</b>)</li> <li>Model the thinking &amp; learning process (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>Incidental learning (<b>MO</b>)</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instilling &amp; promoting student confidence (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>Teacher assistance to accomplish student goals (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Modeling (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>Addressing individual students' needs (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Differentiation (<b>TA</b>)</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extrinsic rewards (<b>ER</b>)</li> <li>Increase student self-esteem (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>Teacher visibility across the school</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differentiation (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Addressing individual students' needs (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Demonstrate teacher caring (<b>DTC</b>)</li> <li>Personal connections with students (<b>DTC</b>)</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing students' social emotional needs (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Show teacher concern for the learning process/students (<b>DTC</b>)</li> <li>Extrinsic motivation/tangible rewards (<b>ER</b>)</li> <li>Keeping students entertained</li> <li>Accept student limitations/any gains (<b>AL</b>)</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modeling (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>Teacher encouragement (<b>TA</b>)</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instill confidence in the students (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>Accept student limitations (<b>AL</b>)</li> <li>Address individual student's needs (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>Differentiation (<b>TA</b>)</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question #3:*

**Allison:** model, modeling. We just encourage them; we just try to challenge them in so many ways. Okay, for example, okay, first of all, we reward them. They like to copy, copy whatever you do. They imitate us (laughing). It's exciting! (p. 4) (**MO; TA**)

**Amanda:** well first, I show that that I love them, I care about them. They have to know that you care about them, and that's all you have to do. Plus there's different types of learners, so you have to teach everybody the same thing in different ways; games, songs, cooperative groups where they're in small groups, alone, and when they're in small groups with me at the teaching stations. Just make sure they're getting it right (laughing). (p. 6) (**TA; DTC**)

**Amber:** hmm, the way I motivate students to do their best is that first of all I try to tell them that there's nothing that they can't do. I tell them they can do it and you know if you cannot do it you let me know you can't do it and we can work through it, hmm. I just never tell them, you know, that they can't do. I just keep motivating, and tell them that they can do it. You can do this! We will do this! And I do small group sessions if there's a problem you know if I have some students they cannot do something I'll bring them aside. (p. 1) (**ISC; TA; WT**)

**Ashley:** Just by being there, somebody who they; they lack a lot of confidence and you've got to bring their confidence back up. And I really worked with A student as far as encouraging her, helping her believe in herself. Helping her, just trying to show her some ways that she can help herself because she. Let's just say that we worked on comprehension a lot too. She passed the CRCT reading portion, she didn't pass anything

else but she passed; she didn't pass anything else but she passed the reading. (Angeline and Ashley both laughing) (p. 2) **(ISC, TA; MO)**

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #3:*

**Denise:** well, I try to find something, for me personally; that each child identifies with. I really believe in students owning their learning, and when they own it, it's easy for me, I feel, to be that facilitator, or that guide; that enables them to do their best, whatever their best may be. I treat them with respect and I try to model responsibilities and respect and I tried to model that whole process of learning. (p. 2-3) **(TA; MO)**

**Dawn:** well, I've tried different things. First, the most important thing that I do is let them know that I really care about them, and I think if you do that, with a child, they will try harder. I find that no matter how low a student comes to me, once they know, you know, I really show them that I love them and I want them to succeed. Once they know that, Ms. Dawn really loves me; you know, she's not trying to do this; it's not just her job, they will put forth the effort; they might not pass that test, but I can go back and show their parent, look, they were here, now they're here. (p. 1-2) **(TA; DTC; AL)**

**David:** (hesitated) well, I try to set up some sort of reward program so that they can feel good about themselves whenever they do a great job at something, or even if they do a minimal job at something and that they are trying to do their best. (p. 2) **(ER; ISC)**

**Donna:** uhmm, I kind of push them and don't let them tell me what they can't do, cause I always tell them, you don't know until you try. You gotta encourage them, you know, to do their best. I tell them, do your best. Everybody's not always an A or being perfect. You gotta keep trying. I tell them, yes, you can do it. (p. 2) **(ISC, TA; AL)**

**Table 13.** Themes from participants' response to question #6:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate/model appropriate behavior for students (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Be a role model for students (<b>MO; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students to embrace the learning process (<b>EL</b>)</li> <li>• Address students' social emotional needs (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>• Develop life skills (<b>DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Teach students to own their own learning (<b>OL</b>)</li> <li>• Help students to find their niche (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Long range goals (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Be a role model for students (<b>MO; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Teachers are knowledgeable</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal setting (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Instill self-confidence in students (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>• Extrinsic rewards (<b>ER</b>)</li> <li>• Be a role model for students (<b>MO; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students to embrace the learning process (<b>EL</b>)</li> <li>• Teach life skills (<b>DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Addressing students social emotional needs (<b>ISC</b>)</li> <li>• Long range goal planning (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued focus on educational attainment</li> <li>• Address life skills (<b>DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Shaping future lives (<b>DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Be a role model for students (<b>MO; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a role model (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Demonstrate/model appropriate behavior (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Instill confidence in students (<b>ISC</b>)</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a "constant" resource (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Extrinsic rewards (<b>ER</b>)</li> <li>• Address life skills (<b>DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Be a role model for students (<b>MO; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students to embrace the learning process (<b>EL; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Long range goal planning (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question #6:*

**Allison:** what difference? Just to be there; whatever they need or any help, like facilitating. I just want to be there for my little ones. About anything, counseling, or whatever. (p. 6) (**MO**)

**Amanda:** hmm, let me think about it. Your question is what is difference can we really make? You're gonna have to look at the kids the first week of school and you'll see the difference. I mean because if we weren't there; if those kids did not have us, think about

it! Think about the difference in their lives especially our kids, ahmm, because my kids were taught manners this year, ahmm. Yeah, and ahmm, they were taught respect for themselves and for others. They didn't even know what that meant when they came to me, ahmm, so we change, ahmm, who they are, so that means we can change completely who they are. And we're not going to see, ahmm, wonderful things right away, but we will ahmm, when these kids graduate, ahmm, when these kids go on to have a professional career, when they're the President. (p. 9-10) **(DLS; MO; ISC)**

**Amber:** hmm, the difference that we can make, I think, is working together and showing professionalism among each other. Well, uhmm, (hesitating), maybe we have to show them that if they don't have it, we have to show them how to have self-respect; so I think that number one we have to show them how to have self-respect. (p. 4) **(MO; DLS)**

**Ashley:** (hesitated) motivating them to do their best. Just giving them a lot of encouragement showing them that when they do, do something, okay you did this, I know that you can do a little bit more. So I guess the thing I like doing is helping them to set goals. If you can do this, okay what can we do to get to the next point, and we move on from there. You do have to mold them; you have to set parameters for them. (p. 4-5) **(GS; DLS; ISC)**

