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School Climate and Rituals

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Abstract

A study was conducted to asses the quality of a high school's climate. School violence,

bullying, absenteeism/dropout rates and suspension rates are some of the problems that

exist in schools and are affected by and affect school climate. Other factors related to

school climate that were discussed included student development, student learning, and

relationships within schools. This study also discussed characteristics of positive school

climates and how schools can improve their climates, with a focus on the use of rituals.

It assessed student perceptions of their school's climate through the use of a

questionnaire. It was discovered that some aspects of this school's climate were positive,

while others were areas of concern.

School Climate and Rituals

School violence progressively continues to affect our nations schools (Adams, 2000). It creates obstacles to learning and creates a climate in which fear and emotional ambivalence are present (Gottfredson, 1989). It hinders the school's educational mission (Anderson, 1998). Other issues that affect and are affected by a school's climate include absenteeism/dropout rates, suspension rates, student development, student learning, and relationships within schools.

This review will address the literature in the following ways: (a) provide an overview of what school climate is and its importance; (b) discuss problems in schools and how they affect school climate; (c) discuss how school climate affects and is related to student development, student learning, and relationships within schools; (d) discuss characteristics of positive school climate and how schools can improve their climates, including the use of rituals and traditions; and (e) conclude with what improving a school climate can do and who can help with efforts to do so.

School Climate

Although it is often overlooked, the climate of a school is one of the most significant factors within an educational setting, influencing everything from student learning to what faculty members discuss at meetings (Peterson & Deal, 1998). School climate is defined in many different ways. Haynes, Emmons, and Ben-Avie (1997) defined school climate as, "the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community that influence children's cognitive, social, and psychosocial development." Welsh's (2000) similar definition explained that school climate is the

underlying, unwritten attitudes, values, and beliefs that make up the style of interaction between students, teachers, and administrators.

It can also be defined as the feelings that members of the school community have towards the school environment over a period of time (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). These feelings, they explained, included individual levels of comfort, safety, and support each person experiences. They also defined school climate as the positive and negative feelings people experience towards the school environment and stated that school climate was comprised of the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of the individuals that make up the school community. Haynes et al. agreed that school climate is the feelings of trust and respect that are present within the school community.

Kelley et al. (1986) defined school climate as the perceptions of the school environment, including relationships among and between all members of the school and the community at large, instructional and extracurricular program management, the appearance and condition of the school building and its grounds, and the encouragement of the development of student social and academic values. School climate, Hoy (1990) added, is based on the members' perceptions of the quality of the school environment. The quality of the school environment experienced by members, in turn, affects people's behaviors (Hoy, 1990). Hoy (1990) added that the climate of a school is comprised of the set of characteristics that distinguishes one school from others and influences the behavior of its members. From a behavioral standpoint, it is also defined as the degrees to which disciplinary problems affect a school (Esposito, 1999).

For the purpose of this review, school climate was defined generally as any and all school psychological factors that affect student well-being and learning (Esposito,

1999). It included norms about what is appropriate behavior and how things should be done, communication patterns, role relationships and role perceptions, patterns of influence and accommodation, and rewards and sanctions (Fox, Schmuck, Van Egmond, Rivto, & Jung, 1975).

<div align="center">Problems In Schools</div>

School Violence

Results from the 1989 School Crime Supplement reported that thirty-seven percent of all violent crimes of youths between the ages of twelve and fifteen occurred on school grounds (Whitaker & Bastian, 1991). School violence is defined as, "any action from or affecting youth that negatively impacts the social climate within a school" (Dorsey, 2000). At the same time, a negative school climate increases the risk of violence (Wilson, 2004). School climate impacts a student's sense of safety and well being (Haynes, Emmons, & Ben-Avie, 1997) as well as their risk for delinquency (Wilson, 2004). Anderson (1998) added that changing a school's climate can have a significant positive effect regarding feelings of safety within the school community.

Hernandez and Seem (2004) stated that one way to tackle the problem of school violence was to create a safe school climate. Dykeman, Daehlin, Doyle, and Flamer (1996) and Nims (2000) added that disruptive or violent behaviors may be reduced through positive peer relationships. Giggins and Levy (1997) agreed that intimate relationships may decrease the risk of dangerous behaviors. Stewart (2003) also stated that school social bonds play an important role in reducing misbehavior in school.

The surgeon general's report (2001) stated that factors for violence prevention included supportive relationships, recognition for involvement in healthy activities,

parental supervision, living in a strong community, and commitment to school. It stressed that the focus of most effective programs was improving the social climate of the school. Hernandez and Seem (2004) added that in order to have a safe school climate, it is critical to define the boundaries of acceptable behavior through the use of codes of conduct and rules. School violence comes in many forms.

Bullying

One form of school violence is bullying. Peterson and Skiba (2001) warned that instances of bullying schools were on the rise. Hoover and Juul (1993) agreed that bullying was a serious problem among school-age children in the United States. Approximately twenty percent of U.S. students were bullied (Whitney & Smith, 1993). In addition, Hazier, Hoover, and Oliver (1996) reported that seventy-five percent of the students they surveyed stated that they experienced being bullied to an extent that they suffered academically, personally, and socially. Ma (2002) noted that bullying had serious detrimental consequences on children, such as depression, decreased self-esteem, and suicide. It affects victims such that they lose interest in learning, avoid school so that instances do not reoccur, (Slee, 1994) and suffer from a decrease in self-esteem, which can last into adulthood (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Bullying is only one negative behavior that exists in schools and affects school climate.

Therefore, there is a relationship between school climate and student behavior in general (Cairns, 1987; Heal, 1978; Reynolds, Jones, St. Leger, & Murgatroyd, 1980; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979). Gottfredson (1989) and Sherman, Gottfredson, Mackenzie, Eck, Reuter, and Bushway (1997) stated that the way that a school is run relates directly to the amount of behavioral disruptions within a school.

Therefore, unhealthy school climates increase discipline problems (Anderson, 1982). In a study that compared eighth-grade classes, Klicpera, Gasteiger-Klicpera, and Schabmann (1995) found that poor classroom climate was related to the frequency of aggressive behaviors. Gottfredson (1984) explained that an improved school culture can reduce student disruption just as effectively as placing him or her in an individual, alternate program can.

