An Exploratory Analysis of School Culture within a Multi-School Charter School System

Alpaslan Sahin
Harmony Public Schools, USA

Meredith Takahashi
Licensed Psychologist at Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, USA

Aziz Koyuncu
Harmony Public Schools, USA

Abstract: The primary purpose of this study is to examine and understand how teachers of charter schools perceive their respective schools' cultures. The research is based upon data gathered from teachers (n=372) in schools (n=18) within a Charter School System (CSS) in the southern United States. We used descriptive statistics, t-test and one-way ANOVA as our statistical tools. The findings revealed that teachers at the Charter Schools have a positive perception of the school culture within their respective schools. Teachers particularly favored professional development opportunities and collegial support in their respected schools. School size, grade span, and years of operation did not make significant differences in CSS's school culture except collegial support. Collegial support scores for the K-12 school was significantly higher than the 9-12 schools.

Keywords: C*harter schools; School climate; School culture; Teacher perception*

Introduction

In the past decade, charter schools have taken on an increasingly important role in educational reform efforts (Lake & Gross, 2012). The basic concept behind charter schools is to provide increased autonomy in exchange for greater accountability (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). Charter schools are encouraged to adopt innovative teaching practices and create new professional opportunities for teachers and their leaders (Chen, 2018; Manno, Finn & Vanourek, 2000). School leaders in charter schools are provided with many opportunities to innovate their leadership. A key element in the concept of charter schools is the collaboration between the administration and teachers and increased teacher participation in decision-making (Malloy, 2003;

Metcalfe, 2014; Morris et al. 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). It is theorized that the combination of increased autonomy, innovation and accountability would lead to improved student achievement in charter schools, high parental and student satisfaction with schooling, and high teacher/employee satisfaction through empowerment (Bulkely & Fisler, 2003).

Although there has been significant research on the effectiveness of charter schools, there has been less examination of the culture within charter schools. However, this is an important area of research as studies have shown that a positive school culture is a critical factor in effective schools (Conold et al. 2018). Research has identified multiple elements that comprise a positive school culture, including a unity of purpose or the extent to which teachers work

towards a common mission, collaborative leadership, opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional development, collegial support, learning partnership among parents, teachers and students, and a school-wide emphasis on academic effort and achievement (Bulkley, Schneider, 2007; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Ohlson et al. 2015; Wohlstetter, & Griffin, 1997). Given the opportunities to innovate provided to charter schools, it appears especially pertinent to examine the school culture within charter schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is derived from literature focused on school culture in general, school culture and school-level variables, and school culture in charter schools.

School Culture

Although there is no universal definition of school culture, one of the more commonly accepted definitions is provided by Peterson and Deal (2002), who stated that, "*culture is a powerful web of rituals and traditions, norms and values that affect every corner of school life*" (p. 10). School culture can also be described as the guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that are evident in the way the school operates (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). School culture shapes the way that school staff, students, and parents, think, behave and act in the school setting (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

School culture is seen as a critical variable in school effectiveness research and school improvement efforts (Cogaltay & Karadag, 2016; Schoen & Teddlie, 2008). Research has shown

that successful schools are tightly linked structurally, symbolically, and culturally more so than unsuccessful schools (Peterson, 1999). In successful schools, the culture influences the actions and spirit of school life and shapes the school's motivation, commitment, effort and focus (Peterson, 1999). The culture of successful schools inspires school leaders and teachers to learn and grow, take risks, and work collegially. In schools with positive school cultures, teachers feel supported when they want to take on additional responsibilities such as leadership roles. Effective school culture promotes a "professional community" where teachers pursue a clear, shared purpose, engage in collaborative activity, and accept collective responsibility for student learning (DuFour et al. 2008; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

School leadership is a critical element in the shaping of school culture (Huguet, 2017; McKinney, et al. 2015; Peterson & Deal, 1998). School leadership provides the parameters within which school culture is established (Hinde, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2016). School leaders communicate values, set change in motion, and provide support to school staff. The principal, more than any other individual within the school, is responsible for establishing and maintaining the school culture (Schreiber, 2019). In successful schools, principals view themselves as collaborative leaders and empower teachers by including them in decision-making processes (Wallace Foundation, 2015). They foster collegiality and value opportunities for collaborative work among teachers and model behaviors that encourage student achievement.