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #6:*

**Denise:** A teacher and the student; the impact is enormous. If you're not knowledgeable, a child gets cheated out of the knowledge and learning that they needed. If you are, then you are able to impact on these children, not just content, and not just facts. But, experiences that help mold a child into being a lifelong learner, or you foster the dropout rate. You develop the psyche of the child. We all contribute to this whole thing of

working with children and developing lifelong learners. And in identifying the challenges; and those children do have challenges, so it's our responsibility to help those children meet those challenges and to see that they are productive citizens in whatever they do! (p. 9-10) **(DLS; TA; ISC)**

**Dawn:** I think we can be the deciding factor; if they decide they want to continue school or not, because we play an important role, in their lives; if we think that, we just teaching them a subject, but we are really teaching them, you know, about life, in a sense. There are the underlining things that kids pick up on while they're around you, and I think that it's important to guide them. We can be that deciding factor; we play a very important role, whether we want the job or not. When we took the teachers' test, you know, we took on a lot of titles. I think that's a big thing with kids, and we have to show them that, you know, with every action there's a consequence to that action. Show them ways to cope. We're teaching them how to get along with people. We're teaching them how to deal, kinda making the connection between what they learn in the classroom, to what they learn in the world. (p. 4-5) **(DLS; ISC; EL)**

**David:** we can make them look at school as a place that they really want to come to and enjoy learning. And realize that learning never stops, and they should never be satisfied with what they know, because there's always more out there for you to learn, and that just my philosophy; so as long as they have that attitude, I know that's going to stick with them for life. (p. 4-5) **(EL; DLS)**

**Donna:** I think you can make a big difference because what you do kind of affects every child; I constantly encourage them, and, you know, and tell them that they can do something, can be somebody! Because the teaching, is just a little part (laughing). I think

you have to be kind of a role model in so many aspects because they depend on you in so many ways. You have to give that encouragement! And when they feel like they can't do something and you kinda encourage them. You have to kind of relate to them and find ways to motivate them. (p. 5) (ISC; MO; DLS)

Teachers at both schools, Abbeyville and Doubleville, believe that with their assistance, students can be successful, and the teachers accomplish this goal by addressing the individual needs of the students. The teachers at Abbeyville used modeling and instilled confidence in their students to motivate them to do their best, and felt that they needed to be role models for the students; whereas, the teachers at Doubleville mainly used extrinsic rewards to accomplish this goal of student success. Doubleville's teachers also mentioned the theme of accepting any signs of student gains as a sign of progress.

**Individual school mission statements as a guide to student interaction.** Not only does Flamingo County have a systemic mission and vision statement, but each individual school in the district, also has their own separate mission and vision statement. As written previously, during the individual and group interviews that were conducted for the Flamingo County's SACS Council report with various leadership groups, it was not evident that the district's vision, mission, and goals were internalized by all groups; however, during the interview sessions that the researcher conducted with selected teachers, they were asked specifically in question number one about how their school's mission statement promoted the best interests of the students in their respective schools. Table 14 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals and from the Flamingo County's district SACS report; whereas, Table 15 details all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 14.** Themes from principal interviews and SACS report to question #1:

Principal Interviews	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School has a vision and mission statement</li> <li>• School district has its own separate vision and mission statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not evident that the district’s vision and mission statement are supported by all groups</li> </ul>

**Table 15.** Themes from participants’ response to question #1:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication to student success (<b>SU</b>)</li> <li>• Being a good role model (<b>RM</b>)</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long range goals (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Inflexibility of the curriculum (<b>IS</b>)</li> <li>• Differentiation (<b>TA</b>)</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term goal planning (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Being a good role model (<b>RM</b>)</li> <li>• Dedication to student success (<b>SU</b>)</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission statement guides instruction &amp; teacher interactions with students (<b>MS</b>)</li> <li>• Long range goals (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Teachers are role models (<b>RM</b>)</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication to student success (<b>SU</b>)</li> <li>• Long term goal planning (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Being a good role model (<b>RM</b>)</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with colleagues to generate ideas and strategies (<b>KC</b>)</li> <li>• Extrinsic rewards (<b>ER</b>)</li> <li>• Maintain a good atmosphere to help students achieve success</li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication to student success (<b>SU</b>)</li> <li>• Long term goal planning (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission statement guides instruction</li> <li>• Long range goals (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> <li>• Teachers help students achieve</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville’s Teachers Responses to Question #1:*

**Ashley:** ugh, I guess long-range goals. It's not just for the here but once they leave Abbeyville, it's that they're using their thinking. How we can make the right choices? (p. 1) (**LTG; RM; SU**)

**Amber:** well one of the ways that that mission statement helps children at Abbeyville. I think that it is promoted through the leadership the principal; principal does a lot of observations to see that that mission statement is carried through and the children are you know looked at. They are first! I feel like that the education of them comes first and the

teachers, they are you know, it's a hard-working group to promote that mission statement.

(p. 1) (SU)

**Amanda:** ugh, well the challenge is, I guess where they're coming from. So we have to prepare our kids and again the kids come to us at all levels. It's a very challenging community and we have to make sure that, that they don't just get through elementary school just get through middle school and get pregnant, and drop out, which is a big statistic out there. We have to start talking college and start talking graduation early. I mean I talk to my kindergartners about college, about what college they want to go to, uhmm and be thinking about you know what are your gifts. (p. 1-2) (LTG; SU)

**Allison:** (Laughing) uh, uhm. Well, we try to accelerate minds, ahmm, ahmm; through learning, so that students can become lifelong learners, productive members of society.

(p. 1-2) (LTG; SU)

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #1:*

**Donna:** I think that it [mission statement] instills in students and teachers, you know, that all students can learn regardless of their disability, uhmm, you know kinda increases motivation, you know, for the students, you know, that they can do it, and the teachers help them achieve. (p. 1) (MS; SU)

**David:** well, they do a number of things. We have meetings all the time, trying to figure different kinds of strategies, strategies that can be used in the classroom to promote that goal. Ahmm, ahmm, exchange of ideas, on how to maintain a good learning atmosphere in the classroom, uhmm, looking out for the safety of the child and coming up with different discipline programs that also include rewards as well as disciplinary actions. (p. 1) (KC; ER)

**Dawn:** Well I do think that we want all the students, even the students at Doubleville to be the best that they can be, and by helping them, and teaching them respect, and teaching them how to be. We want them to be lifelong learners. We want them to leave Doubleville, and to be able to go to whatever middle school, high school, whatever, and we want them to be successful; so that's what I think. I think that the worst thing is not meeting students where they are. (p. 1) **(LTG; SU)**

**Denise:** well, it gives teachers an inspiration, a guide, for their instruction, and for their interactions with children. I believe that if you want something out of the children you have to model it and believe in it yourself. And I kept that in mind what I was addressing the children, whether it was discipline or conducting my instruction. A mindset of personal motivation toward being a lifelong learner; learning not just what I need to learn in third-grade, for the CRCT, but how all of my learning builds upon more learning, throughout my life. (p. 1) **(MS; MO)**

The responses provided by the teachers from both schools differed from the information that was found in the Flamingo County's Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council report; in that the report indicated that the district's vision, mission, and goals were not internalized by all groups; however, the interviewed teachers embraced the mission statements of their respective schools, which they used to guide their instruction, and interactions with students. Both groups of teachers indicated that their respective mission statements were used to promote the atmosphere in their individual classrooms, and that the mission statement was used in planning long term goals to ensure that their students achieve future success. Additionally, the theme of dedication to student success was prevalent among the teachers' responses, and Abbeyville's teachers indicated that they were role models for their students.