Absenteeism/Dropout

Another problem in schools is absenteeism/dropout rates. Researchers believed that there is a relationship between this and school climate (DeJung & Duckworth, 1986; Reid, 1983; Rumberger, 1987; Rutter et al., 1979). Anderson (1982) stated that unhealthy school climates contribute to dropout rates. This is important because research has indicated that one in eight students do not complete high school (McMillen, 1997).

Fine (1991) and Wilson (2004) warned that a lack of sense of belonging was a direct cause of students dropping out of high school. Haynes et al. (1997) stated that students do not want to come to a school where they feel unwelcome and unwanted. In addition, Gregg (1999) explained that when students repeatedly fail, either academically, socially, or both, they are more inclined to give up or alienate themselves.

On the other hand, in schools with positive climates that are warm and welcoming, students experience a greater sense of attachment and commitment (Wilson, 2004). Therefore, a sense of psychological comfort, social acceptance, and support is critical for preventing withdrawal from school (Finn, 1989).

Another factor that contributes to dropout rates is student suspension (Gregg, 1999). Research indicated that there is also a relationship between school climate and

rate of student suspension (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). Bickel and Qualls (1980)

explained that schools with higher suspension rates spend more time on issues of

discipline and give less attention to issues of school climate. Skiba and Peterson (2003)

added that the increased use of suspension is related to teacher and student perceptions of

a less inviting and less effective school climate. Wu et al. (1982) concluded that while

student suspension may be a result of student misbehavior, it is more a result of how a

school treats its students.

<div align="center">Other Factors Affected By School Climate</div>

Education/Learning

School climate is related to the educational outcomes of students, especially with

regards to achievement levels and success (Pallas, 1988). Finn and Rock (1997)

explained that students who fell under the category of academically at risk did far better

academically if they were engaged in school as opposed to those who were not.

Therefore, a school's climate is of central importance to its educational mission

(Anderson, 1998; Sherman et al., 1997).

Peterson and Skiba (2001) stated that school climate can affect a number of

student learning outcomes in both direct and indirect ways. Some examples, they

explained, included how comfortable individuals feel in the school environment, whether

individuals feel that the environment is supportive of learning, how appropriate organized

it is, and how safe they feel while they are there. Connell and Wellborn (1991) added

that the climate of the school environment plays an important role in students' confidence

in their abilities as well as in teachers' beliefs regarding student efficacy. Esposito

(1999) argued that school climate is an important factor of a child's school success and

their school success is an important determinant of their success in life. However, unless students are able to identify well with their schools, their participation in education will be limited (Finn, 1989).

Student Development

Wilson (2004) stated, "In school, children negotiate and renegotiate their relationships, self-image, and independence. They cultivate interpersonal skills, discover and refine strengths, and struggle with vulnerabilities. As such, schools must provide a safe environment for children to develop academically, relationally, emotionally, and behaviorally."

School climate impacts a child's psychosocial development as well as their school adjustment (Haynes et al., 1997), as research has shown a relationship between school climate and student self-concept (Grobel & Schwarzer, 1982; Hoge, Smit, & Hanson, 1990). Ample evidence indicated a positive relationship between school climate and children's adjustment, including self-esteem, behavior, school achievement, and interest and motivation (Somersalo, Solantaus, & Almqvist, 2002). Hernandez and Seem (2004) agreed that schools play an important role as a socializing agent in a young person's development.

Gregg (1999) explained that similar to family, a school community supports the growth of the whole child, as schools are a central place for social bonding (Welsh, 2001). In addition, Haynes et al. (1997) stated that a child's experiences in school have an everlasting impact on their academic success as well as their ability to adjust socially later in life. Wilson (2004) agreed that students' school experiences are fundamental to their ability to successfully transition into adulthood.

Resnick et al. stated, " The most powerful predictor of adolescent well-being is a feeling of connection to school, and students who feel close to others, fairly treated, and vested in school are less likely to engage in risky behaviors than those who do not" (as quoted in Mulvey & Cauffman, p. 800). In addition, research indicated that students who experienced school connectedness, or a sense of commitment and attachment, showed consistent positive developmental patterns, including lower rates of delinquency, and decreased rates of health-risky behavior (Wilson, 2004). Ross, Powell, and Elias (2002) agreed that psychologically sound young people are less likely to engage in high-risk activities that can have dangerous consequences for their health and well-being.

On the contrary, schools where students feel as though they do not belong or feel as though they are uncared for experience greater levels of disorder (Gottfredson, 1989; Sherman et al., 1997).

Relationships

Pianta, Stuhlman, and Hamre (2002) stated that relationships are influenced by school climate. They explained that relationships affect the ability of a child to adapt within both the school and home settings. In adolescence, they added, adult-child relationships serve as support systems, both emotionally and socially, sources of information and role-modeling, and as resources for problem solving.

Dorsey (2000) believed that there are four key relationships involved with school climate: student to self; student to peers; student to parents and community; and student to the school workers. Solomon (1996) stated that there is a significant amount of evidence that indicates that school climate influences the quality of student-teacher relationships and vice versa. Furthermore, students rated their relationships with teachers

more positively when their perception of the school climate was one of caring (Murray & Greenberg, 2000).

Improving School Climate

Characteristics

Stockard and Mayberry (1992) stated that characteristics of positive school climates include: high expectations within the school community, including teachers, students and parents, with regards to student achievement; orderly environments; high spirits among the members of the school community; positive regard of students; student active engagement; and healthy social relationships.

Ways of Improving School Climate

There are a number of ways to improve a school's climate. Discussed previously were the notions of creating safe, caring environments and building healthy relationships. For the purpose of this review, this section will focus on school rituals as an agent of fostering stronger school climates.

Rituals

Struggling Schools

Glickman (2003) stated that not enough schools have symbols that can instill the spirit of education in students, staff, and parents. Peterson and Deal (1998) agreed, stating that some schools have become what they call, toxic or unproductive, over time. They used the term toxic to describe schools where negativity dominates. They warned that within these unproductive cultures, reform attempts will fail, staff commitment and morale will decrease, and student learning will slip.