Successful schools cannot exist without high-quality school leadership (Valentine et al., 2004).

School Culture and School-Level Variables

School Size. Existing research indicates that smaller schools may have more positive school cultures than medium or larger-sized schools. While there is no clear definition of what makes up a "small" versus a "large" school, there is a general agreement that 300-400 students are an appropriate size for elementary school and 400-800 students is an appropriate size for a secondary school (Cotton, 1996). Outcomes associated with smaller schools include more positive student attitudes, greater student participation in extracurricular activities and lower absentee and dropout rates (Cotton, 1996; Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000). There is comparatively less research on school size in relation to teacher and administrator variables; however, existing research suggests benefits for smaller-sized schools. A study conducted by Lee and Loeb (2000) found that teachers at small schools reported more positive attitudes concerning their responsibility for student learning compared to teachers at medium- or larger-sized schools.

Grade-Level Configuration. There is limited research examining the relation between grade-level configuration and school culture. Research has shown, however, that there are differences in school culture between elementary and secondary schools. In this regard, the culture of elementary schools is perceived as emphasizing care and

control; whereas, the school culture within secondary schools tends to be influenced by larger size and departmentalized instruction and thus have a more academic orientation (Stoll, 2000). Thus, it might be expected that different grade configurations could also influence school culture. Table 1 below illustrates previous research examining the relationship between school culture and school type.

Much of the research specifically examining the impact of grade-level configuration is focused on the middle grades. Research shows that there is typically a significant decline in academic achievement and self-esteem when students transition to middle school in 6th or 7th grade (Alspaugh, 1998; Rockoff & Lockwood, 2010). Anderman (2002) found that students' sense of school belonging was slightly higher among students attending schools with K-8 or K-12 grade configurations as opposed to the traditional 6th-8th grade configuration.

Years of Operation. Previous research has indicated that years of operation may impact school culture. In this regard, it has been posited that in the early years of a school, the dominant values that help define the school culture emanate largely from the school leadership and the school culture is made explicit. Over time, the role of the school leadership in shaping school culture may diminish, which can negatively impact school culture (Stoll, 2000).

Table 1

Means for school culture domains by school grade spans

Domains	N	Overall CSS Mean	Elementary*	Middle*	High Schools*
Learning Partnership	244	3.72	3.52	2.99	3.03
Collegial Support	244	3.83	3.95	3.65	3.64
Unity of Purpose	244	3.88	4.02	3.67	3.68
Professional Development	244	3.95	3.99	3.71	3.59
Teacher Collaboration	244	3.29	3.12	2.88	2.73
Collaborative Leadership	244	3.51	3.56	3.35	3.29

* (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998)

These three organizational variables, including school size, grade configuration, and years of operation are important to examine in relation to school culture within charter schools as research indicates differences compared to traditional public schools. School size is an important variable to examine among charter schools in relation to school culture as existing research indicates that charter schools are typically smaller than traditional public schools (Bulkley & Fisler, 2004). It has been theorized that the smaller size of charter schools may contribute to more positive teacher attitudes, enhanced teacher collaboration, a greater sense of student belonging, and increased parental belonging. In regards to grade-level configuration, research shows that approximately half of charter schools have grade configurations that differ from the traditional elementary, middle and high school grade configurations. Finally, in regards to years of operation, the relative recency of the charter school movement has led to a plethora of newly opened charter schools (RPP, 2000). Research has

found that charter schools experience challenges within the first few years of operation. Accordingly, a study published by Wohlstetter and Griffin (2001) identified three main issues experienced by charter schools in the first few years of operation, including developing curricular and instructional programs, developing a meaningful accountability system, and developing a leadership structure.

School Culture in Charter Schools

Existing studies suggest that the enhanced autonomy provided to charter schools and the increased capacity for educational innovation would assist in fostering a positive school culture. In this regard, charter schools are provided with more flexibility in structuring their curriculum and school environment (Gill, 2019). It has also been posited that the capacity to build a shared vision among teachers could enhance professional collaboration and support the development of a shared professional culture.