**Interpersonal skills and academic emphasis.** As written previously, teachers who foster relationships with their students tend to create a more personal and long lasting association for their students. This academic emphasis on learning, allows students to embrace the educational process, and rise to the high expectations that have been set for them. A teacher's belief in a student's ability to benefit academically from the course matter that they teach has the potential to influence students' academic achievement and in this age of accountability, a teacher's ability to influence the foundation of the educational process creates a profound environment which can have far reaching effects on the education of students. As written in the Flamingo County's SACS Council report, one strength of the system is its committed teachers who had a passion, courage, and vision for greatness; however, it was recommended that Flamingo County establish, implement, and monitor a system wide continuous process of improvement that focused on student performance. During the telephone interviews with the principals, they indicated that they were open to suggestions from anyone to help improve student progress and they reported that their buildings fostered a climate that was conducive to student learning and growth. Since Abbeyville achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, and Doubleville did not, the interviewed teachers' responses to question eight, which asked; how they helped the students in their classroom make significant progress, and number nine, which asked; how they got through to hard to reach and unmotivated students in their room, produced valuable information. Table 16 details the information gathered from the telephone interviews with the principals and from the Flamingo County's district SACS report; whereas, Tables 17 and 18 detail all the themes that were discovered from the interview transcripts with the teachers.

**Table 16.** Themes from principal interviews and SACS report to question #8:

Principal Interviews	SACS report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School climate is conducive to student learning and growth</li> <li>• Suggestions to improve student progress were always welcomed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System has committed teachers who have a passion, courage, and vision for greatness</li> </ul>

**Table 17.** Themes from participants' response to question #8:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drill &amp; repetition (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Variation of teaching methods (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Individualized instructional approaches (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Skill specific instruction (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Be a role model for students (<b>RM</b>)</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine students' beginning point (<b>DG</b>)</li> <li>• Educate students about their personal strengths &amp; weaknesses</li> <li>• Celebrate all student progress (<b>AL</b>)</li> <li>• Teacher must be knowledgeable</li> <li>• Differentiation of instruction (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Do your best as a teacher</li> <li>• Student has to take ownership of their learning to be successful (<b>SO</b>)</li> <li>• Challenging to determine students' needs</li> <li>• Teachers provide tools for student success</li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized instructional approaches (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Goal setting for students</li> <li>• Modifications (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Skill specific instruction</li> <li>• Personal ownership of student failure</li> <li>• Challenging to address all of the students' needs</li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data to guide instruction (<b>DG</b>)</li> <li>• Re-teach as necessary</li> <li>• Differentiation of instruction (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Student has to take ownership of their learning to be successful (<b>SO</b>)</li> <li>• Extra efforts yield above average student success</li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drill &amp; repetition (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Individualized instructional approaches (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Modifications (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Skill specific instruction (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Proud of students/monitors future progress</li> <li>• Dedication to student success (<b>DED</b>)</li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra resources/rewards/programs help students to be successful (<b>EH</b>)</li> <li>• Individual student progress (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Learning is a continuous process</li> <li>• Accept all student gains (<b>AL</b>)</li> <li>• Long range goals (<b>GS; DLS</b>)</li> </ul>
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized instructional methods (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Skill specific instruction (<b>TA</b>)</li> <li>• Additional teacher instruction produces success</li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental &amp; administrative support is needed for student success (<b>EH</b>)</li> <li>• Drill &amp; repetition (<b>MO</b>)</li> <li>• Extra resources/rewards/programs help students to be successful (<b>EH</b>)</li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question #8:*

**Ashley:** The goal setting. I think that's been the most helpful and they need a lot of encouragement. Some kids, it takes a lot to figure out what they need. Yeah it's challenging trying to find what they need, but once you find out what their weaknesses are, you can kind of plan the curriculum around that. I did not have a good year this past year. I focused too much on reading and not enough on math, so my kids did terrible on the math. Angeline: but they passed the reading and that's all they needed to pass? Ashley: no I'm not happy, I'm not. Plus I have those personal goals, and that's when I said, okay, my scores were this way last year so this is what I want to see the next year. (p. 6-7) (TA)

**Amber:** what I did do with them. That was that group that got more, by my bringing them to me. That group, their problem was more with reading comprehension or fluency. Those were the skills that I would work on with them. (p. 6) (TA)

**Amanda:** You have to teach on different levels, ahmm; and I call it triple dipping because there are some kids that have to be triple dipped, so they get the regular teaching stations, but it's still longer than some of the other kids because they need more, and then they get extra teaching from my assistant, ahmm; and during centers, ahmm, there's learning games, ahmm, that they play. You have to look at where they're at; ahmm, and try to get them to where, above where you want them to be (p. 14-15) (TA; MO)

**Allison:** drill the sounds. We do a lot of drills, ahmm; sounds, talk about pictures. We do a whole lot of stuff with reading and they love it. We do sight words, sound them out, phonemic awareness, they love it. They know it so well that they can come up and teach the class, I'm serious! (p. 9) (MO)

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #8:*

**Donna:** I think, I have help to do that. With support; I gotta have a parent to do that. I tell them that we can do it all day long here, but if there's no support at home. You have to have the student, the parent, along with the principal. When I have all of that, then I can make it significant, but I can't do it by myself, I can try all day but I don't think I can do it by myself; I haven't seen it done yet, with just me. When I have all of that in place, it makes a big difference. (p. 7-8) **(EH; SO)**

**David:** Well I make them understand that a leap is exactly that, just a leap. There's other leaps to be made, and don't be satisfied with the first leap, because you did so nicely, and everything, you know, because you have other leaps you have to do (both laughing); so just to let them know that everything that they're learning is a steppingstone to learning something better and more encompassing. We have all sorts of programs in place that we use to supplement our regular teaching. I try to utilize all the technological programs that they have in place, to keep it interesting for them. (p. 6-7) **(EH)**

**Dawn:** what I do, at the beginning I look at. I'm a data person, so I look at it, and I see, I look at the big picture; see what the most people, what they don't have. What they don't get, and then I kinda start from there. If they don't pick it up that first time, I give them every opportunity. And then I do something different for those students, I break it down another way, then I will sit there, and we will go over it, but mainly, I've even bought different things. And I think that year, that I really put forth that much effort, I think I had two students that year in my class that did not pass. The rest of the kids in my class passed, but we did so much work (both laughing). I always say it's gonna be up to them; I've done this and I've done that. (p. 6-7) **(DG; TA; SO; EH)**