Productive Schools

On the other hand, some schools have the ability to connect with the hearts of

students and continue to promote the promise of education throughout generations

(Glickman, 2003). One factor that such schools have in common, Glickman (2003)

explained, is their use of rituals. Rituals, Ingall (1993) agreed, are a critical piece of the

life of the school. Peterson and Deal (1998) agreed that rituals and traditions are

necessary components of a school's climate. Glickman (2003) stated that these special

rituals, comprised of unique ceremonies and traditions, "lock the arms of the school and

the community." Peterson and Deal (1998) agreed. They explained that while some

schools may be unproductive and toxic, there are many schools that have developed

strong, positive climates. These are schools, they stated, where rituals and traditions

celebrate what students and teachers have achieved. Because rituals are an important

component of a positive school climate, it is necessary to explore what they are and what

they do for schools.

Definition

Greenberg (2000) described rituals as "emotional and social templates". Moore

and Myerhoff (1977) added that a ritual is a set of behaviors that are separate from

ordinary life and given special meaning. Young (1999) described rituals as repeatable

and purposeful behavioral patterns that acquired a sense of rightness among those who

participate in them. Imber-Black and Roberts (1992) defined rituals as symbolic events

that help people relate, change, heal, celebrate, and believe. They are ceremonies that

represent what is important in the school (Hoy, 1990). In sum, Young (1999) stated that

rituals are a way of joining values with behavior and often times a way of making life sacred.

For example, Mullis and Fincher (1996) believed that rituals contributed to a positive academic atmosphere. Therefore, they devised a ritual named the 'School Mascot Project'. Goals in developing this ritual were to: (a) involve everyone in a way that emphasized what people had in common as opposed to their differences; (b) express the positive climate of the school; and (c) provide the school community with a lasting symbol representative of the school as a whole. It was successful in that the goals were achieved and students and adults reported that the experience had been meaningful for them.

What Rituals Do

Rituals convey values and help individuals connect with others (Young, 1999). They have the power the create time and space that is sacred (Parker & Horton, 1996). Greenberg (2000) explained that rituals provide people with problem-solving procedures, behavior boundaries, cues for acting appropriately, ways of celebrating, and strategies for coping with the emotions that surround life's events. They emphasize a focus on the community and its ties while providing one with the opportunity to experience oneself as being part of a larger group (Mullis & Fincher, 1996). Within a school, rituals have the ability to engage all members in experiences that initiate students into the school community, teach them school values, and welcome them as new members of the student body (Mullis & Fincher, 1996). Overall, they have the power to improve the atmosphere of the school (Mullis & Fincher, 1996).

Self-Esteem

Greenberg (2000) explained that rituals promote self-esteem. Mullis and Fincher (1996) agreed, stating that one experiences an enhanced sense of self that comes with the awareness of connection to the community that rituals provide.

Routines

Greenberg (2000) identified that, starting as early as birth, people need routines. In addition, children benefit from routines all day, each day, both at home and at school and children benefit most from routines that are complimented by soothing and enjoyable rituals. She also stated that following the same order in a routine is important. Mullis and Fincher (1996) noted that the school day is filled with rituals that are routine and provide structure. Parker (1999) agreed that rituals provide a child with security, structure, and meaning.

Knowing what to expect: Predictability

People are comforted by familiarity (Glickman, 2003). Being able to predict what is going to happen next, Greenberg (2000) stated, makes a child feel competent, a feeling that is an important piece of feeling content. Rituals and routines foster this contentment and encourage social and emotional growth in children (Greenberg, 2000).

In fact, children are better able to adjust when their daily schedule is predictable and familiar (Greenberg, 2000). Horsch, Chen, and Nelson, (1999) agreed. They explained that the improved behavior they noticed at a once struggling school was related to the children experiencing a greater sense of stability from being more able to anticipate daily events in the classroom.

Community

Peterson and Deal (1998) explained that the climate of a school is comprised of the norms, values, beliefs, and rituals that have developed over time. They believed that these factors shape how people think, feel, and act in schools. These factors, they stated, are what binds a school and makes it special. Values define the school's character and give it a sense of identity and purpose and ceremonies and rituals play a part in reinforcing these basic core values (Hoy, 1990). In addition, schools that share norms and values, are supportive and caring, and create a sense of community among members are better able to regulate students' behavior and to resolve issues in school effectively (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Gottfredson, 2001; and Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002).

Glickman (2003) discovered that one thing that made a school exceptional was its ritualized experiences that unite everyone. Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990) agreed that a successful school is comprised of a cohesive community of shared values, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies. Deal (1985) also agreed that effective schools have strong climates that contain shared values and rituals that promote shared beliefs that all participate in.

Rituals help make a class a community (Clarke, 2001) by placing emphasis on the community itself and its ties (Mullis & Fincher, 1996). This sense of community in schools is a critical part of creating a healthy learning environment (Evertson, Emmer, & Worsham, 2003; and Good & Brophy, 1997). Mullis and Fincher (1996) also stated that rituals influence community spirit and school allegiance by promoting the stability of the

group as a whole and providing a safe place for people to address social and personal concerns.

Young (1999) agreed that rituals are learning activities that are based on the spirit of community. They recognize each person's unique contributions to the functioning of the group as a whole (Parker, 1999). A ritual connects us to other people and to time (Young, 1999). Parker (1999) explained that celebration rituals, especially, foster an increased sense of community. Celebrating positive aspects of a school, therefore, helps build a positive school climate (Hernandez & Seem, 2004). Hernandez and Seem (2004) agreed that a community of support and celebration promotes a positive school atmosphere and therefore it is necessary for leaders of a school to develop and promote school traditions.

Larger Meaning

Mullis and Fincher (1996) noted that rituals have a power that reaches people in a cognitive and affective manner at the same time. Therefore, although rituals are procedural, they endow a much stronger meaning, a symbolic meaning, to the activities they are comprised of. Parker (1999) agreed, stating that, "Through the power of symbolism, individuals move beyond cognitive knowledge to a deeper level of affective understanding." Parker and Horton (1996) added that a ritual is much more than just a repetitive set of behaviors. A ritual, they believed, is a meaning-creating tool.

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging is defined by Goodenow and Grady (1993) as the extent to which students feel personally included, accepted, respected, and supported in the school social environment. Dinkmeyer, Dinkmeyer, and Sperry (1987) stated that having a

sense of belonging and feeling like part of the group is critical for young people because it helps students feel good about being at school and it increases their enthusiasm towards learning. Students who experience weak connections, however, may also experience increased health risks that detract from their ability to learn (Wilson, 2004) Horsch et al. (1999) agreed that children need to feel like significant members of the community. Wilson (2004) added that those students who experience strong connectedness to their schools believed that their school had a positive climate.