Research has shown that a strong school culture is a critical element in the success of school reforms. To this end, Sutherland (2004) examined how the school culture within a charter school supported the use of data to drive instruction and school improvement efforts. This particular charter school was organized in such a way that cultivated a culture of continuous improvement. The school was designed to have a distributed leadership system in which there was a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities along with an emphasis on "capacity building" and teacher involvement in using data to inform decision-making (p. 288). Findings demonstrated the importance of building a strong culture to foster reforms.

A report issued by the U.S. Department of Education (2004) provided insight into the school culture in eight high-quality charter schools. Data were collected for this study through extensive interviews with students, parents, teachers and administrators and classroom observations. Although the schools were very diverse in their mission and instructional practices, there were certain commonalities related to school culture shared by all eight schools. In this regard, all of the successful charter school had a culture of continuous improvement, a strong leadership system, staff members had a strong commitment to the mission of the school and staff members were also provided with ongoing professional development and planning time. Another study examining charter schools found similar commonalities among high-quality charter schools, including good management and consistent leadership, high expectations for students and staff, and utilization of grade-level

teams to analyze student data and plan for instruction (Izumi, 2008).

Present Study

Given the relative dearth of research on school culture within charter schools, the present study was designed to assess school culture within a multi-school charter system.

We seek answers to following research questions:
1. How do teachers of charter school system perceive their respective school's cultures in the six different domains?
2. Does school size affect teachers' school culture perceptions in the six different domains?
3. Does grade configuration impact teachers' perceptions of school culture in the six different domains?
4. Is there a relationship between schools' years of operations and teachers' perceptions of school culture? Or do teachers' perceptions of school culture change by their years of operations?

Method

The present study utilized a survey research design. According to Creswell (2005) survey designs are used in quantitative research where surveys are administered to the sample population to gather data about perceptions, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of that population. The survey method was also utilized because it provided a convenient and economical method of obtaining data since the sample schools are located in different cities throughout the state.

Research Setting

Charter School System (CSS). The CSS was chosen for the present study because of its size, comprehensive grade span and varying grade configurations. CSS is one of the largest charter school system in the Nation. The CSS serves more than 24,000 students. Each campus has their own building level administration.

CSS schools are also known for the variety of after-school clubs and student participation in science fair events. The types of after-school clubs offered at the CSS vary including STEM-related, social science, art, and sports. Most of the teachers stay for after school clubs at least two days a week. CSS students were female (51%), Hispanic (47%), and low SES (56% free or reduced cost lunch).

Participants

The sample included 36 CSS campuses with more than 1,500 teachers. All campuses were invited to participate in the study and only 18 of the campuses agreed to complete the survey. 455 teachers from those campuses started the survey; however, only 372 teachers completed the survey. Teachers' demographics are reported in the table 1 below. There were between 16-31 teachers from each school included in the study.

Instrumentation

School culture can be assessed through quantitative or qualitative methods. Several inventories have been developed to assess school culture (Maslowski, 2006). A review of school culture inventories conducted by Maslowski (2006) indicated that most school culture questionnaires are based on school improvement models. The present study utilized the School Culture Survey [SCS] developed by Gruenert and Valentine (1998), which has been used extensively in research on school culture (see Appendix). This particular survey examines six broad domains of school culture: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support and Learning Partnership. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The SCS questions were entered into Qualtrics to provide participants with easy access to the survey.

Data Collection

First, we contacted CSS's central office director of research and requested a support letter in order for our research team to complete the IRB application. After obtaining IRB approval, we shared the Qualtrics link with the Director of Research at CSS and the link was passed to the school principals via email in order him to share it with their teachers.

One of the drawbacks of the survey design is that there are often low response rates, which negatively affects generalizability (Creswell, 2005). With that in mind, the first author of the study continuously tracked participation rates. Due to the low response rate, he asked the contact person to send out a reminder email. This continued three times over a ten-day period.