**Denise:** First, I have to identify where they really are. I believe that as a teacher, it is important that you deal with the dynamics in the classroom; that you set those norms for behavior and expectations for everyone, and then once you do, it's important that children know where they're at. As a teacher, I have to know my stuff. Be knowledgeable. I have to know how to deliver my stuff, which is training, and then I have to be able to deliver that information to the child in the way that they are able to grasp the information, and retain it, and be able to apply it. That includes the differentiation of instruction. (p. 13-14) **(DG; TA)**

**Table 18.** Themes from participants' response to question #9:

Abbeyville Elementary		Doubleville Elementary	
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrinsic student motivation <b>(ISM)</b></li> <li>• Extrinsic rewards <b>(ER)</b></li> <li>• Teacher success <b>(TES)</b></li> <li>• Address individual students' needs <b>(TA)</b></li> <li>• Academic success guides instruction/interactions</li> </ul>	Denise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep students informed <b>(EXP)</b></li> <li>• Determine &amp; address individual students' needs <b>(TA)</b></li> <li>• Address students' social emotional needs <b>(ISC)</b></li> <li>• Students have to be open to the learning process <b>(SO)</b></li> <li>• Differentiation <b>(TA)</b></li> </ul>
Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept self limitations <b>(ASL)</b></li> <li>• Intrinsic student motivation <b>(ISM)</b></li> </ul>	Dawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have to be available to students</li> <li>• Accept student limitations <b>(ASL)</b></li> <li>• Students have to open to the learning process <b>(SO)</b></li> <li>• Differentiation <b>(TA)</b></li> </ul>
Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrinsic rewards <b>(ISM)</b></li> <li>• Explain the learning process to students <b>(EXP)</b></li> <li>• Provide hands-on approaches to learning/assessment <b>(TA)</b></li> <li>• Teacher success <b>(TES)</b></li> </ul>	Donna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perseverance <b>(DED)</b></li> <li>• Address students' social emotional needs <b>(ISC)</b></li> <li>• Become constant/maintain structure</li> <li>• Consistency b/w home &amp; school <b>(EH)</b></li> <li>• Collaboration b/w teachers, administrator, &amp; parent for student success <b>(EH)</b></li> </ul>
Allison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher success <b>(TES)</b></li> <li>• Hands-on approaches to learning <b>(TA)</b></li> <li>• Addressing individual students' needs <b>(TA)</b></li> </ul>	David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accentuate student positives</li> <li>• Address students' social emotional needs <b>(ISC)</b></li> <li>• Parent involvement aid student success <b>(EH)</b></li> <li>• Keep students informed <b>(EXP)</b></li> <li>• Extrinsic rewards <b>(EH)</b></li> </ul>

*Abbeyville's Teachers Responses to Question #9:*

**Ashley:** sometimes I don't! Yeah, uhm, it was, kinda like up and down. One day was fine, next not so good. Angeline: (prompt) but what are some of the things that you did on that day that everything was fine? Ashley: tried to give a little bit more responsibility, ugh give a little more freedom. Angeline: freedom to? Ashley: do things more. (p. 7) **(ISM; ASL)**

**Amber:** Well, I try to get through to them. I will. I continue to teach but I will go to them. I would just keep teaching and I would call on them, and if they didn't give me an answer, I waited for them, and I'll tell you something else that I did especially on spelling, I had a board, super spellers. And they knew if I didn't call their name out to color their paper to be put it up on the bulletin board then they know their grade wasn't so good. (p. 8-9) **(ISM; ER; TES)**

**Amanda:** ugh, well there's one thing that I do, that I hug um a lot. Other things that I do, I love um. I just love um a lot and I talk to them, but you have to, uhmm, let them know that you love them, and that you care about them, explain to them why you're doing this. I'm not giving you this work because I'm a mean old teacher. This is practice! Remember, us learning this? This is you practicing; showing me that you know how to do it. See you have to show me. You have to explain to the kids why they're doing what they're doing. (p. 17-18) **(EXP; TES; ISM)**

**Allison:** This past year, I had two I was trying to reach. This little girl, she came to school and she had anxiety. I know how she felt, so I worked with her. As soon as she hit the classroom, she would start crying; especially when it was time to go to nap because she didn't want to take a nap. Since she didn't want to lie down, I let her sit at the table, and I

gave her some puzzles, ahmm; quiet activities to do while the others are sleeping. I just tried to work with her. She was having a hard time. (p. 9-10) (TES; TA)

*Doubleville's Teachers Responses to Question #9:*

**Donna:** sometimes, you have to give that tough love. Really you do, because, I think those are the ones that I end up loving the most. I don't give up on them. I know I'm hard on you, because I want you to succeed, but I let them know what happens if you don't. I think, kinda not giving up on them, and they see we care about them. Yeah, not giving up on them; we all have to work together! (p. 8-9) (ISC; DED; PS; SU)

**David:** most of the people who fall in that category require a lot of encouragement; a lot of rewarding things, especially oral rewards, you know, and try to bring a smile to their face, and let them know that they might be slow in this area, but there're a lot of areas that they're good in, and I remind them constantly of the areas, they're good in; because kids will get down in a minute, if they make an F; they just think that they're not going to be able to learn anything, and I have to show them that progress; that's what you want to do. You know, and that will bring a little smile to their face and they'll feel a little bit better about themselves. And sometimes I pull them aside, and I would have one-on-one conferences with them, and let them know how they're doing. I try to keep more contact with those parents too. To let them know where they are and how they're reacting in class. Things that they might be able to do at home. Things that they can do to help me out so that when they come to school. (p. 7-8) (EH; ISC)

**Dawn:** What to do? (Both laughing). Like you said, I try to treat them like everybody else, and I work with them, when they allow me to, you know. I believe you can't force a person to learn if they don't want to learn. Just give it there, just let them know that when

they're ready to open up to you, you're there. You're there for them. (p. 7-8) **(SO; AL; ASL)**

**Denise:** Me, find out why they're having a difficult time. **Angeline:** (prompt) in finding it out, do you ask them, do you go to them directly? **Denise:** sometimes, you go to them, sometimes I don't think test scores can tell you everything. Just tells you what was going on at that particular time, and don't get me wrong, there is a time and place for test scores, but, the hard-to-reach children; there's a reason that that they're hard-to-reach. Maybe we're reaching them the wrong way. Or maybe they're hard to reach because of some personal aspect; it could be a personality conflict. So, I'm finding that you have those children that come to you with that emotional baggage or baggage of prior educational experiences. We need to meet them; here we have to do something different. (p. 14-16) **(ISC; TA)**

When asked how they helped students in their classrooms make significant progress, the prevalent theme was the usage of individualized instructional approaches. All of the interviewed teachers were confident in their ability to individually impart the necessary information to help their students achieve academic success. In addressing the hard to reach and unmotivated students, the teachers revealed that they had to address the social emotional needs of their students to be successful, which involved explanations to the students at Doubleville; whereas, at Abbeyville, the teachers used intrinsic rewards to accomplish this goal of academic student success. Since the teachers at both schools were confident about their ability to successful teach their students, teacher efficacy does not appear to have an impact on a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

## Summary

Abbeyville Elementary and Doubleville Elementary are similar in physical size, demographics of the student population, staff demographics, administrator to teacher ratio; and their principals indicated similar information about staff turn-over ratio; and the information listed on the School Matters website indicated that both were considered to be safe schools. However, during the 2007/2008 school year, Abbeyville Elementary achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and Doubleville Elementary did not. During the interview sessions, participants from both schools were equally cooperative, and willing to participate in the qualitative research study.