Anderman (2003) emphasized that a sense of belonging is particularly important during adolescence. Battistich et al. (1995) agreed. They stated that middle school and high school years are critical times for students to be a part of caring communities, as this is the time when preadolescent and adolescent disengagement and lack of connection most often occur. In addition, promoting school connectedness, or bonding, was one way to help prevent school violence (Hernandez & Seem, 2004). Early adolescence is also marked as a time when peer pressure sets in (Berndt, 1979) and therefore, if a school climate is poor, students might align with other poorly behaving students (Somersalo et al., 2002).

Rituals, they said, offer that experience of feeling like part of a larger whole or group. Rituals help kids discover their place in a classroom and help them feel like they truly belong (Greenberg, 2000). They also help children understand and appreciate their own personal significance within the group as well as their roles in relation to others (Parker, 1999). In sum, a school climate that makes students feel that they are safe, cared for, and treated fairly is critical to their developing a positive sense of belonging to school (Ma, 2003).

Conclusion

Improving School Climate

In summary, improving school climate can do the following:

1) Help prevent violence (Peterson & Skiba, 2001)

2) Improve student behavior (Peterson & Skiba, 2001)

3) Help reduce instances of bullying in schools (Peterson & Skiba, 2001)

4) Contribute to productive learning atmospheres through:

a) emphasis on the academic mission of the school, (Gregg, 1999)

and academic achievement (Wilson, 2004)

b) fair and consistent rules/disciplinary procedures (Gregg, 1999;

and Wilson, 2004)

c) fostering caring relationships between staff and students (Gregg,

1999; and Wilson, 2004)

d) encouraging respect towards each member of the school

community (Wilson, 2004)

e) emphasis on safety (Wilson, 2004)

f) promoting the involvement of parents and community members

(Wilson, 2004).

Who Can Help

School workers such as counselors are often faced with problems that arise in a

school (Mackey & Greif, 1994). School counselors possess the knowledge, skills, and

education to promote the development of safe climates within a school and to become

advocates for school change (Hernandez & Seem, 2004). Research has shown that as

school staff members make the initiative to improve the climate of the school, the

academic and social outcomes for students improve (Edwards, 1993). Parker (1999)

added that by using rituals and by teaching parents how to make effective use of rituals,

counselors are able to provide assistance for many of the problems that arise. Peterson

and Deal (1998) agreed that the school climate is positively influenced by leaders who

support rituals and traditions.

Finally, when it comes to ways of improving school climate and who can help,

Haynes et al. (1997) stated that it is important that student perceptions of a school's

climate should be included in efforts to improve schools. Because this is important,

student questionnaires were used for the purpose of this review.

Methods

Due to the importance of obtaining and maintaining a positive school climate, a

local high school's climate was evaluated.

Setting

The high school is located in a combined residential, rural, and industrial suburb

of Rochester, New York. The district is made up of 51 square miles and has a population

of approximately 43,000. The school system encompasses approximately eight thousand

students who attend seven elementary, two middle and two high schools. The enrollment

for this specific high school for the 2004-2005 school year consists of 369 freshmen, 340

sophomores, 372 juniors, and 295 seniors. Graduation requirements include a minimum

of 22 credits and all requirements meet or exceed New York State Board of Regents

standards. This high school offers the largest number of Advanced Placement courses in

its city. Based on data from the 2004 graduating class of 311 students, 54% went to four-

year colleges, 34% went to two-year colleges, 8% chose employment, and 1% went to the

military.

Participants

This study's sample consisted of forty of the high school's students; twenty males

and twenty females. Of each set of twenty, there were five from each of the four class

years; freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used was created by the author of this study. It consisted of

twenty-five statements that students were asked to rate on a four-point Likert-Type Scale

whether they agree, disagree, strongly agree, or strongly disagree. All items were

devised to relate to and evaluate the quality of the school's climate based on the research

previously. The most favorable response for each item was a score of four or 'strongly

agree'. The questionnaire is included as Appendix A of this document.

Procedure

The sample was randomly selected. The questionnaires were pre-coded by grade

level and gender. The author went into the cafeteria during lunch periods and randomly

asked students what grade they were in and if they would take a few minutes to fill out a

questionnaire about their school. Care was taken not to ask groups of students sitting

together in cliques. In doing so, the goal was to receive a variety of students' responses

as opposed to a group of students that all might respond the same way. Hence, students

were randomly selected from different lunch tables. The only instruction given was not

to talk to anybody while they were completing it.

Results

Three out of the forty original questionnaires had to be discarded: a female senior who responded with two answers on four questions, a male senior who responded with two answers on one question, and a junior male who skipped a question. These were replaced by new random participants.

Analysis

The use of percentages and means were used to compare the overall results of the school climate for the entire questionnaire as well as for each item on it. Percentages and means were also used to compare differences between genders and grade levels.

Overall School Climate

The highest possible score for each questionnaire was 100, indicating a response of 'strongly agree' for each of the 25 statements. Scores between 75 and 100 indicated the 'agree' to 'strongly agree' range. Scores between 25 and 50 indicated the 'disagree' to 'strongly disagree' range. Scores between 51 and 74 indicated a neutral range between 'disagree' and 'agree'.

The overall school climate mean for all 40 participants was 70.7. The mean for ninth grade females was 84, while the mean for ninth grade males was 77. The mean for all ninth graders was 80.5. For tenth grade females the mean was 69.2. For tenth grade males the mean was 58.6. The mean for all tenth graders was 63.9. For eleventh graders, the mean for females was 69.6 and the mean for males was 60.4. The mean for all eleventh graders was 65. For twelfth graders, the mean for females was 70.8 and the mean for males was 76. The mean for all twelfth graders was 73.4. The mean score for all females was 73.4. For all males, it was 68.

Statements

For each individual statement, the overall total (out of 160) was presented. The mean answer for that statement was also presented. A mean score between 3.0 and 4.0 represented the range of 'agree' to 'strongly agree'. A mean score between 1.0 and 2.0 represented the range of 'strongly disagree' to 'disagree'. A mean score between 2.1 and 2.9 represented the neutral range between 'disagree' and 'agree'. Means and percentages were also presented by grade level (out of 40) and gender (out of 80).

#1) Violence (bullying, verbal attacks, physical attacks) is not a problem in my school.

The overall total for this statement was 112, with a mean of 2.8. Sixty percent of the students either agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 27 and the mean was 2.7. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total score was 30 and the mean was 3.0. Again, sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For eleventh graders, the total score was 24 and the mean was 2.4. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 31 and the mean was 3.1. Eighty percent of the seniors agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The overall total for males was 59 with a mean response of 2.95. Sixty-five percent of the males agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while thirty-five either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The overall total for females was 53 and the mean was

2.65. Fifty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#2) I feel a strong sense of belonging to my school.

The overall total for this statement was 113. The mean was 2.825. Seventy percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 34, with a mean of 3.4. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 26, with a mean of 2.6. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 26, with a mean response of 2.6. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 28 and the mean was 2.8. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was sixty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was forty.

For males, the total was 54 and the mean was 2.7. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 59, with a mean of 2.95. Seventy-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#3) Occurrences of suspension are minimal at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 98. The mean was 2.45. Fifty percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 26, with a mean of 2.6. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 25, with a mean of 2.5. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 23, with a mean response of 2.3. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 24 and the mean was 2.4. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was forty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was sixty.

For males, the total was 49 and the mean was 2.45. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 49, with a mean of 2.45. Fifty percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#4) I feel safe at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 133. The mean was 3.325. Ninety-five percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 34, with a mean of 3.4. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 35, with a mean of 3.5. Again, one hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed. The total for eleventh graders was 29, with a mean response of 2.9. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 35 and the mean was 3.5. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed again was one hundred.

For males, the total was 64 and the mean was 3.2. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 69, with a mean of 3.45. One hundred percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

#5) I feel closely connected to the people at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 118. The mean was 2.95. Seventy-five percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 31, with a mean of 3.1. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 29, with a mean of 2.9. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 28, with a mean response of 2.8. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 30 and the mean was 3.0. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was again seventy and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was thirty.

For males, the total was 60 and the mean was 3.0. Seventy-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 58, with a mean of 2.9. Like the males, seventy-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#6) My school has a healthy, positive environment/climate.

The overall total for this statement was 122. The mean was 3.05. Eighty-five percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 33, with a mean of 3.3. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 29, with a mean of 2.9. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 30, with a mean response of 3.0. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 30 and the mean was 3.0. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was ninety and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was ten.

For males, the total was 61 and the mean was 3.05. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 61, with a mean of 3.05 as well. Ninety percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#7) The quality of teacher-student relationships at my school is high.

The overall total for this statement was 123. The mean was 3.075. Eighty-five percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 33, with a mean of 3.3. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For

tenth graders, the total was 26, with a mean of 2.6. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 31, with a mean response of 3.1. Like the freshmen, ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 33 and the mean was 3.3. Again, the percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was ninety and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was ten.

For males, the total was 61 and the mean was 3.05. Seventy-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 62, with a mean of 3.1. Ninety-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#8) The quality of student-student relationships at my school is high.

The overall total for this statement was 129. The mean was 3.225. Eighty-seven and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twelve and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 36, with a mean of 3.6. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 30, with a mean of 3.0. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 30, with a mean response of 3.0. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 33 and the mean was 3.3. Similar to the ninth graders, the percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was one hundred.

For males, the total was 69 and the mean was 3.45. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 60, with a mean of 3.0. Eighty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#9) I feel welcomed and wanted at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 122. The mean was 3.05. Seventy-seven and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty-two and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 34, with a mean of 3.4. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 29, with a mean of 2.9. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 27, with a mean response of 2.7. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 32 and the mean was 3.2. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was eighty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was twenty.

For males, the total was 58 and the mean was 2.9. Sixty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 64, with a mean of 3.2. Ninety percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#10) I have been able to adjust well at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 127. The mean was 3.175. Eight-two and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and seventeen and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 35, with a mean of 3.5. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 30, with a mean of 3.0. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 30, with a mean response of 3.0. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 32 and the mean was 3.2. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was eighty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was twenty.

For males, the total was 61 and the mean was 3.05. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 66, with a mean of 3.3. Eighty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#11) I am interested in what occurs at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 106. The mean was 2.65. Sixty-two and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and thirty-seven and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 31, with a mean of 3.1. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For

tenth graders, the total was 24, with a mean of 2.4. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 23, with a mean response of 2.3. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 28 and the mean was 2.8. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was sixty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was forty.

For males, the total was 45 and the mean was 2.25. Forty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 61, with a mean of 3.05. Eighty percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#12) I feel motivated to participate in my school's events.

The overall total for this statement was 99. The mean was 2.475. Sixty percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 30, with a mean of 3.0. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 22, with a mean of 2.2. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 21, with a mean response of 2.1. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 26 and the mean was 2.6. Like the tenth graders, the percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was fifty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was also fifty.

For males, the total was 45 and the mean was 2.25. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 54, with a mean of 2.7. Seventy percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#13) At my school, there are high expectations with regards to student academic achievement.

The overall total for this statement was 120. The mean was 3.0. Seventy-seven and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty-two and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 33, with a mean of 3.3. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 26, with a mean of 2.6. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 30, with a mean response of 3.0. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 31 and the mean was 3.1. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was eighty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was twenty.

For males, the total was 57 and the mean was 2.85. Seventy-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 63, with a mean of 3.15. Eighty percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#14) Students are actively engaged in my school.

The overall total for this statement was 120. The mean was 3.0. Seventy-seven and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty-two and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 36, with a mean of 3.6. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 24, with a mean of 2.4. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 29, with a mean response of 2.9. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 31 and the mean was 3.1. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was ninety and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was ten.

For males, the total was 54 and the mean was 2.7. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 66, with a mean of 3.3. Ninety-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#15) A high level of spirit exists among the members of my school's community.

The overall total for this statement was 120. The mean was 3.0. Seventy-seven and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty-two and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 36, with a mean of 3.6. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed. For tenth graders, the total was 28, with a mean of 2.8. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly

disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 27, with a mean response of 2.7. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 29 and the mean was 2.9. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was, like the sophomores and juniors, seventy and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was thirty.

For males, the total was 59 and the mean was 2.95. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 61, with a mean of 3.05. Eighty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#16) We often celebrate at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 106. The mean was 2.65. Fifty-two and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and forty-seven and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 32, with a mean of 3.2. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 21, with a mean of 2.1. Thirty percent agreed or strongly agreed and seventy percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 26, with a mean response of 2.6. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 27 and the mean was 2.7. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was sixty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was forty.

For males, the total was 48 and the mean was 2.4. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 58, with a mean of 2.9. Sixty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#17) My school has a lot of traditions.

The overall total for this statement was 98. The mean was 2.45. Forty percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 31, with a mean of 3.1. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 20, with a mean of 2.0. Twenty percent agreed or strongly agreed and eighty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 22, with a mean response of 2.2. Thirty percent agreed or strongly agreed and seventy percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 25 and the mean was 2.5. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was forty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was sixty.

For males, the total was 45 and the mean was 2.25. Thirty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and sixty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 53, with a mean of 2.65. Forty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#18) A strong sense of community exists at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 112. The mean was 2.8. Seventy percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 35, with a mean of 3.5. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 25, with a mean of 2.5. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 22, with a mean response of 2.2. Thirty percent agreed or strongly agreed and seventy percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 30 and the mean was 3.0. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was eighty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was twenty.

For males, the total was 53 and the mean was 2.65. Sixty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 59, with a mean of 2.95. Seventy-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#19) There are fair and consistent rules at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 101. The mean was 2.525. Fifty-seven and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and forty-two and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 30, with a mean of 3.0. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 20, with a

mean of 2.0. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 24, with a mean response of 2.4. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 27 and the mean was 2.7. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was fifty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was fifty.

For males, the total was 51 and the mean was 2.55. Fifty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 50, with a mean of 2.5. Sixty percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#20) Parents and community members are highly involved at my school.

The overall total for this statement was 97. The mean was 2.425. Forty percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 28, with a mean of 2.8. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 22, with a mean of 2.2. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 22, with a mean response of 2.2. Twenty percent agreed or strongly agreed and eighty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 25 and the mean was 2.5. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was forty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was sixty.

For males, the total was 46 and the mean was 2.3. Thirty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and sixty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 51, with a mean of 2.55. Forty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#21) I find it easy to learn in my school environment.

The overall total for this statement was 119. The mean was 2.975. Eighty percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 33, with a mean of 3.3. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 25, with a mean of 2.5. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 29, with a mean response of 2.9. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 32 and the mean was 3.2. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was, like the ninth-graders, one hundred.

For males, the total was 57 and the mean was 2.85. Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 62, with a mean of 3.1. Eighty percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#22) My school has a lot of rituals (repeated events/ ceremonies/

celebrations/traditions).

The overall total for this statement was 99. The mean was 2.475. Fifty-two and a

half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and forty-seven and a half

percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 33, with a mean of 3.3. Ninety percent agreed or

strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For

tenth graders, the total was 19, with a mean of 1.9. Thirty percent agreed or strongly

agreed and seventy percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh

graders was 23, with a mean response of 2.3. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and

fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 24 and

the mean was 2.4. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was forty and

the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was sixty.

For males, the total was 48 and the mean was 2.4. Fifty percent agreed or

strongly agreed with this statement and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For

females, the total was 51, with a mean of 2.45. Fifty-five percent of the females agreed

or strongly agreed with this statement and forty-five percent disagreed or strongly

disagreed.

#23) The rituals in my school unite school members.

The overall total for this statement was 97. The mean was 2.425. Forty-seven

and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and fifty-two and a half

percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 29, with a mean of 2.9. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and agreed percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 20, with a mean of 2.0. Twenty percent agreed or strongly agreed and eighty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 21, with a mean response of 2.1. Forty percent agreed or strongly agreed and sixty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 27 and the mean was 2.7. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was sixty and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was forty.

For males, the total was 44 and the mean was 2.2. Thirty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and sixty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 53, with a mean of 2.65. Sixty percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#24) My school has structure and routines

The overall total for this statement was 115. The mean was 2.875. Seventy-two and a half percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty-seven and a half percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 32, with a mean of 3.2. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and ten percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For tenth graders, the total was 27, with a mean of 2.7. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed and fifty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 25, with a mean response of 2.5. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 31 and the

mean was 3.1. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was ninety and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was ten.

For males, the total was 53 and the mean was 2.65. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 62, with a mean of 3.1. Eighty-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and fifteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

#25) I know what to expect when I come to school.

The overall total for this statement was 122. The mean was 3.05. Eighty percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed and twenty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For ninth graders, the total was 33, with a mean of 3.3. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For tenth graders, the total was 27, with a mean of 2.7. Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed and forty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The total for eleventh graders was 29, with a mean response of 2.9. Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed and thirty percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For twelfth graders, the total was 33 and the mean was 3.3. The percentage of those who agreed or strongly agreed was ninety and the percentage of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed was ten.

For males, the total was 59 and the mean was 2.95. Sixty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and thirty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. For females, the total was 63, with a mean of 3.15. Ninety-five percent of the females agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Discussion

Due to the importance of having a positive, strong school climate (Peterson &

Deal, 1998), this study assessed a high school's climate through the use of student

questionnaires. As further described in more detail, it was found that their overall school

climate fell in the 'average' range but there were areas of concern that could be

considered for improvement.

Overall School Climate

Out of 100, the overall total average response for the questionnaires that assessed

the students' perceptions of their school climate was 70.7. This falls within the range of

'disagree' to 'agree', leaning more towards 'agree'. A positive school climate average

would fall between 75-100. Therefore, while it cannot be stated that this school's overall

climate is positive, it appears that they are not very far off. This is important because

school climate is an important determinant of a child's success in school, as it includes all

school psychological factors that affect student well-being and learning (Esposito, 1999).

Ninth graders rated their school's climate the highest of all the grade levels,

reporting an average score of 80.5, which falls within the range of 'agree' to 'strongly

agree'. This may be due to the fact that they have the least amount of experience to base

their answers on. Interestingly, the averages for tenth graders and eleventh graders were

lower than the overall average (63.9 and 65 respectively) but for twelfth graders, the

average rose back up to a 73.4. Further research would be needed to explore this pattern.

Overall, females rated the school's climate higher than males did. This gender

difference was also true for each of the grade levels with one exception. The twelfth-

grade males reported an average of 76, while the twelfth grade females reported an

average of 70.8. Again, further research is necessary to assess gender differences in student's perceptions of school climate.

Statement #6 of the questionnaire asked students to respond to the following statement: "My school has a healthy, positive environment/climate". The fact that the mean response for this statement was 3.05 indicated that, on average, students agreed with this statement. Although not by much, this was a higher score than the overall school climate score yielded. This indicated that while students did agree that their school had a positive climate, there were some aspects of the school climate that the students did not perceive as positive. Again, these results were important as school climate is an important determinant of a child's success in school, as it includes all school psychological factors that affect student well-being and learning (Esposito, 1999). It also indicated that the questionnaire used was a good tool for measuring school climate, as the scores were so close. Discussing the responses of individual statements will provide a better understanding of which aspects of this school's climate need improvement and which ones the students perceived as being positive.

Violence

The first statement on the questionnaire reads, "Violence (bullying, verbal attacks, physical attacks) is not a problem in my school".

The results indicated that students 'disagree' to 'agree' with this statement. Overall, more students agreed than disagreed but only by a ratio of 60% to 40%. This is an area of concern because research has indicated that violence in schools hinders students' learning and creates an atmosphere in which fear and emotional ambivalence are present (Gottfredson, 1989). Wilson (2004) stated that a negative school climate

increases the risk of violence. Since neither the school climate nor the school violence scores fell within the negative range, we can conclude that these findings are consistent with the research. Further student assessment could discover, in detail, what types of violence are most prevalent in the school and what preventative measures could be taken.

Only eleventh graders had more students disagree than agree with this statement. The rest of the grade levels favored the 'agree' response. Males responded more favorably to this statement than females did, with respective means of 2.95 and 2.65. Again, further research might explain what specific types exist and how they differ in type and prevalence between genders.

Statement #4 is related to school violence. It reads, "I feel safe at my school". Positive scores were yielded from this statement. Only two (or 20%) of the eleventh-grade males disagreed with this statement. Every other participant agreed, including all other grade levels and all females. These results are surprising, given the results for the statement regarding violence. Hernandez & Seem (2004) stated that the problem of school violence could be tackled by creating a safe school climate. The findings in this study are not consistent with this because almost all students felt safe but forty percent of them believed that violence was a problem in their school. What one might believe about the combination of these results is that the majority of those students who participated in the study were aware of the violence that existed in their school but were either not a part of it and/or did not feel threatened by it.

Also related to this is statement #19: "There are fair and consistent rules at my school". Overall, more students agreed than disagreed with this statement but not by a large difference. Scores are similar to those yielded in #1. For this statement, 57.5 % of

students agreed and 42.5% disagreed. Research noted that in order to have a safe school climate, it is critical to define the boundaries of acceptable behavior through the use of codes of conduct and rules (Hernandez & Seem, 2004). The findings of this study were inconsistent with this because again, the majority of students felt safe but only a little more than half agreed that the rules in their school were fair and consistent.

Freshmen were the only group who responded favorably. One hundred percent of them agreed with this statement. Both tenth and eleventh graders had more students who disagreed than agreed. Their ratios were identical. Forty percent agreed and sixty did not. Twelfth graders were split in half. Fifty percent agreed and fifty percent did not. Exploring exactly what students thought was unfair about the rules would provide a better understanding of if and/or how they could be amended so that students' perceptions of them were more favorable.

There was a small difference between the responses from each gender. Fifty-five percent of males and sixty percent of females responded favorably to this statement. This suggested that both genders believed that some rules were fair and consistent while others were not.

Suspension Rates

Statement #3 reads, "Occurrences of suspension are minimal at my school". Overall, 50 % of the students agreed and 50 % disagreed. Suspension is one factor that contributes to drop out rates (Gregg, 1999) and its use/abuse is related to student perceptions of a less inviting school climate (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). For this reason, those statements were included in the questionnaire. A study that measured whether

drop-out rates decreased if suspension rates decreased at this school would be necessary to determine the extent to which the two are related.

 Ninth and tenth graders had identical ratios of 60% to 40% respectively. Eleventh and twelfth graders also had identical ratios, but they were opposite results of the underclassmen. Their ratios were 40% to 60%. This might be due to the fact that the upper classmen had been attending the school longer and therefore had observed more suspensions occur.

Also identical were the scores of each gender. Both males and females had 'agree' to 'disagree' ratios of 50% to 50%. These scores suggest that males and females are equally affected by suspensions within the school.

Sense of Belonging

The following statements are all related to students' sense of belonging to their school: #2) "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my school"; #9) "I feel welcomed and wanted at my school"; and #10) I have been able to adjust well at my school". These statements all yielded overall favorable responses. Ninth graders responded the most favorably for each statement. Also, females responded more favorably than males did for each one. No group had more students disagree versus agree.

These results suggested that sense of belonging was a positive aspect of this school's climate. This was significant as research has noted that a feeling of connection to school is one of the most powerful predictors or student well-being (Resnick in 37). Research also emphasized that having a sense of belonging and feeling like part of the group is critical for young people because it helps them feel good about being at school

and it increases their enthusiasm towards learning (Dinkmeyer, et al., 1987). Anderman (2003) noted that a sense of belonging is particularly important during adolescence.

Relationships

Research indicated that school climate significantly influences the quality of student-teacher relationships and vice versa (Solomon, 1996). Relationships as a whole are also are influenced by school climate (Pianta et al., 2002). For this reason, the following three statements were included as part of the questionnaire: #5) "I feel closely connected to the people at my school"; #7) "The quality of teacher-student relationships at my school is high"; and #8) "The quality of student-student relationships at my school is high".

For each of these questions, all groups had more students who agreed than disagreed. Out of the three, only statement #5 yielded a mean that was just slightly under the 'agree' to 'strongly agree' range (2.95). The other two statements' means fell within this positive range. It is interesting that the ninth graders had the highest score for #5 because they had been at the school the least amount of time, yet they felt most closely connected to others. These scores suggested that relationships were another positive aspect of this school's climate. This is important because in adolescence, relationships serve as support systems, both emotionally and socially, sources of information and role-modeling, and resources for problem solving (Pianta et al., 2002).

Student Involvement

Numbers 11, 12, and 14 were all related to student involvement in school. They state: "I am interested in what occurs at my school"; "I feel motivated to participate in my school's events"; and "Students are actively engaged in my school", respectively. Of the

three, only # 14 yielded a positive overall mean and all groups for this number had more students agree than disagree. This was not the case for questions 11 and 12. Their overall means were 2.65 and 2.475, respectively. Females reported higher means for both. Future research might explain this difference in interest and motivation. Even though more students agreed than disagreed overall for each of these questions, these scores suggested that this might be an area for improvement for this school, as student active engagement is one characteristic of a positive school climate (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992).

Another characteristic of a positive school climate included high expectations with regards to student achievement (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992). Therefore, included in the questionnaire was #13) "At my school, there are high expectations with regards to student achievement". The overall total was in the positive range for this statement. All groups had more students agree than disagree. Based on the research, this would be one aspect of this school's school climate that was positive.

Structure/Routines

The following three statements were related to structure/routine: #21) "I find it easy to learn in my school environment"; #24) "My school has structure and routines"; and #25) I know what to expect when I come to school. Only #25 yielded a positive overall mean, although the other two were only slightly away from the positive mean. All groups for all questions had equal or more students who agreed than disagreed. Females reported higher scores for all three. These scores suggest that this might be an area needing slight improvement/consideration because people need routines (Greenberg, 2000). People are comforted by familiarity (Glickman, 2003).

Sense of Community

The following two questions attempted to asses the sense of community of the school's climate: #18) "A strong sense of community exists at my school"; and #20) "Parents and community members are highly involved at my school". For #18, the overall mean was 2.8. The only group that had more people disagree than agree was sophomores. Overall, however, seventy percent of student agreed that a strong sense of community existed at their school. This is a positive finding because building a sense of community in schools is a critical component of creating a healthy learning environment (Evertson et al, 2003; Good & Brophy, 1997).

For # 20, however, scores were lower. More students disagreed with this statement than agreed. In fact, the only group that had more who agreed than disagreed was freshmen with a close ration of 60% to 40%.

Rituals

Because rituals were of central importance with regard to this review, the following five questions were included in the questionnaire: #15) A high level of spirit exists among the members of my school's community; #16) We often celebrate at my school; #17) My school has a lot of traditions; #22) My school has a lot of rituals (repeated events/ceremonies/celebrations/traditions); and #23) The rituals in my school unite school members.

For #15, all groups had more students who agreed than disagreed. This was not the case for the remainder of the statements in this group. For #16, only 2.5 percent more agreed than disagreed. Sophomores and males were the two groups that had more students who disagreed and juniors were split evenly. This is an area of some concern

because celebrating positive aspects of a school helps build a positive school climate (Hernandez & Seem, 2004).

For #17, more students disagreed than agreed overall and for all groups besides freshmen. This is a major area of concern for this high school because research has indicated that traditions are a necessary component of a school's climate (Peterson & Deal, 1998). They celebrate what students and teachers have achieved (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

For numbers 22 and 23, the overall means were almost identical at 2.475 and 2.425, respectively. Only slightly more than half of the students agreed with #22 and slightly less than half agreed with #23. Again, this represents an area of concern as research has indicated that rituals are a critical piece of the life of the school (Ingall, 1993). They help relate, change, heal, celebrate, and believe (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992). Due to this area and other areas of concern, recommendations are presented. Limitations of this study were also presented.

<center>Recommendations and Limitations</center>

Results of this study should be carefully examined by the leaders of this school, including the principal, vice principals, teachers, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists. It is recommended that close attention be paid the areas of concern of this study including the level of violence that exists in the school, the fairness and consistency of the current rules, suspension rates, student engagement/participation, the need for structure and routines, parent/community involvement, and the lack of celebrations, traditions, and rituals.

A limitation of this study was its inability to explore the reasons for the differences between genders and grade levels. Further research might asses those patterns to discover possible causes. Another limitation of this study was its inability to compare differences across races/ethnic groups. The population of this school would not allow for that due to its incredibly low minority rate. Further research at other schools could determine the differences in perceptions of school climate among different ethnic groups of students.

Summary

Schools today are faced with a multitude of problems including school violence, bullying, absenteeism/dropout rates, and other behavioral issues. School climate affects and is affected by each of these as well as student development, student learning, and relationships within schools. Because of this, school members must be determined to focus on all aspects of improving their school's climate, including but not limited to, the use of rituals and traditions. By doing so, they can attempt to unite the members of their school's community and decrease or prevent future problems from arising.

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Appendix

Young, R. (1999, September-October). Reexamining our rituals. *About Campus,* 10-16.

Based on the following scale, please respond to each statement:
1) Strongly disagree
2) Disagree
3) Agree
4) Strongly agree

1) Violence (bullying, verbal attacks, physical attacks) is <u>not</u> a problem in my school   1   2   3   4

2) I feel a strong sense of belonging to my school   1   2   3   4

3) Occurrences of suspension are minimal at my school   1   2   3   4

4) I feel safe at my school   1   2   3   4

5) I feel closely connected to the people at my school   1   2   3   4

6) My school has a healthy, positive environment/climate   1   2   3   4

7) The quality of teacher-student relationships at my school is high   1   2   3   4

8) The quality of student-student relationships at my school is high   1   2   3   4

9) I feel welcomed and wanted at my school   1   2   3   4

10) I have been able to adjust well at my school   1   2   3   4

11) I am interested in what occurs at my school   1   2   3   4

12) I feel motivated to participate in my school's events   1   2   3   4

13) At my school, there are high expectations with regards to student academic achievement   1   2   3   4

14) Students are actively engaged in my school   1   2   3   4

15) A high level of spirit exists among the members of my school's community.   1   2   3   4

16) We often celebrate at my school   1   2   3   4

17) My school has a lot of traditions   1   2   3   4

18) A strong sense of community exists at my school   1   2   3   4

19) There are fair and consistent rules at my school   1   2   3   4

20) Parents and community members are highly involved at my school   1   2   3   4

21) I find it easy to learn in my school environment   1   2   3   4

22) My school has a lot of rituals (repeated events/ceremonies/celebrations/traditions)   1   2   3   4

23) The rituals in my school unite school members   1   2   3   4

24) My school has structure and routines   1   2   3   4

25) I know what to expect when I come to school   1   2   3   4