Table 2

Participants by teachers and grade spans

School Name	K-5	K-12	8-12	Total
School A	18	0	0	18
School B	21	0	0	21
School C	0	0	16	16
School D	18	0	0	18
School E	0	20	0	20
School F	0	27	0	27
School G	16	0	0	16
School H	20	0	0	20
School I	0	20	0	20
School J	0	0	20	20
School K	0	31	0	31
School L	0	23	0	23
School M	0	21	0	21
School N	0	25	0	25
School O	0	17	0	17
School P	0	19	0	19
School Q	17	0	0	17
School R	23	0	0	23
Total	133	203	36	372

Data Analysis

Initial analysis revealed that CSS schools had different classification of grades. In contrast to most public-school grade configurations, CSS schools had three different grade-level groupings: K-8, K-12, and 8-12. We also grouped schools in three different categories by their student population. Because prior research has looked at school sizes from different perspectives (fiscal, violence, and/or achievement) and found different findings (Slate, & Jones, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education, 1999) on what ideal school size is, in the light of those research, we coded participating charter schools as small (less than or equal to 500), medium (between 501 and 650), and big (greater than 651) to see if there were any differences. We also grouped schools by years of operation. We coded schools 1 if their campuses opened between 2002 and 2007 and 2 if their campuses opened after 2007 (2008 and later) to see if the school years of operation impacts teachers' perception of their respective school's school culture.

For the first question, descriptive analyses were conducted to examine how participating schools'

teachers perceive their school culture in six domains. *T*-statistics and one-way ANOVA were used to address the second, third, and fourth questions to see how charter schools' teachers' perspective vary by their school level, size, and years of operation.

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to examine and understand how teachers of charter schools perceive their respective schools' cultures in six different domains: *collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support,* and *learning partnership.*

Overall, we found that teachers rated *professional development* (4.03) and *collegial support* (3.95) highest while rating *teacher collaboration* (3.36) and *collaborative leadership* (3.50) lowest (see Table 2).

Table 3

Overall school culture factor descriptive

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Collaborative Leadership	372	1.00	5.00	3.50	.83
Professional Development	372	1.00	5.00	4.03	.55
Unity of Purpose	372	1.00	5.00	3.86	.66
Collegial Support	370	1.00	5.00	3.95	.62
Learning Partnership	372	1.25	5.00	3.80	.70
Teacher Collaboration	372	1.00	5.00	3.36	.80

In order to identify the specific strength and weaknesses of this multi-school charter system's school culture, we provided means for all 35 SCS items (see Table 3). Item-analysis revealed that specific school culture items were parallel with factor ratings. Teachers valued *professional development* and *collegial support* items the most such as Q30 (4.15), Q17 (4.12), and Q24 (4.11).

Similar to the school culture factor ratings, teachers rated *teacher collaboration* and *collaborative leadership* items the lowest. For example, Q15 (3.03), Q8 (3.16), and Q33 (3.19) as *teacher collaboration* items and Q32 (3.13) as *collaborative leadership* item got the lowest scores from the teachers (see Table 3).

Table 4

Overall Item Descriptive

Items	Count	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	372	1	5	4.09	.78
Q2	372	1	5	3.66	1.10
Q3	372	1	5	3.74	1.04
Q4	372	1	5	3.82	.91
Q5	372	1	5	4.03	.77
Q6	372	1	5	3.87	.95
Q7	372	1	5	3.65	1.08
Q8	372	1	5	3.16	1.25
Q9	372	1	5	3.87	.88
Q10	371	1	5	4.09	.83
Q11	372	1	5	3.38	1.16
Q12	372	1	5	3.66	1.01
Q13	372	1	5	3.81	.87
Q14	372	1	5	3.23	1.17
Q15	372	1	5	3.03	1.12
Q16	372	1	5	3.96	.94
Q17	372	1	5	4.12	.59
Q18	372	1	5	3.73	.97
Q19	372	1	5	3.91	.85
Q20	372	1	5	3.49	1.15
Q21	372	1	5	4.03	.77
Q22	372	1	5	3.41	1.13
Q23	372	1	5	3.52	1.01
Q24	372	1	5	4.11	.63
Q25	371	1	5	3.77	.86
Q26	372	1	5	3.26	1.07
Q27	372	1	5	3.81	.81
Q28	372	1	5	3.52	1.02
Q29	372	1	5	3.53	1.00
Q30	372	1	5	4.15	.78
Q31	372	1	5	3.91	.80
Q32	372	1	5	3.13	1.30
Q33	372	1	5	3.19	1.05
Q34	372	1	5	4.10	.80
Q35	372	1	5	3.51	1.06

We found no statistically-significant differences between charter schools' sizes and respective schools' school culture factors between *teacher collaboration* (*F* (2, 369)=. 859, *p*=. 425), *collaborative leadership* (*F* (2, 369)=. 1.345, *p*=. 262), *professional development* (*F* (2, 369)=. 300, *p*=. 741), *unity of purpose* (*F* (2, 369)=. 208, *p*=. 812), *collaborative support* (*F* (2, 369)=. 278, *p*=. 758), *and learning partnership* (*F* (2, 369)= 1.183, *p*=. 308) in terms of teacher perceptions (see Table 5).

Table 5

One-Way ANOVA Results for School Culture Factors by School Size

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teacher Collaboration	Between Groups	1.08	2	.54	.85	.42
	Within Groups	233.29	369	.63		
	Total	234.37	371			
Collaborative Leadership	Between Groups	1.87	2	.93	1.34	.26
	Within Groups	256.47	369	.69		
	Total	258.34	371			
Professional Development	Between Groups	.18	2	.09	.30	.74
	Within Groups	110.52	369	.30		
	Total	110.70	371			
Unity Purpose	Between Groups	.18	2	.09	.20	.81
	Within Groups	160.75	369	.43		
	Total	160.93	371			
Collaborative Support	Between Groups	.21	2	.10	.27	.75
	Within Groups	139.23	367	.37		
	Total	139.45	369			
Learning Partnership	Between Groups	1.14	2	.57	1.18	.30
	Within Groups	178.77	369	.48		
	Total	179.92	371			

For the third question, one-way ANOVA results showed that there were no statistical differences between CSS charter schools' school culture factors of *teacher collaboration* (*F* (2,369) =. 043, *p*=. 958), *collaborative leadership* (*F* (2,369) =. 108, *p*=. 898), *professional development* (*F* (2,369) =. 475, *p*=. 622), *unity of purpose* (*F* (2,369) =. 548, *p*=. 578), *and learning partnership*

(F (2,369) =. 715, p=. 490) and their grade span except *collegial support* (see Table 5). There was a statistically-significant relationship between participating CSS charter schools' grade span and respective schools' school culture on *collegial support* (F (2,369) =. 3.309, p=. 038) factor. We ran a post hoc analysis to reveal where the differences among grade spans were. Because sample sizes were not equal, we looked at the Scheffe test results to detect the differences. Post

hoc comparisons using Scheffe test indicated that the mean score of collegial support scores for the K-12 schools (M=3.98, SD=. 55) was significantly higher than the 9-12 schools (M=3.70, SD=. 69). However, the K-8 schools' *collegial support* condition (M=3.97, SD= .66) did not significantly differ from the K-12 and 9-12 schools' scores.

Table 6

One-Way ANOVA Results for School Culture Factors by School Grade Span

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teacher Collaboration	Between Groups	.05	2	.02	.04	.95
	Within Groups	234.32	369	.63		
	Total	234.37	371			
Collaborative Leadership	Between Groups	.15	2	.07	.1	.8
	Within Groups	258.19	369	.70		
	Total	258.34	371			
Professional Development	Between Groups	.28	2	.14	.47	.62
	Within Groups	110.42	369	.29		
	Total	110.70	371			
Unity of Purpose	Between Groups	.47	2	.23	.54	.57
	Within Groups	160.45	369	.43		
	Total	160.93	371			
Collegial Support	Between Groups	2.47	2	1.23	3.30	.03
	Within Groups	136.98	367	.37		
	Total	139.45	369			
Learning Partnership	Between Groups	.69	2	.34	.71	.49
	Within Groups	179.23	369	.48		
	Total	179.92	371			

For the fourth question, independent *t-statistics* analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between participating CSS schools' school culture factors of *collaborative leadership* (*t* (370) =-.234, *p*=. 815)*, professional development* (*t* (370) =. 044, *p*=. 965)*, unity of 7).

purpose (*t* (370) =. 164, *p*=. 870)*, collegial support* (*t* (368) =. 017, *p*=. 986)*, learning partnership* (*t* (370) =. 365, *p*=. 715)*, and teacher collaboration* (*t* (370) =. 060, *p*=. 952) and their respective schools' years of operation (see Table

Table 7

Teachers' Perceptions of School Culture Change By Their Years Of Operations

		F	Sig.	T	df	p
Collaborative Leadership	Equal variance assumed	0.01	0.94	-0.23	370.00	0.81
	Equal variance not assumed			-0.23	364.52	0.81
Professional Development	Equal variance assumed	1.89	0.16	0.04	370.00	0.96
	Equal variance not assumed			0.04	338.53	0.96
Unity Purpose	Equal variance assumed	0.26	0.60	0.16	370.00	0.87
	Equal variance not assumed			0.16	350.69	0.87
Collegial Support	Equal variance assumed	2.61	0.10	0.01	368.00	0.98
	Equal variance not assumed			0.01	343.20	0.98
Learning Partnership	Equal variances assumed	0.00	0.98	0.36	370.00	0.71
	Equal variances not assumed			0.36	365.79	0.71
Teacher Collaboration	Equal variances assumed	0.58	0.44	0.06	370.00	0.95
	Equal variances not assumed			0.06	358.52	0.95

Discussion

We investigated charter school system teachers' perceptions about their schools' school culture. We also examined how their schools' size, grade configuration, and years of operation affected their perceptions of school culture. Overall, the results revealed that teachers at CSS have a positive perception of the school culture within their respective schools. In particular, teachers reported very favorable perceptions of professional development opportunities and collegial support.

We found that teachers rated their respective schools' professional development programs highest. Item analysis also indicated that teachers valued their professional growth such as *teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process*. It is not surprising to see this result because CSS emphasizes the necessity of ongoing teacher professional development in their program handbook. The schools have 6-days mandatory annual professional development days during each school year. They also provide tuition assistance and assistance with tuition related expenses incurred by employees striving to attain certification or graduate degree.

The lowest rated domains were teacher collaboration and collaborative leadership. For teacher collaborations, item analysis also identified areas of weakness in teachers' perceptions of school culture. Accordingly, teachers do not have positive perceptions of their ability to collaborate and learn best practices from each other. The two lowest rated items were "teachers take time to observe each other teaching" and *teachers spend considerable time planning*

together. In addition, collaborative leadership reflects the degree to which school leaders establish, maintain, and support collaborative relationships with and among school staff. However, teachers also gave a low rating to the collaborative leadership items including *administrators protect instruction and planning time*. This might indicate that teachers may not be happy about administration respect for their lessons and lesson planning times if they are frequently assigned extra duty like subbing and/or lunch duties. To improve it, their leadership might involve them in decision-making, innovation and support, and the sharing of ideas and practices (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998).

School culture item analyses revealed that CSS teachers value their schools' growth with the highest-rated item, *the faculty values school improvement*. This may also explain why teachers dedicate extra time for afterschool clubs twice a week and science fair preparation with students during after school hours in addition to their one-day full Saturday for actual science fair competition

Examination of the impact of grade configuration on teachers' perceptions of school culture revealed few differences. However, there was a statistically-significant relationship found for the domain of collegial support, which indicates that the degree to which teachers work effectively together. In this regard, a significant difference was found between collegial support between K-12 schools and 9-12 schools, with results favoring K-12 schools. This finding is consistent with previous findings showing that collegial support is perceived more positively by teachers at the elementary level compared to middle and high school teachers (Gruenert, 2005). This might

indicate teachers stop collaborating with each other as grade levels increases because they become busier or more self-sufficient.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge some limitations for this study. The low response rate may have impacted the validity of our findings. It is possible that teachers at CSS who completed the school culture survey may have influenced the results whereas majority of teachers did not participate in the study thus, their voices were not heard. The timing of the survey (early May) administration may have contributed to the low response rates. Another limitation of this study is that school culture was only measured from the perspective of teachers and not from other stakeholders in the school, such as students, parents, and administrators. Future research could address this limitation. The present study was also limited to the use of quantitative data in the assessment of school culture. School culture could also be assessed using qualitative methods, such as written reflections or naturalistic observations.

Conclusion

The present study makes several unique contributions to the literature. First, this study is one of the few studies that examined a charter school system's school culture. Charter schools have now been in existence long enough that it was time to study factors that make charter schools successful. Second, this study revealed that teachers valued their professional growth. This was evident in their ratings of their charter schools' professional development opportunities. This seems one of the qualities of a healthy school culture. Another finding that we found was how teachers value collegial support in their schools. This implied that teachers both pleasantly work together and improve this opportunity more. This was more prevalent in K-12 schools that other grade schools. Future research should investigate why this might be the case. We also learned that positive school culture was not up to school sizes and years of operation. Yet, teachers reported that an environment where they receive support from their administrators is crucial.

References

Anderman, E. M. (2002). School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*, 795-809.

Bulkley, K. & Fisler, J. (2003). A decade of charter schools: From theory to practice. *Educational Policy, 17*, 317-342.

Bulkley, J., & Schneider, M. (2007). *Charter schools: Hope or hype?* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Konold, T., Cornell, D., Jia, Y., & Malone, M. (2018). School climate, student engagement, and academic achievement: a latent variable, multilevel multi-informant examination. *AERA Open* 4, 1–17. doi: 10.1177/2332858418815661

Cogaltay, N., & Karadag, E. (2016). The effect of educational leadership on organizational variables: A meta-analysis study in the sample of Turkey. Educational Sciences: *Theory & Practice, 16*(2), 603–646.

Cotton, K. (1996). School size, school climate and student performance. *School Improvement Research Series*. Retrieved form
https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/SizeClimateandPerformance.pdf

Chen, G. (2018). *What is a charter school*? Retrieved from https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/what-is-a-charter-school

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). R*evisiting professional learning communities: New insights for improving schools*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Gardner, P. W., Ritblatt, S. N., & Beatty, J. R. (2000). Academic achievement and parental school involvement as a function of high school size. *The High School Journal, 83*, 21-27.

Gill, M. (2019). *Frequent Misconceptions About Charter Schools*. UCF Forum. 354. Retrieved from https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum/354

Griffin, N. C., & Wohlstetter, P. (2001). Building a plane while flying it: Early lessons from developing charter schools. *Teachers College Record, 103*, 336-365.

Gruenert, S., & Valentine, J. (1998). *School culture survey*. Middle Level Leadership Center, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of collaborative school cultures with student achievement. *Sage Journals, 89*(645), 43-55.

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). S*chool culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it.* Alexandria, VA: Hawker Brownlow Education

Hinde, E. R. (2004). School culture and change: An examination of the effects of school culture on the process of change. *Essays in Education*. Retrieved from: http://www. usca.edu/essays/vol12winter2004.html

Huguet, B. C. S. (2017). Effective leadership can positively impact school performance. *On the Horizon, 25*(2), 96–102.

Izumi, L. (2008). *What works: Inside model charter schools*. Lincoln, IL: Center for Innovation & Improvement.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2016). *Learning leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Lake, R. J. & Gross, B. (2012). *Hopes, fears & reality: A balanced look at American charter schools in 2011*. Retrieved from University of Washington, Center on Reinventing Public Education.

Lee, V. E., & Loeb, S. (2000). School size in Chicago elementary schools: Effect on teachers' attitudes and students' achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 37*, 3-31.

Maslowski, R. (2006). A review of inventories diagnosing school culture. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*, 6-35.

Maslowski, R. (2001). *School culture and school performance* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://worldcat.org/oclc/56823430.

Manno, B. V., Finn, C. E., & Vanourek, G. (2000). Charter school accountability: Problems and prospects. *Educational Policy, 14*, 473-493.

Malloy, C. L. (2003). Teacher professionalism in charter schools: An exploratory study. *Dissertation Abstract International, 64*, 4295A.

McKinney, C. L., Labat, M. B., & Labat, C. A. (2015). Traits possessed by principals who transform school culture in national blue-ribbon schools. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 19*(1), 152–166.

Metcalfe, L (2014). *A tale of two effective title one reward charter schools*. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Web.

Morris, J. E., Lummis, G. W., Lock, G., Ferguson, C., Hill, S., & Nykiel, A. (2019). The role of leadership in establishing a positive staff culture in a secondary school. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 1741143219864937.

Newmann, F. & Wehlage, G. (1995). *Successful school structuring*. University of Wisconsin-Madison. Center on Organization and Restructuring Schools.

Peterson, K. D., & Deal, T. E. (1998). How leaders influence the culture of schools. *Educational Leadership, 56*, 28-30.

Peterson, K. D., (1999). Time use flows from school culture: river o values and traditions can nurture or poison staff development hours. *Journal of Staff Development,* 20,

Rockoff, J. E. & Lockwood, B. B. (2010). Stuck in the middle: Impact of grade configuration in public schools. Jo*urnal of Public Economics, 94*, 1051-1061.

RPP International. (2000). *The state of charter schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Schoen, L. T., & Teddlie, C. (2008). A new model of school culture: A response to a call for conceptual clarity. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 19*, 129-153.

Schreiber, J. L. (2019). *How school leaders shape school culture: A qualitative case study.* Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/2142/

Stoll, L. (1998). School culture. *SET: Research Information for Teachers, 3*, 9-14.

Sutherland, S. (2004). Creating a culture of data use for continuous improvement: A case study of an Edison project school. *American Journal of Evaluation, 25*, 277-293.

Texas Education Agency. (2019). *Charter schools*. Retrieved from https://tea.texas.gov/
	Texas_Schools/Charter_Schools/

U.S. Department of Education. (2004). Innovations in education: Successful charter schools.

Valentine, J., Clark, D., Hackmann, D., & Petzko, V. (2004). *Leadership for highly successful middle level schools,
	v. 2: A national study of leadership in middle level schools.* Reston, VA National Association of Secondary
	School Principals.

Anna P. (2015). *Developing excellent school principals to advance teaching and learning: Considerations for state
	policy.* Retrieved from https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/developing-excellent-
	school-principals.aspx

Wagner, C. R. (2006). The school leader's tool for assessing and improving school culture. *Principal Leadership:
	Middle Level Edition, 7*, 41-44.

Weiss, C. C., & Kipnes, L. (2006). Reexamining middle school effects: A comparison of middle grades students in
	middle schools and K-8 schools. *American Journal of Education, 112*, 239-272.

Wohlstetter, P., & Griffin, N. C. (1997). C*reating and sustaining learning communities: Early lessons from charter
	schools*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association,
	Chicago, IL.

Corresponding Author Contact Information

Author name: Alpaslan Sahin

Harmony Public Schools, USA

Email : Sahinalpaslan38@gmail.com

APPENDIX

SCHOOL CULTURE SURVEY
Form 4-98

To what degree do these statements describe the conditions at your school?

Rate each statement on the following scale:

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

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Leaders value teachers' ideas.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subjects.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Teachers trust each other.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5.	Teachers support the mission of the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6.	Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7.	Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8.	Teachers spend considerable time planning together.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9.	Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10.	Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11.	Leaders take time to praise teachers that perform well.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12.	The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13.	Parents trust teachers' professional judgments.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14.	Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15.	Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16.	Professional development is valued by the faculty.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17.	Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18.	Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	①	②	③	④	⑤
19.	Teachers understand the mission of the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
20.	Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
21.	Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.	①	②	③	④	⑤
22.	My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.	①	②	③	④	⑤
23.	Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤
24.	Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	①	②	③	④	⑤
25.	Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	①	②	③	④	⑤
26.	Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	①	②	③	④	⑤
27.	The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.	①	②	③	④	⑤
28.	Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤
29.	Teachers work together to develop and evaluate programs and projects.	①	②	③	④	⑤
30.	The faculty values school improvement.	①	②	③	④	⑤
31.	Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
32.	Administrators protect instruction and planning time.	①	②	③	④	⑤
33.	Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.	①	②	③	④	⑤
34.	Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	①	②	③	④	⑤
35.	Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example they engage mentally in class and complete homework assignments.	①	②	③	④	⑤