Information gathered from the individual teacher interview sessions, the school district's SACS accreditation report, the researcher's observations within each school building, and telephone interviews conducted with both building principals indicated that there were some similarities and differences among the feelings of teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate within Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary schools. In both schools, the interviewed teachers all validated the theme of having a principal's support, in regards to discipline or interactions with parents, as being important in meeting their job related needs, with the exception of David, the lone male teacher in the sample. Relating to job satisfaction and the role of the principal, Abbeyville's teachers displayed themes that addressed the principal's ability to be a leader within the school, their ability to communicate effectively with their staff members, and to be seen as a disciplinarian. In contrast, at Doubleville, the school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, the prevalent themes relating to teacher job satisfaction pertained to the principal's ability to address the social emotional needs of the staff by being an administrator who was seen as being flexible, appreciative of teachers and as

one who showed empathy towards their faculty. As found in this study, feelings of job satisfaction did not appear to have an impact on a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

In regards to feelings of teacher morale, the teachers at Abbeyville indicated that they had personal relationships with other staff members, especially their team members, where they communicated with each other, inside and outside of school, about both school related, and non-school related matters; however, such interactions were not mentioned among the teachers at Doubleville Elementary. Therefore, there seemed to be a sense of trust, friendliness, and enthusiasm among Abbeyville's interviewed teachers, whereas, when answering questions related to teacher morale, the teachers at Doubleville reported an underlying theme about respect for the teaching profession and a mutual respect colleagues' ideas. These findings indicate that teacher morale can have an impact on a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

In regards to feelings of teacher efficacy, both sets of interviewed teachers indicated that they believed that they had the ability to help their students achieve academic success. All of the teachers noted that they used individualized instructional approaches and addressed the social emotional needs of their students to help in this endeavor. At Doubleville, the teachers explained the process to their students; but at Abbeyville, the teachers used intrinsic motivation to help accomplish this goal of student success. Therefore, these findings indicate that in this study, teacher efficacy does not appear to impact a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

## **Chapter V**

### **Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

In the era of the No Child Left Behind Act, principals have to be very well informed when targeting areas to ensure that their schools make Adequate Yearly Progress. Although there are many directions in which principals can turn to address these concerns, none is as important as addressing the climate within their respective school buildings. There are several components of school climate that a principal can target, but the areas of teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy have shown promise when addressing school climate concerns. Therefore, if a principal targeted those areas to improve the climate within their buildings, that could help the school move towards the goal of achieving Adequate Yearly Progress.

#### **Introduction**

As noted by several researchers, (Mackey et al., 2006; Olson, 2000; Abu-Saad & Hendrix, 1995), a principal is in a position to influence a school's climate and through that influence, indirectly, the learning process of all individuals within the school building. Teachers are also intricately involved in the school climate of their respective buildings.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to deepen the understanding of how teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy, as components of school climate impact a school's achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress. The researcher used a semi-structured interview instrument that consisted of ten interview questions that were designed to guide this process of inquiry and answer the overarching research question and subsequent sub-questions. A qualitative approach was utilized so that the participants could use their own words to describe the real world differences that exist with respect to teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of the school climate in their buildings. Transcribed interviews from the audio

recordings were edited as necessary to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the names of other individuals, schools, districts, and geographic regions. As necessary, the researcher also edited the transcribed interviews to remove repetitive information and information that was not relevant to the research questions. Additional data sources included information pertaining to both schools located on the School Matters website, telephone interviews with both principals, and information from Flamingo's County SACS report.

The researcher chose four teachers from Abbeyville Elementary, which achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, and four teachers from Doubleville, which did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, for a total of eight elementary school teachers using a purposive sampling of those who responded to the Participant Consent Letter (see Appendix C). Six of the teachers in the research study were representative of the population of the schools, in that they were predominantly African-American females. Of the remaining two participants, one was an African-American male and the other was a Caucasian female. The participants taught several grade levels in their respective buildings and all but one had the opportunity to work with at least one principal other than their current one. All of the participants had been teaching for a minimum of five years and had been in their respective buildings for a prolonged period of time.

Chapter Five of this qualitative research study was used to allow the researcher the opportunity to reach conclusions about the research and to summarize implications from the study. The research question and sub-questions focused on teacher job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate and their impact on a school's achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress. The overarching research question of the study was: How do the components of school climate contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress status in Flamingo

County, Georgia elementary schools? The following sub-questions were designed to explore the overarching research question:

1. How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
2. How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
3. How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected through the in-depth semi-structured interview sessions conducted with four elementary school teachers who taught at Abbeyville and four teachers who taught at Doubleville Elementary during the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 school years. A thorough review of the schools' report cards was conducted, information pertaining to both schools was obtained from the School Matters website, and both principals were interviewed via telephone and indicated that they believed that their respective environments were conducive to student learning and provided a setting where students and teachers were recognized for their accomplishments, the faculty turn-over rate was low, and anyone was permitted to voice their opinions. A qualitative research design was used to give a deeper, richer understanding of the teachers' real world feelings of job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to deepen the understanding of how feelings of job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy as components of school climate, impact a school's ability to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress. Data sources used included information pertaining to both schools located on the School Matters website, telephone interviews with both principals, and information from Flamingo's County SACS report. Additionally, eight teachers, four from each school, were interviewed and their responses to the interview questions were

sorted by the three research sub-questions in order to establish a foundation for the analysis. The researcher analyzed the transcripts and identified common themes, ideas, trends, and recurring patterns which were reported in Chapter IV. In this chapter, the researcher used the findings related to the research sub-questions and other pertinent information that emerged from the interviews to draw conclusions and to consider the implications from the study.

**The following research findings were reported for Research Sub-question 1:**

How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

- All of the interviewed teachers, with the exception of David, indicated that they wanted their principals to be supportive of their role as a teacher, as it pertained to discipline and parent concerns
- Abbeyville's teachers wanted their principal to be seen as a leader in the school, a disciplinarian, and one who communicated with their faculty
- Doubleville's teachers wanted a principal who was flexible, appreciative of teachers, and respected teachers
- Abbeyville's teachers were focused on student success, even though they expressed dissatisfaction with the school system
- Doubleville's teachers expressed satisfaction with teaching students and the maintenance of a positive outlook, and said that their personal feelings did not influence their professional obligations

School-based factors which included school leadership, have the ability to influence a teacher's sense of job satisfaction (Mertler, 2002; Hallinger et al., 1996; Evans, 2001; Bolin, 2007); and as displayed by the participants in this research study, principal support as it pertains to discipline and addressing parent concerns was a prevalent theme. As noted by Houchard,

(2005) and Ma & MacMillan, (1999), teacher interactions with the principal have the potential to influence teacher job satisfaction and morale, and in turn, these teacher-principal interactions can influence student achievement. All of the participants indicated that the principal should provide academic and discipline guidance when approached by teachers and as noted by (Paredes, 1991; Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006), principals have the ability to support teachers during the performance of their duties to promote a favorable learning environment.

As found in this research study, the participants at Abbeyville indicated that their feelings of job satisfaction were not being met; however they continued to teach to address the needs of the students in their classrooms. Researchers have found that intrinsic rewards, such as a sense of accomplishment can prove very gratifying to teachers, because when teachers feel validated in the provision of their duties, this can be translated into positive and more involved instructional methods for children which can increase student academic achievement (Papanastasiou & Zembylas, 2005; Caprara et al., 2003; Evans, 2000; Black, 2001; Abu-Saad & Hendrix, 1995).

Students at Doubleville Elementary did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, and the interviewed teachers mentioned that they wanted to be respected by their principal. As noted by Lauer (2005), a principal's ability to express his or her respect for their staff allows the employees to perform up to their real capabilities. Doubleville's interviewed teachers also indicated that their personal feelings did not influence their professional obligations. Alternatively, Abbeyville's interviewed teachers linked their feelings of job satisfaction to their dedication to student success. This correlated with the idea that a school's climate has the potential to impact all areas of the school building (Cohen, 2007; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Kallestad et al., 1998; Lindahl, 2006).

**The following research findings were reported for Research Sub-question 2:**

How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

- Abbeyville's teachers expressed their desire to impact students in a positive manner, and they thought working at Abbeyville provided them a venue to do so
- Abbeyville's teachers indicated close relationships with their team members where they socialized in and away from the school about personal and professional matters
- Doubleville's teachers indicated that they felt like a family, who had a mutual respect for each other, and came together in spite of their differences
- Abbeyville's teachers indicated that they liked the working atmosphere at the school, in addition to liking the teachers and students there
- Doubleville's teachers indicated that they wanted their faculty members to be team players who worked together for the common good of the student during school hours, regardless of their personal feelings

Marks, (1995) indicated that working conditions, job demands, and the atmosphere within classrooms between students and teachers could influence student achievement.

Doubleville's teachers, where the school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, indicated that the teachers felt like a family and came together in spite of their differences; however, this did not translate into the school achieving Adequate Yearly Progress. Good colleague interactions existed among the teachers at Abbeyville and Doubleville; however, the teachers at Abbeyville had more interactions among team members, which indicated a greater sense of friendliness, enthusiasm, and confidence amongst the teachers. As written by Smith, (1971) and Smith, (1976), effective organizations have high staff morale, which increases the level of participation of teachers in the learning process.

As noted by Briggs & Richardson (1992), high morale is a pre-requisite to creating unity within the school building, and low morale can be detrimental to this process. This idea is validated by Hart (1994) and Vail (2005), who both wrote that positive teaching experiences increase morale, which leads to better school climate because teachers' attitudes trickle down to the students. In contrast, low morale can result in the formation of cliques. Briggs & Richardson also noted that ways to improve teacher morale include allowing colleagues to communicate freely with each other and by showing employees that they are appreciated.

The teachers at Abbeyville socialized and communicated away from school about non-school related matters, especially among team members. As noted by the participants at Doubleville, they wanted their colleagues to work together as a team that shares ideas and materials, put aside personal feelings, and worked towards a common goal throughout the school day, which are all ideas that improved teacher morale (Hoy et al., 1991; Smith, 1966; Korkmaz, 2006; Black, 2001). The findings of this study indicate that teacher morale can impact a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

**The following research findings were reported for Research Sub-question 3:**

How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

- All of the teachers indicated confidence about their ability to prepare their students to achieve future goals, and be successful academically, which included preparation to be life skills
- Differentiation during instruction was used to help students achieve academic success; teachers at Abbeyville used intrinsic motivation and modeling, whereas teachers at Doubleville used extrinsic motivation
- Students' social emotional needs had to be addressed to help students achieve academically

The teachers at Abbeyville and Doubleville Elementary indicated confidence about their ability to prepare their students to achieve future goals which included attending college and preparing them to become life long learners as found in this research study. A teacher's belief in a student's ability to benefit academically from the course matter that they teach has the potential to influence students' academic achievement (Goddard et al., 2000a; Goddard et al., 2004). This interrelatedness between student achievement and teacher efficacy can produce a positive relationship that produces benefits for both students and teachers. Freeman et al., (1999); Adams & Adams, (2000); and Mackenzie, (2007) indicated that teachers' beliefs in their ability to help their students achieve academically produced a profound effect, and as found in this research study, teachers displayed confidence in their ability to help students achieve academically and learn the life skills, necessary for adequate functioning. Despite the presence of these feelings in both schools; however, one school, Doubleville, did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress. It should be noted that teachers at Abbeyville used intrinsic motivators, for example, instilling confidence in the students' ability to be successful, used intangible rewards like verbal praise, and demonstrated strategies for success, while the teachers at Doubleville used extrinsic motivators such as, treats and other tangible rewards.

Usually individuals do not learn alone and need the support of others who are knowledgeable about specific topics in order to become successful in mastering curricular requirements and skills. The participants at both schools in this research study indicated that the use of differentiation during instruction helped students to achieve academic success. This information was validated by Hamre & Pianta, (2005); Caprara et al., (2006); Freeman et al., (1999) who found that student achievement was correlated with an instructional support for learning, but despite this, one school did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress.

Strategies including tangible rewards and intangible rewards were used by the participants in this research study to ensure the academic success of their students. Roney et al., (2007) indicated that most people enjoy accolades and would do anything in their power to receive recognition for a job well-done, and Goddard et al., (2000a) concurred by noting that student achievement was significantly and positively correlated with teacher efficacy. The ability of a teacher to have confidence in their ability to have students gain meaningful knowledge from the information that teachers provide, has proven beneficial to students, and teachers, alike. As found in this research study, both groups of teachers were confident in their ability to successfully teach their students, so teacher efficacy does not appear to impact a school's ability to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

## **Conclusions**

Conclusions drawn from the results of the study include the following:

1. High teacher morale existed at the school which achieved Adequate Yearly Progress.
2. Principals were viewed as significant factors in their support of teachers in regards to discipline and academic concerns.
3. Teachers in the school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress wanted a principal who addressed their social emotional needs—was appreciative of teachers and empathetic towards their needs; however, in the school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, teachers indicated the need to have a principal who was seen as a disciplinarian and a leader who communicated with faculty members. Therefore, a principal should be seen as a strong disciplinarian who communicates with his or her faculty.
4. Good colleague interactions existed in both schools; however, in the school that achieved Adequate Yearly Progress, close interactions existed among teachers, both in and away from

the school; so opportunities should be provided so that teachers can interact with their colleagues in and away from the school building to positively impact feelings of teacher morale.

5. In the school that did not achieve Adequate Yearly Progress, the teachers wanted their faculty members to be team players, who worked together for the common good of the student, and this relationship was already fully operational in the school that Achieved Yearly Progress, therefore, providing opportunities to foster team building would be beneficial to a improving a school's climate.
6. Teachers have confidence in their ability to prepare students to achieve future goals, which includes becoming life long learners, and in both schools teachers relied on extrinsic and intrinsic motivators to aid them in this process.
7. Principals need to have a vision and should be able to communicate that vision to others, so that needs of the students are at the forefront of every decision. Having a vision that is conveyed to the members within the building can have an impact on the quality and character of life within the school building.
8. The atmosphere within a school building was a contributor to a teacher's desire to continue teaching at their specific school and both schools had teachers who have been members of the school building for at least four years; thereby indicating that certain aspects made the teachers want to remain in the building.

### **Implications**

The researcher anticipated that this research study would add to the body of knowledge relative to the impact that school climate has on student achievement. Based upon the research findings of this study, considerations should be made of the following:

1. The researcher's findings indicate that principals contribute to the overall climate in the building and teachers want to know that principals can provide guidance about academics and discipline when they are approached, because principals are seen as the instructional leader within the school building, and as such, support is one of the major attributes that teachers want their principals to possess. Principals and aspiring building leaders should be interested in the results of this study to use as a resource in their interactions with the teachers and the atmosphere that they cultivate in their buildings.
2. Leaders and aspiring leaders should explore the relationships among the members in their buildings to help foster relationships where colleagues can utilize each other as resources. Things that might cultivate such a relationship include allowing teachers to spend time discussing school and non-school related matters.
3. The research findings indicate that teachers' feelings of job satisfaction may impact a school's climate, so leaders and aspiring leaders should want to make sure that they address the job related needs of their staff.
4. School climate has the ability to impact all areas of the school building, so principals who want to promote a healthy school climate, should want to make sure that the climate within the school building is one that is conducive for learning to take place and one that promotes dedication to student success. As such, addressing the morale and feelings of job satisfaction of their staff would be a great beginning.
5. Staff development opportunities should be provided to school level administrators to help them create situations away from the school building so that colleagues can positively interact with each other.

6. University teacher programs should provide opportunities for prospective teachers to network with others, thereby creating a supportive atmosphere in which the prospective teachers can learn additional ways to motivate their students and have an avenue to share the successes and trials within their chosen profession.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

From the findings of this research study, further studies are warranted related to school climate:

1. This study should be replicated in other grade levels as comparative findings may give a clearer understanding of school climate at different levels.
2. The researcher's findings were limited to teacher job satisfaction, efficacy, and morale as components of school climate. Further research should be considered involving additional components of school climate.
3. This research study involved teachers at all grade levels in the school building; however, since Adequate Yearly Progress in elementary schools is based on the academic performance of students in third and fifth grade; further research should be considered with teachers in those specified grade levels as a comparison.
4. This study should be expanded in a specific area of education, such as exploring the school climate among high school ninth grade teachers.
5. It would probably be helpful for principals who wanted to address the area of teacher morale to make sure that teachers experienced an environment that promoted a sense of confidence, enthusiasm, and friendliness among colleagues.

**Dissemination**

Georgia school principals, and those aspiring to be building level supervisors, should have access to the findings of this research study. The participants in this research study provided rich, detailed accounts of their feelings of job satisfaction, morale, and efficacy in their respective buildings. The findings of this study would be helpful to others who want to address the school climate in their buildings. Copies of this research study will be made available in the library at Georgia Southern University, and will be available electronically through the doctoral dissertations website, so that anyone who wants to pursue it may do so. The findings of this research study should also be presented to superintendent of the school district where this study was conducted.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions Prior To Review

Research question 1: How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status?

1. How does your school mission promote the best interests of the children in this school?
2. What do you expect from the principal? Your colleagues? Your students? Your parents?  
Your community? Please respond to one or all of these.
3. How do your feelings of job satisfaction compare with other jobs that you have had?
- 3b. Have these feelings affected your willingness to teach?

Research question 2: How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

4. Describe your relationship with your colleagues.
5. What are the benefits of working here for you and your colleagues?

Research question 3: How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?

6. How do you get through to the hard to reach and unmotivated students in your room?
7. How do you help the students in your classroom make significant progress?
8. How do you motivate students to do their best?
9. What difference can you and your colleagues really make in the lives of students?

## Appendix B

### Qualitative Item Analysis Prior To Review

Interview Question	Source	Research Questions
1) How does your school mission promote the best interests of the children in this school?	Cowdery, 2004; Wolf et al., 2000	How does teacher job satisfaction contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status?
2) What do you expect from the principal? Your colleagues? Your students? Your parents? Your community? Please respond to one or all of these.	Blase & Blase, 1999; Bogler, 2001; Capa Aydin & Hoy, 2005; Dellar, 1998; Evans, 2001	
3) How do your feelings of job satisfaction compare with other jobs that you have had?	Churchill et al., 1976; Korkmaz, 2007	
3b) Have these feelings affected your willingness to teach?	Black, 2001; Evans, 1992	
4) Describe your relationship with your colleagues.	Rempel & Bentley, 1970; White & Stevens, 1988; Mays Woods & Weasmer, 2004	How does teacher morale contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
5) What are the benefits of working here for you and your colleagues?	Williams & Lane, 1975; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Korkmaz, 2006	
6) How do you get through to the hard to reach and unmotivated students in your room?	Hausman & Goldring, 2001; Henze & Arriaza, 2006; Hoy et al., 2006	How does teacher efficacy contribute to a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status?
7) How do you help the students in your classroom make significant progress?	Edwards et al., 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Freeman et al., 1999	
8) How do you motivate students to do their best?	Poulou, 2007; Brown & Medway, 2007; Henson, 2002	
9) What difference can you and your colleagues really make in the lives of students?	Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Albanese, 2004; Henson, 2001	

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions After Review

1. How does your school mission promote the best interests of the children in this school? (Sub question 3).
2. What are the benefits of working here for you and your colleagues? (Sub question 2)
3. How do you motivate students to do their best? (Sub question 3)
4. Describe your relationship with your colleagues. (Sub question 2)
5. (i) What do you expect from the principal? (Sub question 1) (ii) Your colleagues? (Sub question 2) (iii) Your students? (Sub question 3) (iv) Your parents? (Sub question 1) (v) Your community? (Sub question 1). Please respond to one or all of these.
6. What difference can you and your colleagues really make in the lives of students? (Sub question 3)
- 7a. How do your feelings of job satisfaction compare with other jobs that you have had? (Sub question 1)
- 7b. Have these feelings affected your willingness to teach? (Sub question 1)
8. How do you help the students in your classroom make significant progress? (Sub question 3)
9. How do you get through to the hard to reach and unmotivated students in your room? (Sub question 3)

## Appendix D

### Participant Consent Letter

My name is Angeline E. Miller and I am in the process of completing a research study as part of the requirements for an Educational Administration doctoral degree at Georgia Southern University. The purpose of this study is to understand how teacher morale, job satisfaction, and efficacy as components of school climate can influence student achievement as measured by the Adequate Yearly Progress status of two elementary schools located in County (Flamingo County will be used as a pseudonym), Georgia.

Participation in this research study will include the completion of an individual taped interview session that will involve ten questions which should take approximately sixty minutes of your time to complete. The taped interview sessions will be transcribed after the interview session is completed and you will have access to the transcript which can be reviewed for accuracy and clarity of the information that you provide.

There should be no adverse risks as a result of responding to these questions and participation is voluntary. As a participant, you will have to think about your personal feelings when responding to the questions. Participating in this research study will allow you the opportunity to express your opinions about the climate in your school. If you interested in participating, please be assured that your responses will be kept absolutely confidential because Dr. Reavis and I will be the only persons with access to the data.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please complete the attached information, and you will be contacted to set up the interview session. Thanks in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Angeline Miller

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have taught for \_\_\_\_\_ years

I have taught at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary for \_\_\_\_\_ years

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

The best time to contact me is: \_\_\_\_\_ via \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about this study, please call me, Angeline Miller at (706) 560-9459, or my dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Charles Reavis at (912) 481-1025. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

## Appendix E

### Informed Letter of Consent



*COLLEGE OF Education*

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*DEPARTMENT OF Leadership, Technology, and Human Development*

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#### *INFORMED CONSENT LETTER*

My name is Angeline E. Miller and I am in the process of completing a research study as part of the requirements for an Educational Administration doctoral degree at Georgia Southern University. The purpose of this study is to understand how teacher morale, job satisfaction, and efficacy as components of school climate can influence student achievement as measured by the Adequate Yearly Progress status of two elementary schools located in Flamingo County, Georgia.

Participation in this research will include completion of an individual taped interview session that will involve ten questions which should take approximately sixty minutes of your time to complete. The taped interview sessions will be transcribed after the interview session is completed and participants will have access to the transcript which can be reviewed for accuracy and clarity of the information provided. The tapes will be stored at my home address and will be destroyed by 2010. Dr. Reavis, my dissertation committee chairperson, and I are the only persons who will have access to these taped sessions. I will also use anecdotal records and observations of the participants in their natural environment to monitor their interactions with others and nonverbal methods of communication.

There should be no adverse risks as a result of responding to these questions. As a participant, you will have to think about your personal feelings when responding to the questions. Participating in this research study will allow you the opportunity to express your opinions about the climate in your school, while the information garnered from this study has the potential to influence the manner in which principals and teachers approach their roles in creating a learning environment and educating students.

If you agree to participate, please be assured that your responses will be kept absolutely confidential because Dr. Reavis and I will be the only persons with access to the data.

Participation is voluntary, therefore, you do not have to participate in this research study; you may end your participation at any time by telling me, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and there are, of course, no professional ramifications should you decide not to participate or to later withdraw from the study.

Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please call me, Angeline Miller at (706) 560-9459, or my dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Charles Reavis at (912) 481-1025. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: School Climate Components that Contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress in Elementary Schools in Flamingo County

Principal Investigator: Angeline Miller  
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Hephzibah, GA 30815  
(706) 560-9459  
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Faculty Advisor: Dr. Charles Reavis  
College of Education  
P.O. Box 8013  
Statesboro, GA 30460-8013  
(912) 681-5719  
careavis@georgiasouthern.edu

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix F: Attestation**

Angeline Miller requested that I conduct an audit of her qualitative dissertation titled: School Climate Components that Contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress in Elementary Schools. I have reviewed other dissertations previously, but this is the first audit that I have completed. The audit was conducted between January 25<sup>th</sup> and January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010 to ascertain the extent to which the results of her study were trustworthy.

To make this determination: Angeline gave copies of the interview transcripts, the interview tapes, a copy of her research questions, chapters of her dissertation (3, 4, and 5), coded transcripts from the interviews, and her observations/field notes from the interview sessions.

I reviewed all of the information provided thoroughly and made a list of all of the items that were provided to me. I checked the chronology of all of the materials and I wrote the following attestation which I shared with Angeline.

1. The purpose of the study was consistent with the proposed focus of the study.
2. I was unsure as to why Angeline did not make sure that all participants answered all parts of interview question 5, but Angeline explained that each participant had a choice to answer any or all parts of the question as they chose to.
3. I felt as though the interview questions were not equally dispersed among the research sub questions.
4. The interview transcripts were consistent with the interview tapes in that Angeline transcribed the interviews verbatim, but I found two incidents where the words were unrecognizable, so she was unable to transcribe that information.

5. There was continuity to the conversations and Angeline appeared to keep rapport going from question to question.
6. The probes that Angeline asked were effective in clarifying responses.
7. The manner in which the transcripts were coded and displayed made it easier for me to review the information.
8. The themes were justified and logical in that evidence was provided in the transcripts.
9. Angeline appeared to have manually coded the transcripts as opposed to using Microsoft word to help find similar words and phrases, but there was clear evidence to suppose the recognized themes.

It appears that the trustworthiness of this study can be established in that the findings seem to be clearly grounded in the data. The researcher utilized several verification strategies (including external audit, triangulation, clarification of researcher bias, and a rich, thick, description) to ensure the accuracy of the data. Having reviewed the provided information, it appears that the data accurately reflects the participants' words and perspectives. The findings and conclusions presented in chapters IV and V flow logically and the ensuing information seem warranted. Angeline was rigorous and systematic with her data collection and record keeping.

Attested to by Cherylece Wiggins on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010

*Cherylece Wiggins*  
1-29-10

## Appendix G: IRB Approval

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Angeline Miller  
3459 Essex Place  
Hephzibah, GA 30815

**CC:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 7, 2009

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H09123** and titled **“School climate components that contribute to adequate yearly progress in elementary schools in Flamingo County”**, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer

## Appendix H: IRB Extension

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs <b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021 P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	

**To:** Angeline Miller  
3459 Essex Place  
Hephzibah, GA 30815

**cc:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 7, 2010

**Subject:** Status of Extension Request for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your Extension Request for research project numbered: **H09123**, and titled "**School Climate Components that Contribute to Adequate Yearly Progress in Elementary Schools**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your extension.*

This IRB Extension approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.

**If at the end of that time there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year.**

If you wish to continue the project after 3 years you must reapply to the IRB as a new project. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer