ADMINISTRATOR, TEACHER, AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have found that schools that support a students' sense of community (SOC) positively affect students' academic achievement, behavior, motivation, and social and emotional competencies (Bryk & Driscoll, 1995; Schaps, 2003; Schaps, Battistich & Solomon, 1997; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Ladd, 1990; Resnick & Bearman, 1997; Wentzel, 1997). The purpose of this study is to explore, analyze, and describe characteristics of an elementary school that reports a high sense of community among students and to describe adult perceptions on the school's program, activities, and practices that are in place to contribute to the SOC. Schools that provide a high SOC appear to have certain collective key characteristics that have been identified in the research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school. The following overall research questions focus this study:

1. How does an elementary school identified as having a strong SOC support its students' sense of community?

2. What are the administrator, teacher, and parent perceptions of why the students have a SOC within the selected elementary school?

3. What evidence is there that these six key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) are present within the selected elementary school?

4. What similarities and differences are seen between the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and parents regarding these key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) within the selected elementary school?

A mixed methods approach was used. The study used surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis to investigate administrator, teacher, and parent perceptions of the students' SOC at the selected school. The researcher identified and examined distinct characteristics that can assist schools in supporting a student's SOC. The study describes a

school program and identifies key activities and practices of a school that reports a strong SOC among students.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The School as a Community

There has been a considerable breakdown in community in the United States (Martin, 2000; Putman, 2000). In 1992, three-quarters of the U.S. workforce said that "the breakdown of community" and "selfishness" were "serious" or "extremely serious" problems in America (Putman, 2002, p.25). In 1996, only 8 percent of all Americans said that "the honesty and integrity of the average American" were improving, as compared with 50 percent who thought Americans were becoming less trustworthy (Putman, 2000, p. 25). More than 80 percent of Americans believed that there should be more of an emphasis on community, even if that emphasis puts more of a demand on themselves (Putman, 2000).

No school is an island entirely of itself. Schools are affected by this breakdown in community. Dysfunctional families, violence, drug abuse, and everyday tragedies have made the job of educating students more difficult and crucial than ever (Martin, 1992). Some young people are successful in their rite of passage from childhood to adulthood; however, research shows that many become burdened with behavioral and academic problems, and educating those students has become even more difficult (Feldman, 1997). Jane Martin (1992) argues that, to offset this breakdown in community, schools should be the "moral equivalent" of a home. Schools must recognize that often parents are not a dominant force in the socialization of their children, and instead, schools should take the responsibility to fulfill this deficit.

In his book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putman makes a case for the importance of examining the state of community:

> To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven," sang the Hebrew poet in Ecclesiastes. When Pete Seeger put that ancient maxim to folk music in the 1960s, it was, perhaps, a season for Americans to unravel the fetters of intrusive togetherness. As we enter a new century, however, it is now past time to reweave the fabric of our communities.
>
> At the outset of our inquiry, I noted that most Americans today feel vaguely and uncomfortably disconnected. It seemed to many as the twentieth century closed, just as it did to the young Walter Lipmann at the century's opening, that "we have changed our environment more quickly than we know how to change ourselves." We tell pollsters that

we wished we lived in a more civil, more trustworthy, more collectively caring community. The evidence from our inquiry shows that this longing is not simply nostalgia of "false consciousness." Americans are right that the bonds of our communities have withered, and we are right to fear that this transformation has very real costs (Putman, 2000, p. 402).

Discussion about schools as communities is becoming more common in the literature on effective schools. Good schools as places where there is a sense of community (SOC) is a recurrent theme in research on effective schools (Brandt, 1992; Schmitz, Baber, John & Brown, 2000; Vail, 2005; Schaps, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2004). Students in schools with a strong SOC are more likely to act ethically (Battistich & Solomon, 1997); to be academically motivated (Schaps, Battistich & Solomon, 1997); to avoid a number of problem behaviors, including drug use and violence (Battistich & Hom, 1997); and to develop social and emotional competencies (Schaps & Solomon, 1990). Finn and Rock (1997) identified lack of participation and engagement in the school and classroom as the single most important antecedent of at-risk behavior and academic failure. "Educators may be able to encourage engagement behaviors to increase a student's chance of completing school successfully" (Finn and Rock, 1997, p. 1).

Evidence suggests that many children today are lonely, and that they are less connected with schools, adults, and their families (Sergiovanni, 1994; Solomon et al., 2000). One study by the University of Maryland in 1993 found that parents spent an average of only 17 hours per week with their children, compared to 30 hours per week in 1965, which has led to an increase in loneliness in American children (Steyer, 2003).

In addition to loneliness, policy makers, teachers, and parents alike recognize the prevalence of relational and physical aggression among school children (Craig & Pepler, 2003). Early rejection by peers shows an adverse relationship to results, such as dropping out of school, physical aggression, and psychopathology (Donohue, Perry & Weinstein, 2003). There is a strong need for efforts to curb aggression among students in schools to serve their well-being (Craig & Pepler, 2003). Researchers have associated a school's SOC with a number of outcomes that may temper aggression among children, cultivate prosocial and moral reasoning, and enhance conflict resolution skills and empathy, among other positive outcomes (Battistich, Solomon & Schaps, 1997; Bryk, 1993).

SOC is defined as a student's feeling of being known by, accepted by, valued by, and having influence with their teachers and classmates (Schaps, Lewis & Watson, 1997). It is also described as feeling connected to, engaged to, belonging to, and committed to school. The quality of students' social relations with each other, with teachers and with administrators contributes to an enhanced school environment. The benefits of community building in schools depend on the school's efforts.

Students need to feel an SOC in order to succeed and develop to their fullest potential (Vieno, Perkins, Smith & Santinello, 2005). The literature suggests that the educational system that is needed can be best delivered through caring school communities (Aderman & Maehr, 1994; Glynn, 1981; Westheimer & Kahne, 1993). "Despite the massive amounts being invested in student assessments these days, [schools] fail to monitor [student's] SOC and connection to school…that are easily measured and have proven links to important outcomes" (Schaps, 1998, p. 48).

Research has shown that the benefits of an SOC are often lasting. From primary schools through secondary schools, an SOC affects student achievement, engagement, social skills, and behavior (Schaps, 2003). Schools that have developed an SOC have been shown to demonstrate significant improvements in the students' well-being (Bryk & Driscoll, 1995; Sergiovanni, 2004). As Yale University child psychologist James Comer has said, "In every interaction, you are either building community or destroying community. Schools have no choice about whether to shape citizenship and character. The only choice is whether to do it well" (Schaps and Lewis, 1998, p. 27). If schools desire to cultivate a community experience that is meaningful to children, there is a need to deepen an understanding of a school as a community so as to understand what is relevant and meaningful to children.

Sergiovanni (1994) and others believe a loss of community has manifested itself in the large number of troubled students now acknowledged to exist in the United States. Building a school community becomes the "secret weapon that can help domesticate the wild cultures that now seem omnipresent in our schools" (Sergiovanni, p. xiv). Finding ways to address these issues is increasingly urgent in view of the rapidly changing society, and developing an SOC in schools should be a key feature of 21st century schools. However, this is made even harder without a real recipe for community building.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore, analyze, and describe characteristics of an elementary school that reported a high sense of community among students and to describe adult perceptions of the school's program, activities, and practices that are in place to contribute to the SOC. If an SOC is as important to increasing students' commitment to school as research suggests, gaining additional information about building an SOC will lead to a better understanding of ways to improve the educational environment within the school.

Research on schools as communities has increased greatly over the past 20 years. However, little research has focused on identifying the specific program characteristics that promote an SOC. Most existing empirical studies have focused on documenting the educational benefit of a strong SOC. There is a lack of empirical studies on the development of an SOC in a school, in particular a detailed description of what schools have done to shape and enhance a student's SOC. While there is a call for administrators to cultivate an SOC, many schools lack the specific understanding of what characteristics provide an SOC to their students (Battistich & Solomon et al., 1995). Schools now should take steps to improve their SOC. By taking action, an SOC will be experienced rather than merely admired (Cook, 2000). Martin (1992) argues that schools need to become a place of physical and emotional safety, a place for encouragement and an SOC, which fills an emptiness created by unreliable homes.

According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), one way research contributes to educational knowledge is by description. What happens in schools has been greatly enhanced by descriptive studies. Therefore, a descriptive study will be undertaken to understand the characteristics of a school that reports a strong SOC among students. The goal of the descriptive study was to describe the relevant aspects of the school's program that supports a student's SOC.

This study identified and examined distinct characteristics that can assist schools supporting a student's SOC, as well as describing the school program and identifying key activities and practices of a school that reports a strong SOC among students. Additionally, the study provided the perceptions held by teachers, parents, and school administrators toward the school environment as a community and their perceptions of the school's program characteristics and activities that influences a student's SOC.

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Research Questions

Osterman (2000) argues that there is a need for descriptive and analytical studies that focus specifically on the influence of the school on the students' SOC. Schools that provide a high SOC appear to have certain collective key characteristics that have been identified in the research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school. The following overall research questions focus this study:

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Significance of the Study

With continued concern about school violence, disruptive student behavior, bullying, and student academic failures, interest in promoting positive student experiences is rising. A student's SOC has been identified as a critical factor that may help schools improve student's connectedness to school. Because a student's SOC benefits students in many ways, educators need to make sure they are doing everything they can to ensure that students feel an SOC at school. Since "children are 25 percent of the population, but 100 percent of the future," what schools do today to shape students' SOC will greatly affect the future (Lickona, 2004, p. xxiii). Information gleaned from this study is useful for administrators and school districts to understand the characteristics that can build or strengthen a school's SOC. Results of this research can be used in policy decisions to support the allocation of funding for professional development and financial support for programs that would encourage the development of a school's SOC.

Operational Definitions

Caring – Seeing, hearing, or feeling what others are trying to convey and feeling that they are cared for (Noddings, 1992).

Kindness – The "definitive element for true community" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 14), is being thoughtful, helpful, and nice to each other.

Mission – "The fundamental purpose of an organization" and answer to the question, "Why do we exist?" (Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2008, p. 468).

Order and Discipline – Methods of modeling character, the regulation of children, and the maintenance of order or rules of the school (Papalia, Wendkos-Olds, Dustin-Feldman, 2006).

Regular Contact – The provision of ample opportunities for students to interact with each other and to develop relationships.

Respect – To hold high regard for, to hold in esteem, to treat with courtesy and consideration, and to address each other kindly.

School Climate – The "reflection of all the combined aspects" of the school and its effects on all the people who enter it (DeRoche & Williams, 2001, p. 73). The feeling that one gets as he or she walks into the school.

Schools as Communities – The bonding together of people in special ways and the binding of them to shared values and ideas (Sergiovanni, 1994).

School Culture – A "complex web of traditions and rituals" that has developed over time in a school. It is thought of as the normative glue that holds a particular school together" (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 1).

School Vision – "A realistic, credible, attractive future" for a school (Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2008, p. 472).

Sense of Belonging – Shared emotional connection within the group that provides a sense of identity and a feeling that one is part of the group (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

Sense of Community (SOC) – A student's feeling of being known by, accepted by, valued by, and having influence with his or her teachers and classmates (Schaps, Lewis & Watson, 1997). Also known as feeling connected to, engaged to, belonging to, and committed to school.

Shared Governance – Students work collaboratively and participate in day-to-day operations and decision making. Students have a say in establishing the climate and culture of the classroom and school.

School Program – The usual way of doing things, as defined by a school's traditions, celebrations, tone, values, ideals, expectations, usual ways of doing things (Ravitch, 2007).

Trust – The feeling that community members can be believed and can rely on other members of the community where members will act in a consistent, honest, and appropriate way (Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpande, 1993).

Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations of this study:

1. The study sample was limited by the willingness of the respondents to complete the surveys.
2. The survey sample was selected based on the perceptions of the Positive Behavior Support Specialist of the school district.
3. The sample is taken from only one elementary school and therefore does not represent all elementary schools.
4. Data were collected in the form of survey responses, a focus group, interviews, observations, and document review from teachers, parents, and administrators, but not from students.

Conceptual Framework

Six measures to understand the multiple factors that define a students' SOC – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline have been identified as the theoretical rationale for the theoretical framework. This conceptual framework was developed by the researcher based on an extensive literature review and was used to examine and analyze the school's SOC (see Figure 1).

Organization of the Study

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction to the study and the problem, purpose, research questions, significance of the study, research definitions, research limitations, and conceptual framework. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature as it pertains to a school's SOC. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used, including an overview of methods, research design, setting and participant process, and data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents the summary, findings, limitations, recommendations, and suggestions for topics for further research.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
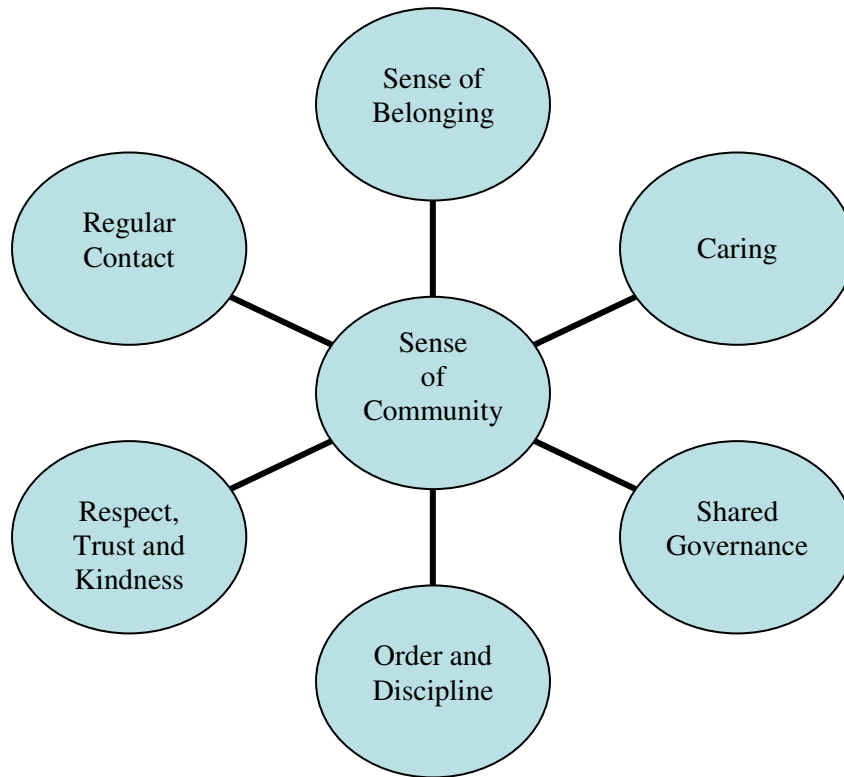
CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) echo many researchers who believe that one of the most essential reforms needed in education is to make schools into better communities. The purpose of this literature review is to determine through existing research what others have learned about the SOC in schools, to identify the benefit for both the students and the community itself, and to identify common practices and conditions in developing an SOC in schools.

Defining Community

Community

An understanding of the need for an SOC in schools first requires an understanding of the term "community". For many, the idea of community evokes images of a small town or neighborhood where people know each other, often for many years, and provide various types of material and emotional support to each other. A community "is an idealization in place and time of feeling a part of a place, with those around knowing us and caring about us" (Bess, Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, B, 2002, p. 3).

Gusfield (1975) distinguished between two major uses of the word "community" which can be used either in a relational or territorial sense. The relational dimension of community deals with the nature and quality of relationships within the community (Gusfield, 1975). People can be connected through commonalities of interests, concerns, and beliefs. Other communities may be defined according to territory, as in the case of neighborhoods (Wright, 2004). The two conceptions of community can also be intertwined (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001). People may live in a location that has a name and feature that distinguishes it from other territorial communities. At the same time, they may belong to a social or professional community within that location as in the case of a school where the school grounds area defines its geographical borders and has a distinctive location. Inside the school, children, teachers, and staff may be socially-bounded to each other through common interests.

A similar distinction is drawn between "*gesellschaft*" (society) and "*gemeinschaft*" (community) which are associated with the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (Sergiovanni, 1995). Gesellschaft is the concept of a society formed by agreement by essentially independent individuals to achieve something together whether or not the individuals have common interests and it is maintained through individuals acting in their own self-interest. Gesellschaft has no

feeling of kinship (Tönnies, 1963). Tönnies associated gesellschaft with the world of business and government, as opposed to the community grouping of family and friends. Interactions of gessellschaft members are superficial and largely occur to accomplish a particular purpose (Vance, 1941; Landis, 1942).

Gemeinschaft, by contrast, differs in that the concept of a social entity, such as spiritual or personal convictions already exists before any interaction occurs. Kinship, neighborhood, and unity of mind and spirit are considered essential in a gemeinschaft relationship. Where there are "gemeinschaft characteristics," most people know each other and interact with each other (Vance, 1941; Landis, 1942). Individuals in gemeinschaft are also directed by common beliefs about the appropriate behavior and responsibility of members of the group. They are committed to each other and to the association at large – associations marked by "unity of will" (Tönnies, p. 22). Tönnies saw the family as the most perfect expression of gemeinschaft, but community could also be based on shared place or shared belief. Members of gemeinschaft communities are linked by shared values and beliefs, recurring interactions with each other, and a shared commitment to a particular place.

Since the nineteenth century, social theorists have suggested that historical progression is from gemeinschaft (community) to gesellschaft (society) (Sergiovanni, 1994). Power (2002) agrees, suggesting that schools are more akin to gessellschaft rather than gemeinschaft because students are compelled to attend a school up to a certain grade, while the teacher-student relationship is traditionally grounded on good grades and quality of work.

According to Scott Peck (1987), community is about the individual members making up the group. It must be inclusive and committed to each other in growing together. Peck describes community in this way:

> The analogy of a gem comes to mind. The seeds of community reside in humanity – a social species – just as a gem originally resides in the earth. But it is not yet a gem, only a potential one. A group becomes a community in somewhat the same way that a stone becomes a gem – through a process of cutting and polishing. Community, like a gem, is multifaceted, each facet a mere aspect of the whole that defies description (Peck, p. 60).

Similarly, Graves (1992) defines community as "an inherently cooperative, cohesive, and self-reflective group whose members work on a regular face-to-face basis toward common goals while respecting a variety of perspectives, values, and life styles" (p. 64). As Peck (1987) has

reminded us, a community is a place where conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional aggression and with judgment and grace. A generation that is unable to feel for one another is incapable of developing such a community.

McMillan and Chavis' (1986) identified and proposed four elements of communities: (a) membership; (b) influence; (c) integration and fulfillment of needs; and (d) shared emotional connection as a model in which SOC can operate and be understood. The first dimension, membership, involves a feeling of belonging to a collective group where the individual feels safe (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). It is described as having a sense of belonging (who is in and who is out), and members' needs are met through their commitment to be together. McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggest that membership is the feeling that one is part of a group or community. One senses identity by being a member of the community.

The second dimension is described as influence, which captures the individual's ability to influence the collective, and the ability of the collective to influence the individual. The influence component suggests that engaging in group behaviors fulfill the individual's need for similarity with others, while strengthening the group's SOC. The influence component provides a balance that allows the individual to contribute to the community, but still have a level of freedom and self-expression.

The third component, integration and fulfillment of needs, further elaborates on the cohesion of the group. This suggests that individuals are attracted to groups that fulfill individual needs ranging from the desire to achieve a level of social status, to human survival. McMillan and Chavis (1986) believe that fulfillment needs are determined by individual values and the ability of the community to organize and prioritize activities.

The final component of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) definition of community is shared emotional connection which refers to the bond between members of the group and has several features, including:

1. Contact – the more people interact, the more likely they are to be close.
2. Quality of interaction – the less positive the relationship, the better the bond.
3. Closure to events – the more ambiguous or unresolved the tasks are, the more cohesive the group will be.
4. Shared events – the more important a shared event is to those involved, the greater the connection among the group.

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5. Investment – the amount of investment (time, relationships), the more important the community bond.

6. Honor or humiliation – the effect of honor or humiliation on a member, the more impact on the community positively or negatively.

7. Spiritual bond – the amount a community shares a bond also known as community of spirit.

Sense of Community

"The four elements that form the basic building blocks of community, membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection are all dynamically connected" (Hersberger, Rioux & Cruitt, 2005, p. 8). The strength of community is built on each of these elements and the better these fit together and the extent to with which they are self-reinforced will determine the power of the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

An SOC is a feeling where members care about and support one another, actively participate in and have influence on the group's activities and decisions, feel a sense of belonging and identification with the group, and have common norms, goals, and values (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1994; Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000). In several aspects, an SOC and positive school climate are complementary. A positive school climate contributes to an SOC and vice versa. Both include warmth, caring, and respect. Both provide opportunities for students and teachers to interact and work collaboratively in an atmosphere of trust.

In his book *The Psychological Sense of Community: Prospects for a Community Psychology,* Sarason (1974, p. 157) defined psychological SOC as "the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure." Sarason (1986) found in his research of community mental health that the lack of SOC was extraordinarily frequent and was a destructive force.

The psychological SOC is defined by the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, California as the student's experience of being a valued, influential, contributing member of a group that is committed to everyone's growth and welfare (Schaps, 1998). As Sergiovanni describes, "The need for community is universal. A sense of belonging, of continuity, of being

connected to others and to ideas and values that make our lives meaningful and significant – their needs are shared by all of us" (Schaps, 1998 p. 6). The need for community in schools is collective because children, like the rest of us, are human beings with basic needs for belonging, connectedness, and companionship (Schaps, 1998). An SOC binds students and teachers together. Together, they create shared values and ideals, and the group is committed to each other with a unique sense of identity and belonging (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Theorists McMillan and Chavis (1986) are the starting point for most of the recent published research on SOC. Their work is widely referenced and their definition of SOC is the theoretical framework for this thesis. McMillan and Chavis (1986, p. 9) defined an SOC as "a feeling that the members have a belonging, a feeling that members matter to another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together."

McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggested that the four components of community, as described in the definition of community, work together dynamically to create and maintain the SOC, and that the importance of the components may vary across groups, individuals, and situations. They proposed that their community components could provide a foundation for strengthening, preserving, and understanding the nature of community. McMillan and Chavis' conceptualization of community has been applied in both schools and workplaces.

Chavis, Hogge, McMillan and Wandersman (1986) drew on the theoretical work of McMillan and Chavis (1986) to develop the Sense of Community Index (SCI), in an effort to demonstrate that SOC is a shared construct. Items were grouped into the four components of community: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. "The SCI is a 12-item questionnaire which measures the extent to which the individual perceives himself or herself as a member of the majority group and has been found useful in conceptualizing SOC as a multidimensional construct" (Cartland, Ruch-Ross & Henry, 2003, p. 307).

Theoretical Foundation/Need to Belong

John Dewey

Many theorists and researchers in education beginning with John Dewey have recognized the central role of community in school for preparing a new generation of citizens. Dewey (1958) wrote of the need for schools to be communities where there is a give and take in the

building of common experiences. Scholars echo Dewey's call for community building within schools (Goodlad, 1991). The significance of community is reflected in the work of Dewey who viewed education as a social rather than individualistic process. Recognizing children's interpersonal needs and the importance of collaborative activities for experiential learning, Dewey promoted the idea that students should function as a social group. As Dewey pictured it, teachers and students share membership and collaborate with others (Dewey, 1958). The need for an SOC is universal. Without feeling connected to others, their ideas and values, we are required to search for substitutes which are not always functional or healthy (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Samuel Sarason

In 1974, psychologist Samuel Sarason introduced the concept of "Psychological Sense of Community" and suggested that it become the theoretical center for the psychology of community (Wright, 2004). Quite a few studies and empirical developments have followed this concept, which by 1986 had come to be regarded as a fundamental value of community psychology (Sarason, 1986; Chavis & Pretty, 1999).

The need to be related to, to feel securely connected with others, and to experience oneself worthy of love and respect is a fundamental need for human growth and development (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Based on a review of empirical evidence, Baumeister and Leary determined that the need to belong is fundamental for human motivation and is associated with a person's sense of well-being. The experience of belonging affects people's perception of others and leads to positive emotions. They concluded from their research that the "desire for interpersonal attachment may well be one of the most far-reaching and integrative constructs currently available to understand human nature" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 522). In schools, researchers have drawn similar conclusions. Students who experience a sense of belonging in a school community have more positive attitudes and relationships with others (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Dong-I, Watson, & Schaps, 1995).

Thomas Sergiovanni

Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that people have a basic human need to belong with others and a need to feel part of a group that works toward a common goal. Goodenow and Grady (1993) defined a sense of belonging as the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported in their school. Schools can provide this sense of belonging and feeling. A school is the logical setting in which to guide children toward caring about,

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empathizing with, and helping others since it is a place where students come in contact with each other regularly (Kohn, 1991). In the book *East of Eden* (1952) John Steinbeck (1952, p. 270) described not belonging as:

> The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell of fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with crime, guilt – and there is the story of mankind.

Baumeister and Leary

Baumeister and Leary argued that the fundamental need for a sense of belonging applies to all humans and affects cognitive and emotional patterns. Furthermore, the failure to satisfy this fundamental need produces long-lasting pathological consequences (1995). The absence of acceptance and inclusion is associated with mental and physical illness, higher rates of suicide, emotional distress, and violence (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Resnick & Bearman, 1997). In an extensive review on the sense of belonging, Osterman (2000, p. 327) links the experience of belongingness to "outcomes of particular significance in educational settings: (a) the development of basic psychological processes important to student success; (b) academic attitudes and motives; (c) social and personal attitudes; (d) engagement and participation; and (e) academic achievement."

The psychological impact of an SOC can be enormous. Individuals no longer feel alone, but become members of a group that both supports them and holds them accountable to their common values (Sergiovanni, 1994). Baumeister and Leary (1995) conducted an extensive review of literature to determine whether there was sufficient empirical evidence to conclude that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation. They determined that the need to belong is associated with differences in cognitive processes, human emotion, behavior, health and well-being. Being accepted, included, and welcomed lead to positive emotions, such as happiness and contentment, while being rejected, excluded, or ignored lead to often intense feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, and loneliness. On the basis of their analysis, Baumeister and Leary believe that "the weight of evidence suggests that lack of belongingness is a primary cause" of a wide range of psychological and behavioral problems (p. 511).

William Glasser

Psychiatrist William Glasser (1986) asserted that the need to belong is one of the five basic needs written in the human genetic structure. He argues that what is going on inside the student is more important than what is going on outside. What is being taught matters little if a student's basic need for belonging is not met. "Hungry students think of food, lonely students look for friends" (Glasser, 1986, p. 20). The student who feels lonely and does not have a sense of belonging will invest more time and energy in seeking a sense of belonging than focusing on education (Beck and Malley, 2003). Because of its essentialness, students who do not experience a sense of belonging or community may experience negative outcomes and be unable to cope with everyday social situations (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Likewise, Maslow (1971) believed that most emotional illnesses and could be traced to the failure to meet this basic human need, the need to belong. A sense of belonging has been shown to positively affect school-wide efforts, such as cooperative learning, dropout prevention, remediation and other programs for students at risk (Bryk & Driscoll, Royal & Rossi, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1995).

Benefits of a Sense of Community

Schools that do not adequately address an SOC clearly have adverse consequences for children. If schools organize themselves to provide students with an SOC, research has shown many positive benefits.

Students' Sense of Well Being

In order to understand the role of community in the school, researchers have examined how SOC is related to a variety of educationally related outcomes (Sanchez, Colon & Esparza, 2005). The benefits of SOC in schools are often lasting, persisting from primary schools through secondary schools with a positive impact on student achievement, social skills, and behavior (Schaps, 2003). Positive outcomes that result from the presence of an SOC are widely documented and an SOC has been identified among the characteristics necessary for developing and sustaining an effective school (Battistich, 1997; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Schaps, 2003).

Research establishes that students' sense of belonging has important implications for school success and students' happiness. Goodenow and Grady (1993) conducted a study of 353 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students and found that sense of school belonging was positively correlated with the students' sense of values, likelihood of success, and academic

effort. Both belonging and motivation influenced student effort and achievement. Goodenow and Grady (1993) found that teacher support was the most consistent influence among all grade levels. They concluded that it is important to identify students whose sense of belonging is low and to make a special effort to include everyone in the development of community. Participating in a caring school community helps meet student's basic psychological need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 2005).

Resnick and Bearman (1997) confirmed this finding in their own study of adolescents. They reported that an adolescent's sense of connectedness to school was significantly associated with lower rates of emotional stress, violence, substance abuse, and sexual activity. Students' sense of membership is strongly associated with their value of school work, motivation to learn, effort, and success (Watkins, 2005). In addition, by making new friends in the classroom, SOC reduces the number of unknown students and creates a more familiar, friendlier, and supportive environment (Ladd, 1990). Ladd (1990) found that peer status significantly predicted student perceptions, involvement, and performance. In the Wentzel (1997) study, the experience of peer support, or lack thereof, was a significant predictor of emotional distress.

Research has established that many students do not experience schools as supportive or caring communities, and many students do not have satisfying peer relationships. In Kinderman's (1993) study of elementary school students, 12% did not belong to any peer group in the classroom. Wentzel (1997) found that 37% of 212 sixth-grade students did not have a reciprocal friend. In Bishop and Inderbitzen's (1995) study of 542 ninth grade students, students with at least one mutual friend had higher self-esteem scores than students without a reciprocal friend.

A lack of membership in learning communities within schools was found to be related to a lower SOC among both students and staff (Royal and Rossi, 1996). Several studies of friendships in schools have found that between 10 to 37% of students surveyed had no reciprocal friend (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995; Wentzel, 1997). Studies also have shown that boys are less likely to experience a sense of belonging in schools than girls (Goodenow, 1993). An absence of supportive peer relationships is problematic in developing an SOC and a sense of belonging.

A longitudinal study, which established the importance of peer acceptance and friendship, determined that classroom peer status had an impact on predicting school perceptions, involvement, and academic performance. Based on peer nominations, children classified each

other as rejected, popular, neglected, and controversial. Rejected students were seen to have no friends and displayed significantly less favorable perceptions of school, lower levels of academic performance, and an overall dislike for school (Ladd, 1990). Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler and Williams (1996) linked a student's level of SOC to the student's level of loneliness and social isolation. SOC in the school was positively correlated with higher levels of happiness, social support, and lower levels of worry.

What these studies show is that when students experience belongingness, their perceptions differ in predictably positive ways. A school's social environment has broad influence on students' learning and growth, including major aspects of their social and emotional development (Schaps, 2003).

Students' Behavior

In order to understand the role of SOC in the school, researchers have examined how SOC is related to a variety of outcomes including student behavior, engagement, academic performance, and motivation. Studies have shown that students who experience their school as a community enjoy school more, are more actively engaged, motivated, less disruptive, and have higher achievement and less absenteeism than students who do not (Battistich, 1997; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988, Schaps, 2003).

McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum (2002) studied 80,000 students nationwide and "school connectedness, which was defined as feeling part of one's school and feeling close to people at school, was positively related to grade point average" (Schaps, 2003, p. 2). In addition, the absence of school connectedness was correlated with low motivation and student misbehavior. Schaps (1998) identified common practices that help create a caring community within the classroom: (a) class meetings in which students shape classroom norms and practices and problem solve together; (b) activities that help students and teachers get to know one another and build unity; (c) discipline that fosters students' desire to do what is right; (d) collaborative learning that emphasizes challenging academics, and students treating each other with respect; and (e) curriculum that engages students in studying ethical issues.

Battistich and Hom (1997) examined cross-sectional relationships between students' sense of school community and the prevalence of problem behaviors among fifth and sixth graders and confirmed that the students who experience an SOC are more resilient. Students who

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agreed with statements, such as: "my school is like a family" and "students really care about each other" showed a "host of positive outcomes" (Lewis, 1996, p.4).

Additionally, in a cross-sectional study of 12,000 adolescents, school community had very broad and significant benefits – with a greater SOC comes less alcohol use, drug use, emotional distress, violence, and early sexual behavior (Resnick et al., 1997). Burnett and Walz (1994) concluded that gang-related behavior increases when students do not have a sense of belonging in their school. Similarly, Omizo, Omizo and Honda (1997) interviewed boys about their membership in gangs and identified major themes in their reasons for gang membership such as lack of belonging, low self-esteem, and need for protection. Overall, the research shows that students' feelings of belonging and community in their school environment promote positive school behaviors. Moreover, schools with higher SOC scores had significantly lower-than-average drug use and absenteeism, suggesting that schools that have an SOC influence students' behaviors inside and outside of school (Battistich & Horn, 1997).

Student Engagement

Battistich's and Hom's (1997) results included higher levels of academic achievement, stronger motivation to learn, less absenteeism, greater liking of school, fewer behavioral problems, and greater commitment to democratic values (Lewis, 1996). Bateman studied 462 sixth-grade students' psychological SOC. He determined that the factors affecting engagement are the quality of the school membership, sense of ownership, and social support in the classroom from teachers and students (Bateman, 2002).

Goodenow confirmed similar findings in research of 301 students in their early secondary years, concluding that students' SOC had significant impact on their motivation, engagement, and academic work (1992). Finn (1992) and Finn and Rock (1997) found that enhancing students' engagement by providing opportunities for classroom and school participation was the single most important prevention of at-risk behavior and academic failure. Bateman (2002) found that a students' SOC was positively associated with students' social skills, academics and behavior. In a study of three schools, Royal and Rossi (1996) found that the students' SOC was related to the students' engagement in school activities, and that students with higher level of SOC were less likely to be disruptive and misbehave.

Student Achievement

A study of students in secondary schools revealed that students' gains in achievement and engagement were significantly higher in schools where students' felt a part of the school community. Likewise, students with a higher sense of belonging attended school more frequently and received better grades (Watkins, 2005). Similarly, elementary school students who felt an SOC had better academics, stronger motivation to learn, greater liking of school, less absenteeism, fewer discipline problems, and a greater commitment to school (Lewis et al., 1996).

A major finding in Ma's (2003) study of 13,751 grade sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in 250 schools was that peers' and teachers' care for and concern for each other made them feel at home in school. Ma determined that academic achievement was not critical for the students' sense of belonging and instead what mattered was the presence of caring peers, teachers, and an SOC. In addition, students with a higher SOC "were more likely to report feeling bad when unprepared for classes and that the teachers at the school work hard for students" (Royal & Rossi, 1996, p. 410). Royal and Rossi (1996) also found that the students who formed more relationships in their classroom tended to gain in academic performance over the course of the school year.

Common Dimensions in a School Community

Respect, Trust, and Kindness

Peer relationships provide an important context to development. The extent to which a student feels respected, trusted, and treated fairly by others is a strong determinant of long-term social and academic outcomes (Bishop, 1995; Gettinger, 2003). Schools that create a climate of respect, trust, and kindness, reduce the likelihood of violence and make students feel safer in school. Students also feel cared for and part of a community (Haynes, 1996). In classrooms that operate as communities, a wider range of students are respected and valued (Watkins, 2005). By establishing a school community in which students feel comfortable, respected and at home, Martin argues that a school can prepare children to create a better world (2005). In a study of violence, nearly three-quarters of students who resorted to extreme school violence had a grievance and two-thirds of all attackers felt harassed or bullied themselves (Kagan, 2001). By experiencing community, students are motivated to show respect and concern for others and a wider range of students become valued (Watkins, 2005). Likewise, students were found to respond sensitively to the ideas and needs of their classmates without dismissing or degrading

them. Differences are celebrated as, Boyer argues, "All members of the community are able to accept both praise and constructive criticism from others" (2005, p. 184).

Sense of Belonging

There is ample evidence that the school environment has a strong effect on a child's sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Osterman, 2000). "Schools remain one of the few sites in our society where children are able to experience an ongoing social relationship with a group that extends beyond their immediate family and friends" (Smith, 1993, p. 7). In schools where there is a sense of belonging, there is a shared emotional connection within the group that provides a sense of identity and a feeling that one is part of the group. This feeling is created by school programs, teachers, and the acceptance of all members in the group regardless of their individual differences (Beck, 1998; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Sergiovanni, 2004). The shared activities serve to unite the students to create a feeling of community and a sense of belonging regardless of their social order. In schools and classrooms where students do not experience an SOC, those at the bottom of the social pecking order feel excluded and, as a result, the students feel isolated, ashamed, and often bullied (Kagan, 2001).

The feeling of belonging can be created by school programs that recognize positive behavior and success of students, which link students, families, teachers, and administration to the school's traditions. These shared rituals unite the students to the school and create a sense of belonging to something of value (Belenardo, 2001). The school's SOC can be reflected in its ceremonies and the accomplishments it recognizes. Schools can encourage students to adopt similar norms and values by making a point to publicly recognize students (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Many Japanese schools attempt to build an SOC by valuing the children's needs for friendship and sense of belonging. Japanese teachers strive to build an SOC that extends beyond the classroom to the whole school through scheduling three days each year for school-wide festivals, and about 30 days of the school year are devoted to community-building activities (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998).

Regular Contact

In schools that have an SOC, ample opportunities for students to interact with each other and develop relationships are necessary. By having regular contact, students develop relationships that are beyond the academic context (Driscoll, 1995). Osterman (2000) argues that

existing research shows that schools with a low SOC provide few opportunities for interaction among students during the day, either inside or outside of class. Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) showed how teachers who focused on instructional practices and not on providing opportunities for students to interact maintained student isolation, and any interaction with friends or classmates occurred outside of the classroom, mostly during lunch or recess.

Classroom involvement and participation is linked to an SOC among students. The more contact the students are provided with each other, the greater the SOC increases (Watkins, 2005). Gettinger (2003) argues that "educators must create opportunities to encourage friendships and interactions." "The way in which experiences and activities are structured in a classroom…accounts for the social and academic benefits [of the students]" (Gettinger, 2003, p. 302). An SOC does not occur because students are in regular contact with each other. The development of an SOC requires adults to provide opportunities for students to interact positively and peacefully with one another and to provide opportunities for teachers to interact with students in informal settings to promote relationships beyond the classroom (Belenardo, 2001; Gettinger, 2003).

Caring

A defining element of community is a student feeling that they are cared for and connected to the group. In a school that is perceived to be a community, relations among teachers and students are personal, something Nel Noddings calls an ethic of caring that goes beyond the boundaries of formal classrooms (2005). What is needed to overcome the problems that many students face at home and in their communities, argues Jane Martin in *The Schoolhome*, is the creation of a school that teaches students the importance of living together and caring for each other (1995). Underlying Martin's vision of a community school is a commitment to "the three C's of care, concern, and connection" (Martin, 1995, p. 134). There is a feeling of cooperation and a willingness to help each other. Students care for their classmates and are also cared for. The Center for Mental Health in schools believes that teaching caring should be a major focus of what is taught and learned in schools in order to foster positive prosocial development.

"Teachers show caring through characteristic forms of attention: by cooperating in children's activities, sharing their own dreams and doubts, and providing carefully for the steady growth of the children in their charge." (Noddings, 1995, 3). Students in schools with a strong SOC are more likely to care for classmates and have a higher level of moral reasoning (Schaps,

1998). In classrooms that operate as a community students not only take responsibility for themselves, but also ensure that others are cared for and that their needs are met (Watkins, 2005). Battistich and Horn findings suggest that a caring school community is beneficial for all students and is essential to their success in school (1997).

Caring is evident in schools in the actions of teachers who work beyond what is required and assist students when they are struggling. Programs are put in place to meet the needs of all of the students and there is a feeling of cooperation among teachers in helping each other and their students. The caring interactions between administrators, teachers, and students often make the difference between a positive and negative school experience (Belenardo, 2001; Noddings, 1995). A school should be a just place where everyone is cared for and there is a feeling of fairness, shared beliefs, and the opportunity to succeed (Boyer, 1995).

Shared Governance

Schools that operate as communities encourage students to take an active role in school and classroom governance (Solomon et al., 2000; Watkins, 2005). Through activities, such as class or morning meetings to discuss student concerns and issues, students learn to work collaboratively with the teacher to develop solutions to problems. Classroom discussions in which it is made clear that students' ideas and opinions are welcomed and seen as helpful contribute to the students' overall SOC (Battistich et al., 1995). Battistich and Solomon (1997) concluded that teacher practices impact students' SOC by establishing a classroom environment where students work collaboratively and participate in day-to-day operations and decision making. Providing students an opportunity to have a say in establishing the climate of the classroom helps build community and prepare students for "the complexities of citizenship in a democracy" (Schaps, 2003, p. 32). It also helps students express points of view and develop a greater appreciation for others. Teachers also build students' connection to school by having class meetings and by giving students a say in the running of the classroom or school. "Through daily class meetings, class committees, and a rotating system of leadership, even first graders can take responsibility for creating class goals and leading meetings" (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1990, p. 32).

Order and Discipline

In schools that students perceive as communities, order and discipline are essential components. "If student conduct is undisciplined and where children fail to live by fair imposed

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rules" an SOC is nearly impossible to sustain (Boyer, 1995 p.24). Bryk (1988) found student misbehavior to be less frequent in schools that operated as communities. Students do not learn in an environment that is unsafe, and research indicates that clear, reasonable rules that are fairly and consistently enforced promote an SOC among students. Not only do these reduce behavioral issues, but they also promote the students' SOC (Purkey & Smith, 1993). Ma (2003) determined in a cross-sectional survey that "If students perceived school disciplinary rules as unfair, they developed a negative sense of belonging, even though their disciplinary climate may not necessarily have been negative" (Ma, 2003, p. 348).

<div align="center">Conditions for Developing a Sense of Community</div>

Literature on school reform recommends that schools build an SOC (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1994; Solomon, et al., 2000). While there is not agreement as to the exact characteristics of an SOC (Furman, 1998), through a review of research, common characteristics in developing an SOC in the classroom and school can be identified.

Classroom Context

While students in a classroom have a common goal to learn, there is usually no other built-in reason, such as kinship, that ties the students and teachers together. Within the context of the classroom, the teacher is pivotal to the students' experience of community, helping students find their place physically, emotionally, and mentally within the community (Graves, 1992; Lickona, 1991; Osterman, 2000; Sarason, 2004). Lewis, Schaps and Watson (1997) cite the following strategies teachers can use to enhance classroom and school community:

- Build relationship with students.
- Involve students in planning and problem solving.
- Get to know students' strengths and interests.
- Involve all students in classroom duties.

Lewis et al. (1997) stated that community exists when students feel that they are personally known and respected, when they have a voice in decision making and planning, and when they feel that fellow students not only care about them, but also about their learning. The development of a community in most cases does not occur simply because children are in close and frequent proximity to each other. The development of a community necessitates the attention of, and deliberate actions from, the teacher (Zins, Elias, Greenberg & Weissberg, 2000).

The literature also suggests that teachers must balance providing guidance with promoting student autonomy in the varied aspects of class functioning (Gettinger, 2003). To do so, teachers must know their students, their strengths, and areas for growth in order to provide proper support that advances student academics and school functioning (Gettinger, 2003; Lickona, 1991; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). This form of individualized attention generally is not taught in teacher education (Sarason, 2004), pointing to a need for school administrators to address relational dimensions when planning staff development. Dong-Il, Solomon and Roberts (1995) investigated factors that promoted students' SOC in 232 elementary schools and found a clear linkage between students' SOC and teachers creating classrooms "that encourage students' active participation, collaboration, and interpersonal support" (Dong-In, et al., 1995, p. 13).

Similarly, Lickona (1993), author of *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*, found that three conditions are basic to a student's SOC: students know each other; students respect, affirm, and care about each other; and students feel part of, and responsibility toward, the group. Lickona argues that children learn to become a community by interacting with others, forming relationships, working out problems, and growing as a group. When teachers create this SOC, they simultaneously foster the self-esteem of each child.

Kim, Solomon and Roberts (1995) tested a model associating teacher practices to student classroom behaviors and students' SOC. The findings confirmed that when teachers "were warm and supportive, emphasized prosocial values, encouraged cooperation (Schaps, 2005, p.39)", and elicited student thinking and ideas, students demonstrated high levels of positivity, encouragement of others, and student influence. The findings suggest that teachers, who create classrooms that encourage students to participate, collaborate, and support peers provide a higher SOC.

In a review of community and students, Osterman (2000) highlighted a number of classroom factors that are conducive to community building in schools – all of which revolve around the teacher. Osterman (2000) concluded teachers' methods of instruction, the teacher's use of cooperative learning strategies, and two-way communication between the teacher and students influenced exchanges that fostered an SOC.

To summarize, research on influencing a student's SOC identifies the following classroom elements as essential: an environment where students know each other, feel connected, respected, emotionally safe, and involved in planning and problem solving.

Cooperative Learning. Cooperative learning is one instructional strategy that establishes a learning environment in which students feel respected and connected to one another and provides students with opportunities to display and experience positive behavior with their peers (Kagan, 2001; Dong-Il et al., 1995). A primary benefit of cooperative learning is that it enhances students' self-esteem, interpersonal relations, and attitudes toward school and peers. This results in students helping one another and, in doing so, building a supportive community (Slavin, 1980; Kagan, 2001).

Cooperative learning employs a variety of techniques to make instruction more meaningful and relevant for students. Slavin (1987, p. 8) defined cooperative learning as "instructional methods in which students of all performance levels work together in small groups toward a group goal." While the techniques vary, they share basic common components (Hendrix, 1996). Students are assigned to small groups consisting of high-, average-, and low-ability students and then are given an assignment to work on together and asked to share responsibility for completing the assignment.

There is a large body of research documenting the positive effects of using cooperative learning strategies on a variety of social behaviors, including understanding others, helping others, sharing, mutual respect and concern for others, and mutual cooperation (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Schaps, and Solomon, 1991). Cooperative classrooms produce positive interpersonal behavior as well as academic gains (Kim et al., 2005). When teachers use cooperative structures regularly, students no longer feel segregated into "in-groups" and "out-groups". They are able to name more classmates as friends, to care about more classmates, and to feel more cared about (Kagan, 2001). Everyone is included and no one is excluded because of race, religion, personality, differences in perspectives, attitudes, or interests (Graves, 1992). Berman (1997) conducted an extensive review of the research on cooperative learning and found that a cooperative learning community "creates the bond among people that moves democratic decision making from negotiations around competing self-interest to a consideration of the common good (Berman, 1997, p. 136). In addition, he found that members show significant development in prosocial behavior and care about each other. The social interaction between

students allows greater opportunities for learning to take place. Likewise, Solomon, Watson, Deloechi, Schaps and Battistich (1998) found that there were positive correlations between students' participation in cooperative activities with supportive and friendly behavior and with negative behavior.

In the same way, Johnson, Ferkas and Bers (1995) adopted an action research model in an effort to reduce negative behavior by encouraging supportive relationships among students through cooperative learning activities. They found that behavioral referrals had dropped by as much as 71% and students indicated a higher SOC.

Schaps (1998) warns that instructional practices such as collaborative learning do not necessarily build an SOC. His research has shown that small-group learning benefits only children who are in groups that are helpful, friendly, and empathetic to others. "For this reason, we suggest that teachers structure regular opportunities for students to discuss the values and principles that should guide their interactions – such as responsibility and fairness – and regular opportunities to reflect on whether they live up to these principles" (Schaps, 2003, p. 4).

Class Meetings. Another instructional strategy for building students' sense of belonging is the use of class meetings. Regular class meetings encourage prosocial values, and shared commitment to each other and to building an SOC. Through open discussions, students discover that they are cared about, valued, and responsible for their actions (Bryant, 1999). The primary purpose of the daily meeting is to support each child in establishing membership in the class while developing a classroom community and culture. The Northeast Foundation for Children recommends four class meeting elements: greeting, sharing, group activity, and news and announcements (Kriete, 2003). "Embedded in each are the opportunities to practice skills of being a caring community" (Kriete, 2003, p. 68). Doing these together daily provides opportunities for students and teachers to build an SOC (Rimm-Kauffman & Yu-Jin, 2007). The meetings are useful in setting goals and norms and in planning activities and are essential for building peer relationships (Schaps, 2003). The interaction between students becomes more friendly and caring and the students respond more openly to one another (Bryant, 1999).

The School Context

As noted above, in the classroom context, a teacher can establish a student's sense of community. Little research has been devoted to the importance of an SOC in the school context, so a clear understanding of the conditions that contribute to its presence does not exist (Solomon,

Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996; Driscoll, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1994); In his review of educational research, Osterman (2000) concluded that there is relatively little research on a student's sense of belonging within the school.

Nevertheless, as a starting point researchers have explored SOC and its value in schools and some agreement does exist. Although classroom practices are extremely important in shaping a community, the culture of the school as a whole also plays a role in developing an overall SOC. Schools must influence policies and practices that encourage students and teachers in becoming a community (Pretty, 1996). Sergiovanni (1994) viewed communities as schools and classrooms where administrators, teachers, and students share ideas and leadership roles. The community forms a genuine relationship with each other, wanting to better know themselves and each other. A successful community depends on the school and how its members decide, organize, teach, learn, and live together. One of school's roles is the responsibility to ensure that relationships model active citizenship and students are taught how to feel responsibility for others and feel that sense of belonging (Sergiovanni, 1994).

In schools where there is an SOC, it is a shared feeling. This shared feeling is created by a school program that recognizes the positive performance and contribution of individual members, acceptance of all members into the group regardless of their differences, and a common agenda of activities and traditions that link students, teachers, and administrators together (Beck, 1994; McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

Wendell, Hoke and Joekel (1994) surveyed 70 outstanding middle school administrators and found an administration's ability to create the students' SOC was essential for a successful school operation. The principal guides staff members by inspiration rather than authority in building a school community. They advocated that school administrators must ensure that teachers feel a sense of belonging so that they, in turn, can help students feel a sense of belonging. "Sergiovanni describes the principal's role in leadership as one that sees that the community maintains its covenant" (Stein, 1999, p. 33). Boyer argues the schools that are successful in establishing an SOC are friendly and small enough to know everyone by name – 300 to 500 children. For schools that are larger, looping – where students remain with the same teacher and classmates the following year – may contribute to a students' SOC experience by allowing continuity of their relationships at school (Osterman, 2000).

Common Activities

Common community-building activities link students and teachers and help foster new traditions and an SOC (Schaps, 2003). These activities are designed to build a caring community through the school by involving teachers, students, and staff in activities that are noncompetitive and inclusive (Battistich et al., 2000). Bateman (2002) suggests that school-wide activities are important when fostering community building. Bateman's study of three elementary schools found that schools that had the highest rate of SOC reported a greater range of school-wide activities, such as spirit squads, assemblies, and student councils. By participating in school activities beyond the classroom, children developed relationships with other students and adults that they would not have otherwise, which contributed to a more positive experience, and ultimately, a stronger SOC. In a closer examination of student responses, Bateman (2002) found that students participating in activities involving the entire school population, and not just students in their particular grade, reported a higher SOC. "These school-wide activities "help educators make significant changes in the norms, practices, routines, and policies" (Schaps, 2003, p. 33) of a school and help promote the students' experience of community.

Buddy System. A "buddy" system or activities where younger students are matched with an older student contributes to a student's SOC (Osterman, 2000). A buddy activity can pair whole classes of older and younger students for academic and recreational events. Schools can establish a buddy program to build a caring community. In teacher-organized buddy activities, older students buddy with younger students and participate in activities to practice mentoring others. "Older students can read to younger ones and tutor them in various class subjects. These activities give older students a sense of responsibility and foster friendships across grades. The older students realize they are setting an example, so they are more mindful of their behavior. Younger students no longer feel intimidated by their older peers, but look to them as friends" (Six ways to build character in the classroom, 2002, p .6). Gorrell and Keel (1986) found that through a buddy activities, students developed emotional attachments to each other.

In a descriptive study of seventh and eighth grade students as peer tutors, Blake et al. (2000) reported that students showed more positive peer interactions and expressed enjoyment of social interactions and instruction. Lane, Pollock and Sher (1972), Lazerson (1980), Locke & Fuchs (1995), and Maher (1982) found similar results in the benefits of cross-aged activities. Positive gains in self-concept, behavior, and academics were attributed to such activities. In

addition, Maher (1984) identified a decrease in disciplinary referrals and improved peer relationships.

<div align="center">School-Wide Programs</div>

There are also a number of program and isolated interventions aimed at developing a SOC. However, Sergiovanni (2004, p. 5) warns "there is no recipe for community building – no correlates, no workshop agenda, no training package. Community cannot be borrowed or bought." This reality makes building an SOC a challenge. Several programs that focus on building community in school have been evaluated for their effects on achievement-related outcomes. The programs described below were selected because of their potential for influencing the climate of the school or classroom. A priority of building an SOC is explicit in these programs.

The Child Development Project

The Child Development Project (CDP) is the first long-term, comprehensive, school-based project in prosocial educational. Beginning in 1982, a group of researchers began working with school districts throughout the country to help schools become supportive communities that address students' needs for belongingness and promote prosocial behavior (Kohn, 1991). The program's basic premise is that children's prosocial characteristics can be best enhanced in a setting that emphasizes and teaches commitment to shared values, responsibility and concern for others, and an SOC (Kohn, 1991).

The program attempts to create a caring community through classroom, school-wide activities, and parental involvement. Common elements at each level include: (a) teaching cooperation; (b) promoting helping skills; (c) providing positive role models both, fictional and real; (d) enhancing students' ability to understand the feelings and customs of others; and (e) developing self-control and internalizing core helping values through "positive discipline." The research concluded that the student's SOC was an important variable for almost all dependent variables and that teachers were critical in creating a climate of mutual concern and respect. Classrooms who participated in the CDP demonstrated more prosocial behaviors, such as helpfulness, cooperation, concern for others, affection, and support than comparison groups (Battistich et al., 1991). Researchers found that the program was only as effective as the schools' success in establishing a caring community in the school (Solomon et al., 2000).

Character Education Programs

      The United States Department of Education wanted to find out why a group of award-winning schools was so successful. The study concluded that while academics were the schools' priority, the schools were equally concerned with students' character (Boyer, 2005). As Thomas Lickona points out, young students often require adult guidance and support to help them experience positive and productive peer relationships (1993). In *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education*, Marvin Berkowitz verifies, "The degree to which children perceive their schools as caring communities is directly related to the effectiveness of those schools in promoting student character development" (2002, p. 57).

      The Character Education Institute began developing the Character Education Curriculum in 1968 which was designed to develop responsible citizens. A different set of lessons was developed for every grade, kindergarten through fifth grade, and in 1984 additional grades were added (Mulkey, 1997). Many of the lessons at each grade level focused on situations that provided the children with problems for them to solve. The children's critical thinking skills were developed as they identified alternative solutions to the problem, determined the consequences of each alternative, and reached a conclusion (Mulkey, 1997).

      "Schools with fully-implemented character education programs experienced greater improvement in perceived character-driven behavior and lower suspension rates than schools with less well-implemented programs" (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006, p. 83). The Character Education Program is now implemented in more than 60,000 classrooms in the United States. The program has been evaluated by local school districts as well as the Character Education Institute and findings report that students "fight less, engage in less name-calling, are less likely to steal from each other, are more likely to consider the consequences of their actions, and cooperate better with each other" (Bulach, Fulbright and Williams, 2001; Mulkey, 2007, p. 38).

      Thomas Lickona (1991) documents the decline of virtues, such as respect, caring, and honesty among today's youth and calls for character education as a high priority among schools. Esther Schaeffer, executive director and CEO of the Character Education Partnership, believes that for a school to be strong and high functioning it must have high morals and behaviors. Schaeffer argues that there are not enough of these characteristics in our youth and that it is the schools' responsibility to offer character-building content in their curricula.

Responsive Classroom

The Responsive Classroom approach "emphasizes social, emotional, academic growth in a strong and safe school community" (http://www.responsiveclassroom.org). The premise of the program is that children learn best when they have both academic and social-emotional skills and common classroom and school-wide practices (http://www.responsiveclassroom.org). The program's principles are that the greatest academic growth in a child occurs through social interaction; that in order to be successful academically and socially, students need a set of social skills; that the social curriculum is just as important as the academic curriculum; and, that lasting change begins with the adult community (Doveston, 2007). Classroom practices include morning meetings, student/teacher rule creation, positive teacher language, guided discovery, academic choice, classroom organization, collaborative problem solving, and working with families. Schools that implement the Responsive Classroom approach typically also adopt the following school-wide practices: planning all-school activities to build an SOC, welcoming families and the community as partners, and organizing the physical environment to set a tone for learning.

In a three-year longitudinal, quasi-experimental study, researchers at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education found that the Responsive Classroom approach is associated with positive academic and social outcomes for elementary students. Students felt more positive about school and reported liking their classmates and teachers more. Additionally, students reported being more comfortable with trying new things and teachers reported feeling closer to students (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2007). Stephen Elliot (1992) "Compared the performance of students in a program school with those in two comparison schools and found that the program produced gains in student academics and social skills and declines in problem behaviors" (Schaps, 2005, p. 48).

The Basic School

Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, issued the report *The Basic School: A Community for Learning*. The 1995 report proposed an overall strategy for renewal in elementary schools. It identified four priorities that are implemented in effective schools. These include:

1. "The School as Community: a shared vision uniting teachers who are leaders with parents and partners.

2. Climate for Learning: the needs of students are supported with flexible groupings, supportive services and rich resources.

3. A Curriculum with Coherence: an integrated, thematic curriculum is framed by human commonalities.

4. A Commitment to Character: the ethical and moral dimensions modeled and taught by word and deed. Seven core virtues are integrated into the curriculum and the daily life of the school" (Stein & Burger, 1999, p. 34).

Boyer (1995) found that the first and most essential element of an effective school was the connection. An effective school connects people to create community, to learn, and to build character. A Basic School is created through collaborating with others, discussing practice and philosophy, and becoming a community of learners (Boyer, 1995). Schools often have a difficult time funding the training needed to implement the Basic School since it can be costly and larger schools are less likely to be successful due to their size (Jacobson, 2000).

School Development Program

James Comer's School Development Program (SDP) aims to improve achievement and other student outcomes by improving school climate and the relationships between students, teachers, administrators, parents, and school staff (Schaps, 2005). The program focuses on establishing collaborative and planning groups that are pivotal in reshaping the school and maintaining its functioning. Its principles include putting children first, problem solving, and creating a culture of cooperation and consensus decision making (Comer, Ben-Avie, Haynes, & Joyner, 1999).

In a study by Comer, Haynes and Hamilton-Lee (1998), students from SDP schools demonstrated significantly greater improvements in classroom and school climate, attendance, classroom behavior, attitude for school, and achievement compared with students in non-Comer SDP schools. Likewise, a study by Cauce, Comer, and Schwartz (1987) found that SDP students reported higher perceived school competence and self-competence compared to non-SDP students. Haynes and Comer (1990) studied self-concept in fourth and sixth-grade students in SDP schools as compared with non-SDP schools. On the post-test measures, the School Climate Survey and Classroom Environment Scale, SDP students scored significantly higher than the control group of non-SDP students.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), also known as PBS, is a school-wide decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of best academic and behavior practices with the goal to improve student behavior and academics (Sugai, 2007). In general, a PBS school integrates four elements into its school culture: (a) data for decision making; (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data; (c) practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable; and (e) systems that effectively support implementation of the practices (Bradshaw, et al., 2008; Sugai, 2007). Schools that have established PBS effectively in their schools have learning environments that are less reactive, more engaging, and that raise student achievement for all students (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

Schools are using PBS across the nation (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Students are identified in one of three categories based on their behavior problems. These categories are: primary or level 1, secondary or level 2, and tertiary or level 3. Interventions are developed for each of these levels with the goal of reducing the behaviors and increasing student achievement. As a student moves from one level to another, the interventions become more focused and complex (Bradshaw, et al., 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2008).

The goal of the above school-wide programs is to change the relationship of students to their schools by focusing on the entire school body. Schools that fully adopted a specific program tended to have more positive student outcomes, which suggests that training in, and implementation of one of the above programs contributes to improving a students' SOC (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Although the SOC is not always the programs' goal, these programs aim to create a supportive school environment and improve a students' SOC. Schaps (Safe and Health Kids Program Office, 2005) however, warns that implementing a school-wide program must be done thoroughly, consistently, and over a period of several years in order to have broad and long-term effects.

In summary, a substantial body of research indicates that building an SOC can effectively promote students' academic motivation and achievement, as well as their social and emotional well-being, and prevention of problem behaviors. Building an SOC may powerfully meet the needs of both students and society (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1994; Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000). With schools now called on to raise student achievement, the students' SOC in schools has a direct effect on their liking school and their

motivation, engagement, and self-worth, which in turn appears to lead to higher academic achievement.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore, analyze, and describe characteristics of an elementary school that reports a high sense of community among students and to describe adult perceptions of the school's program, activities, and practices that are in place to contribute to the SOC. This chapter presents a description of the design, site selection procedures, instrumentation, rationale for the study, research context, study participant selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures used in the study. The study determines whether the key characteristics identified in the literature review – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline – are present in a school that reports a high SOC.

Schools that provide a high sense of community appear to have certain collective key characteristics that have been identified in the research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school. The following overall research questions focus this study:

1. How does an elementary school identified as having a strong SOC support its students' SOC?

2. What are the administrator, teacher, and parent perceptions of why the students have an SOC within the selected elementary school?

3. What evidence is there that these six key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) are present within the selected elementary school?

4. What similarities and differences are seen between the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and parents regarding these key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) within the selected elementary school?

Design

To address the research questions, a single case study was conducted. A case study refers to the in-depth investigation of a case or closed system (Merriam, 1998). In the present study,

one elementary school was studied over the course of the 2009-2010 school year during the months of November, December, January, and February.

For this case study, a mixed methods design was used, which combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This method was chosen as the methodology to be utilized for this research project because it allowed for the combination of multiple types of data and techniques used to collect information about the stated research problem (Merriam, 1998). Multiple sources of data were collected to inform the case study.

An extensive literature review provided the theoretical rationale for the identification of six measures to understand the multiple factors that define a students' SOC – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline. This conceptual framework developed by the researcher was used as a guide to explore, analyze, and describe the characteristics of the selected elementary school. Common themes in the analysis revealed the program qualities that support a student's SOC. "All research is a search for patterns, a search for consistencies" (Stake, 1995, p. 44).

<div align="center">Rationale</div>

A mixed method case study was selected for the following reasons. First, the design will contribute to a body of research that rarely uses qualitative data to investigate the composition of SOC (Earls & Carlson, 2002). Literature exploring SOC is largely quantitative (Fisher et al., 2002; Hill, 1996; Pretty, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2004). Quantitative research using strictly survey data is commonly used to uncover key components of a student's SOC (Hill, 1996); an approach criticized for its inability to clarify how the factors relate to one another (Bess et al., 2002).

A single case study best aligns with the research questions of this study since "any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Multiple sources of data were collected to inform the study and the researcher looked for recurring patterns in the data. Merriam (1998) defines qualitative research in education as seeking to "discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives" of the people involved (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). The basic qualitative study in education collects data through interviews, observations, and document analysis and the findings are a mix of description and analysis (Merriam, 1998).

A descriptive case study provided the researcher with a detailed account of the phenomenon and basic information about program qualities supporting SOC (Merriam, 1998). A

descriptive case study provides "a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). "Innovative programs and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies in education" (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). Merriam (1998) explains that a descriptive case study is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the context being studied. A descriptive case study investigates the phenomenon with its real-life context (Yin, 1994).

Using a mixed method approach enhanced the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2003) and allowed the researcher to uncover more information than if a single methodology was used. By "using more than one method in the same research study…the researcher capitalizes on the strengths of each method" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 308). By combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches, the weaknesses of each may be minimized, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). A mixed method study provides the researcher with a more complete understanding of the phenomenon (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Site Selection

Once permission to initiate the study was approved by the Virginia Polytechnic Institutional Review Board (Appendix B) the researcher approached the appropriate district personnel regarding participation in the study and approval (Appendix C). Once approval was obtained, the Positive Behavior Support Specialist (PBSS) of the school system who works closely with schools to build a sense of community, identified 12 elementary schools that she perceived displayed a strong SOC among students. Principals had to have been in their position for more than one year to be considered for nomination. The PBSS was provided with the researcher's definition of SOC, as well as some guiding characteristics to consider when identifying the 12 schools (Appendix D). Upon receipt of the 12 selected schools, the PBSS explained that the 12 schools were nominated based upon the assumption that each has implemented school-wide Positive Behavior Support program with high level of integrity; therefore, demonstrating the school as a caring community.

The researcher utilized the criteria-based selection process by having the PBSS recommend schools to survey. "In criterion-based selection, [the researcher] create[s] a list of attributes essential to [his or her] study and then proceed[s] to find or locate a community matching the list" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

Once the PBSS identified the 12 schools, an information letter about the research study was sent to the identified school principals informing them of the study and procedures

(Appendix E). The principals were asked to disseminate the information to their staff regarding the study, procedures, and the electronic link to the survey. The School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) was sent electronically using survey monkey by the researcher to the principal of each of the 12 schools (Appendix F). Participants were asked to complete the survey within two weeks of the initial e-mail. To promote a high response rate, a reminder to the principals was sent three days prior to the closing of the survey. The school that scored the highest on the SCCP-II profile was selected for the case study. An informational e-mail was sent to the selected school staff by the principal informing them of the selection process, study, and procedures (Appendix G).

This study utilized extreme case sampling which involves studying something that has special, effective, or exemplary characteristics (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). "The logic of using extreme case sampling is that what is learned from the extreme cases may be applied to typical cases" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009, p. 344). Extreme sampling selects subjects that are far from the average or mean in their behavior, so that particular insights will highlight factors and patterns less visible in other cases.

<div align="center">Participant Selection</div>

Once the final site was selected, the following procedures were followed in selecting participants for the case study. All participants were asked to complete a consent form (Appendix A) agreeing to the conditions for the research. For the purpose of confidentiality, the school, school district, and names of the persons interviewed were identified with pseudonyms.

Individual Interviews

The administration team consisting of the principal and two assistant principals of the selected school were selected for individual interviews.

Focus Groups and Journal

The school principal nominated 15 teachers and 5 staff members who are knowledgeable of the school, its history, and current programs. The researcher randomly selected from the 15 nominations, 3 teachers and 2 staff members to participate in a focus group. Excluding the 5 members selected for the focus group, the researcher also randomly selected 1 individual to keep a journal of her perceptions of the school's program and practices that encourages students' SOC.

Parents

Parents were provided information about the study by the school principal (Appendix G) and an electronic link to the Sense of Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) survey was sent to the parents via e-mail using the district's e-mail system which maintains all e-mails for parents of the school.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

This study used a variety of data instrumentation including: the SCCP-II, focus group, and individual interview protocols, a document review checklist, and an observation guide.

School as a Caring Community Profile-II

The SCCP-II was used in the identification of the selected school. Once the school was identified, the survey was also sent to parents of the selected school as part of the data collection. The survey, developed by the Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson for the Development Studies Center, Oakland, California (Roberts, Hom & Battistich, 1995) is designed to assess stakeholders' perceptions of the school as a caring community. The SCCP-II was developed to help schools assess themselves as caring communities and can be administered at any point of the school year to assess a school's SOC (Lickona and Davidson, 2003). The SCCP-II was chosen since it is one of the most often used measures for SOC (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999) and the survey best aligned with the purpose of the study.

Construct validity of the SCCP-II has been established in several studies on school climate and school community including those conducted by the Hawthorne School District (2005), three dissertations by Kokolis (2004), Hanks (2007), Butts (2005) and a research study by Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) for Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The studies results showed a significant relationship between the student and staff perceptions of SOC.

The SCCP-II contains 42 items in 5-point Likert format. The first 25 items relate to adult perceptions of students SOC; the final 17 items relate to student perceptions of adults. Since the purpose of the study is to address the adult perceptions of students' SOC, the first 25 items were used and the final 17 items were discarded. While the entire survey may be completed by both students and adults, validation analysis indicates strong reliability and supports the break-down into adult and student perceptions with reliability alphas in samples ranging from .73 to .86 for youth and from .73 to .88 for adults. The analysis of the SCCP-II also shows that it is a very reliable measure (coefficient alpha = .94) (Lickona and Davidson, 2003).

The 25 questions of the profile deal with several factors clustered into three subscales: Perceptions of student respect (Items 1, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 23); Perceptions of student friendship and belonging (Items 2, 3, 5, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 24); and Perceptions of students shaping their environment (Items 6, 8, 11, 14, 19, 22, 25). The profile was chosen because it aligns the best to the conceptual framework (see Table 1).

School staff, administration, and parents were asked to anonymously respond to each question in the survey on a five-point Likert scale. The following scale is used: Almost never = 1; Sometimes = 2; As often as not = 3; Frequently = 4; Almost always = 5 by indicating how strongly they agree or disagree with a given statement.

Interviews

Interview questions were developed by the researcher to assess the six dimensions of an SOC identified in the literature review – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline. Some interview questions were taken from the Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics (Khmelkov & Davidson, 2005) interview matrix which addresses ethical learning communities and school climate, and other questions were developed to address the six dimensions of SOC.

Table 1

SCCP-II Profile Alignment

Conceptual Framework	SCCP-II Subscale	Question Example
Sense of Belonging	Perceptions of student friendship and belonging	#5 Students help each other, even if they are not friends.
Caring	Perceptions of student friendship and belonging	#3 Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness.
Shared Governance	Perception of students shaping their environment	#25 Students are involved in helping to solve school problems.
Order and Discipline	Perceptions of students shaping their environment	#19 Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.
Respect, Trust and Kindness	Perceptions of student respect	#1 Students treat classmates with respect.
Regular Contact	Perceptions of student friendship and belonging	#2 Students exclude those who are different (reversed).

The interview questions were used with the adult focus group and individual administration interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the school setting and their perception of the SOC among students (Appendix J and K).

To increase the validity of the questions, the interview questions were administered, on a pilot basis, in April 2009 to a group of three elementary school teachers and one principal. The pilot group represented a similar ratio to the sample focus group used in the study. The purpose of the pilot was to make adjustments to the questions, determine the appropriateness and relevance of the proposed questions, make sure the questions were appropriately aligned to the study that would yield fitting results, and develop and refine the researchers interviewing skills.

Document Review Guide and Checklist

Documents, both historical and current, were collected. They were used "in the same manner as data from interviews or observations…[which] can furnish descriptive information" (Merriam, 1988, p. 108). The document review guide (Appendix L) and checklist (Appendix M) was created to focus the document analysis on the six elements of an SOC identified respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline. The document review guide was piloted by two assistant principals to help the investigator refine her data collection plans with the goal of creating a good prototype for the final case study.

Observation Guide and Checklist

The researcher included observations for data collection. An observation guide and checklist identifying the six elements of an SOC – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline – were outlined with examples of activities to look for. The observation guide (Appendix H) and checklist (Appendix I) were piloted to determine accuracy of the instrument by two elementary assistant principals to help the investigator refine her data collection plans with the goal of creating a good prototype for the final case study. Sample documents were provided to the two assistant principals and the document review guide was used to determine if there are any problems that need to be corrected (Slavin, 2007).

Data Quality Procedures

Validity

Several steps were taken by the researcher to contribute to the validity of the data. The researcher used member-checking, triangulation, piloting instrumentation, and long-term observations in order to enhance internal validity.

Member-checking was used after an initial analysis of interviews, which allowed participants to have an opportunity to read the transcripts from their interview and confirm the accuracy of the information. The researcher made any corrections needed. This method is regarded as one of the most important ways to contribute to the credibility of data (Creswell, 2003).

Figure 2

Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence
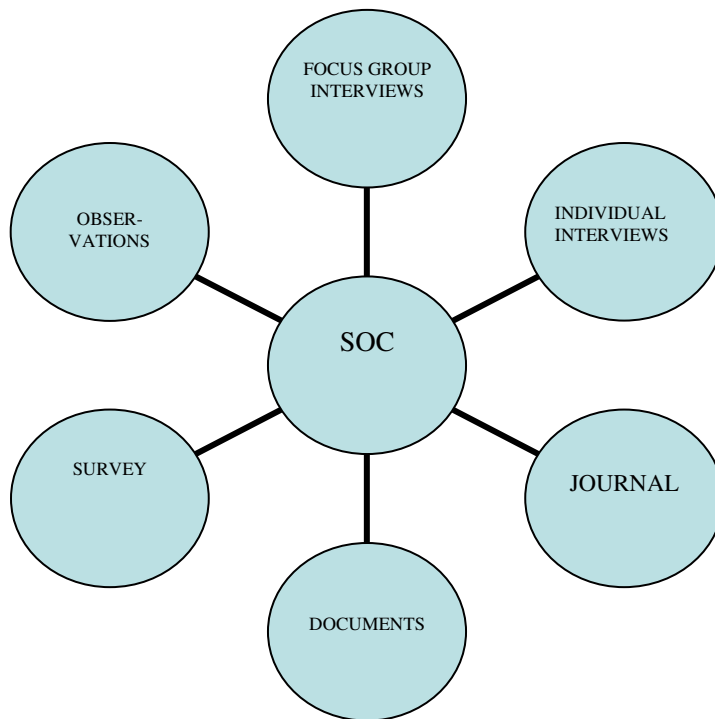
Data from multiple sources was used to triangulate the data. Since the case study used multiple sources of evidence, the validity is considered higher than a study that relies on only single sources of information (Yin, 2004). Repeated observations and data collection of the phenomenon in different settings provided the researcher with multiple sources of data to

analyze. "With triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity…can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" (Yin, 2004, p. 92). Figure 2 displays how the multiple sources of data were converged and triangulated.

Piloting the data instruments before beginning data collection increased the quality of data collected and the validity (Yin, 2004). Piloting the data instruments allowed the researcher to refine her data collection with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed prior to initiating the study.

A significant amount of time was spent in the school. Long-term observations and interaction with the setting helped the researcher develop an insider's view of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Gathering data over a period of time increases the validity of the findings (Merriam, 1998).

<div style="text-align:center">Data Collection</div>

In this case study, the researcher collected data to provide a description of the school's SOC. The researcher utilized the following data collections: one individual interview with each of the school's administration, one focus group interview consisting of a staff member and 2 teachers, survey to staff and parents, observations, and an analysis of artifacts and documents. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data (Merriam, 1998). Due to the nature of the research and design, triangulation techniques and multiple instruments were utilized for data collection.

The data collection is divided into two parts: quantitative data collection and qualitative data collection.

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using the Sense of School Community Profile-II to measure staff perceptions of the student's SOC to identify the selected school. In addition, the Sense of Community Profile-II was sent electronically to parents of the case study school to deepen the researcher's understanding of the students' SOC.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collection included interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data collection focused on the common dimensions: respect; trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline.

Observation and Field Notes. The researcher observed all areas of the study school during the school day, both inside and outside. Observations and field notes play an important role in qualitative studies and are helpful in triangulating data. Additionally, the researcher observed special events and meetings at the school. Observations and field notes were helpful for the researcher to notice things that may lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). The observations and field notes were conducted and recorded using the Merriam (1998) checklist as a guide to focus observations (see Appendix I), and an observation guide was used to assist with documentation (see Appendix H).

Individual Interviews. In order to gain a holistic picture of the school's SOC, individual interviews with the school principal and assistant principals were conducted to probe their perceptions on the students' SOC at their school. Interviews help researchers gain a deeper understanding of the school setting and programs. "In all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews" (Merriam, 1998, p. 71). The school administrators received a copy of the anticipated questions and informed consent procedures prior to the interview (see Appendices J & K). The interviews lasted approximately an hour.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview process where "the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 1998, p.74). The interviews were audio-taped to "Ensure that everything said is preserved for analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 81). Additional notes and reflections were written at the conclusion of each interview. "These reflections might contain insights…descriptive notes on the behavior…of the informant…[or] thoughts of the researcher" (Merriam, 1998, p. 83). The information from the interviews were transcribed by the researcher using a computer digital voice recognition program, Dragon Naturally Speaking, which allowed the researcher to transcribe the information into Microsoft Word. The interview data were analyzed to compare similarities of responses, discrepancies, and interpretation of the interviewee's responses to the theoretical framework and other data sources. Interviewees were given an opportunity to read the transcripts for accuracy and have an opportunity to make changes if needed.

Focus Group Interviews. One focus group interview was conducted with a total of 3 adults (2 teachers and 1 staff member) in each group. Focus group interviews can help the

researcher explore ideas and concepts and obtain in-depth information (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) and examine, in detail, how the group members think and feel about an SOC. Participants were provided with the informed consent procedures (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix K) prior to the interview.

The focus group sessions took approximately one hour in length. The researcher took notes during the interview to record interview data, as well as to audio-tape the interview. Focus group questions were used to assess the groups' perceptions of the students' SOC. Immediately following the interviews, the researcher wrote down her reflections about the interview. "Post interview notes allow the investigator to monitor the process of data collection as well as begin to analyze the information itself" (Merriam, 1998, p. 88).

Merriam's (1998) strategy to transcribe interviews was used. The researcher identified the interviewee's name, interview date, and other necessary details of the interview at the top of the page. The information from the interviews were transcribed by the researcher using a computer digital voice recognition program, Dragon Naturally Speaking, which allows the researcher to transcribe the information into Microsoft Word. Each interviewee's name was recorded to the left of transcription. A copy of the transcript was given to the study participants for review and if needed, for corrections to be made.

Document Review. Documents that were reviewed by the researcher included, but were not limited to: staff communications, school and staff handbook, school calendars, teacher newsletters, lesson plans, classroom schedules, teacher blackboard sites, principal newsletters, school letters, school wiki site, School Improvement Plan, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) newsletters, and PTA communications. "In case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 1984, p. 80). Therefore, this source of data becomes an essential tool in triangulating evidence and data.

The researcher used a document review guide (Appendix L) to assist in the organization of the review process and a document review checklist (Appendix M) to ensure that multiple documents were examined by the researcher. The researcher looked for documents and extracted data that provided evidence of the program activities, practices, or ideas related to the conceptual framework – respect; trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline – are present. Document analysis provided access to data that could not always be observed and provided a historical context on program initiatives and

policies. These documents helped the researcher further understand the larger school context and the programs and activities in place.

Journal. The researcher randomly selected one staff member to maintain a weekly journal of her perceptions of the school's program, activities, and practices that encourages students' SOC. The researcher met with the staff member to explain the time commitment, procedures, and goals for journal. The researcher provided the staff member with the six dimensions from the literature review (see Appendix N) to reflect about over the course of four weeks. Each Friday, the researcher e-mailed the teacher a reminder about the journaling and asked for any completed journal entries. The research received three journal entries spanning the four-week period.

Reliability

Fulfilling the reliability standards using qualitative research is more difficult since qualitative methods emphasize the unique perspectives of the study participants and recognize that results are a reflection of the participants' view as seen through the researcher's lens (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, fulfilling reliability is less important if not impossible to achieve in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

The SCCP-II profile contributes to the reliability of the quantitative findings. The reliability of the questionnaire has been tested using larger and more diverse samples (Solomon et al., 1992). The questionnaire has a high total internal reliability (.94) (Lickona and Davidson, 2003).

Generalizability

Generalizability or external validity refers to the degree that the findings apply to other people and places outside of the study (Merriam, 1998). Like reliability, the ability to make inferences about other populations based on the data collected, is limited in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the sample was chosen specifically because the school reported the most positively on the SCCP-II survey that related to the students' sense of community. In most cases, the samples used in qualitative research are too small and unrepresentative to adhere to the quantitative standards for transferring results to other settings and peoples, as is the case with the present study (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

However, analytic generalization does not rely on samples and populations. According to Yin (1984), in analytic generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of

results to a broader theory. To generalize to a theory is to provide evidence that supports that theory. When one generalizes to a theory, one uses the theory to make predictions and then confirms those predictions (Yin, 1984). The researcher used analytic generalization to the theory that if a school focuses on a students' SOC with respect to: respect; trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline, then the school becomes a place of physical and emotional safety, a place for encouragement, and an SOC for students (Martin, 1992).

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

The quantitative statistical results from the SCCP-II profile was compiled and analyzed using The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. An inferential analysis was done to determine the mean, standard deviation, and significant differences reported between staff and parents who responded to the SCCP-II profile. Similarities and differences were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parent responses to the SCCP-II profile. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p) under Levene's Test was less than 0.05, there was a significant difference between the variances, and equal variances could not be assumed.

The qualitative data collection was ongoing. Transcripts and field notes were transcribed by the researcher using Microsoft Word and Dragon Naturally Speaking. "The final product of the case study is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process" (Merriam, 1998, p. 124). When reviewing documents, transcripts, journal entries, interview transcripts, and survey data, the researcher looked for words, examples, and themes that were congruent to the six dimensions identified in the literature review and coded the data appropriately. The conceptual framework of the study focused on the six dimensions of an SOC that emerged from the literature review that provided the researcher the initial coding of the data. Documents, transcripts, and field notes were coded by identifying the presence of one or more of the six characteristics: respect; trust and kindness (RTK); sense of belonging (B); caring (C); regular contact (RC); shared governance (G); order and discipline (D); and (O) for other. The researcher used a mix of manual and computer management of documents and data. Microsoft Excel was used to enter the type of data, and the coding and Microsoft Word was used in

<div align="center">48</div>

transcribing documents and documenting observations. Data were grouped under the codes and sub-codes if needed and organized and stored in a secure location.

Using the Constant Comparative Method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), the following format was used for document analysis: (a) carefully reading and coding each piece of data; (b) organizing each piece of datum into categories; (c) comparing each new piece of datum to existing categories to determine whether the new datum fit into existing categories or fell into new categories; (d) looking for emerging themes in each category; and (e) repeating the process for finding the most salient themes. Each data entry was labeled by entry number, type of data (interview, observation, document, etc.), identifier (who was interviewed, type of document, etc.), notes, comments, and a place to identify the theoretical framework coding.

The multiple forms of data were used as different sources of evidence to triangulate the data. "Any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information" (Yin, 2004, p. 92). After analyzing the data for themes, patterns, and categories, the researcher used the data analysis to draw inferences (Merriam, 2001). The end result of this data analysis was the analysis describing the presence of the six dimensions, the school's program, activities, and practices in place central to the school's SOC, and stakeholder's perceptions on the students' SOC. The researcher compared the data collected and looked for trends and common themes with respect to the six dimensions: (a) respect, trust and kindness; (b) sense of belonging; (c) caring; (d) regular contact; (e) shared governance; and (f) order and discipline.

<center>Summary</center>

Chapter 3 included a description of the methodology, rationale, and selection process of the study participants. The researcher described the rationale for a mixed method qualitative case study, and an explanation for data collection, analysis, and validity.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore, analyze, and describe characteristics of an elementary school that reports a high sense of community among students and to describe adult perceptions of the school's program, activities, and practices that are in place to contribute to the SOC. Schools that provide a high SOC appear to have certain collective key characteristics that have been identified in the research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school. The following overall research questions focus this study:

1. How does an elementary school identified as having a strong SOC support its students' SOC?

2. What are the administrator, teacher, and parent perceptions of why the students have a SOC within the selected elementary school?

3. What evidence is there that these six key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) are present within the selected elementary school?

4. What similarities and differences are seen between the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and parents regarding these key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) within the selected elementary school?

Data collection occurred between November 2009 and February 2010 and consisted of three one-on-one administration interviews, a focus group interview, a staff and parent survey, observations at the school, and the review of school documents related to the school's efforts in developing and maintaining its sense of community. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology, a detailed description of the case study school, the results of the qualitative data, an analysis of the parent and staff survey, and a report of the findings. The findings section includes findings from the administration interviews, focus group interview, and data results from the parent and staff survey. Where applicable, data from the document reviews, teacher journal, observations, and parents' comments from the survey are included in the results. The following section is organized by the research questions and six dimensions discussed in Chapter 3 that are important to the development of a student's SOC.

Case Study Site Selection

Study Site Selection

The Positive Behavior Support Specialist (PBSS) of the school system identified 12 elementary schools that she perceived displayed a strong SOC among students and whose principals have been in their role for more than one year so that they have a historical background of the school. The PBSS was provided a definition of an SOC, as well as some guiding characteristics to consider when identifying the 12 schools. She was provided a nomination form to fill out and returned it to the researcher (Appendix D). The PBSS explained that the 12 schools that were nominated were based upon the assumption that each has implemented a school-wide Positive Behavior Support program with high level of integrity; therefore, demonstrating a school as a caring community.

Once the PBSS identified the 12 schools, an information letter about the research study was sent to the identified school principals informing them of the study and procedures (Appendix E). Following the informational letter to the principals, an informational letter was sent to the school staff informing them of the study and the consent procedures (Appendix G). The SCCP-II was sent electronically using survey monkey to all staff members (Appendix F). Participants were asked to complete the survey within two weeks of the initial e-mail. To promote a high response rate, a reminder to the staff was sent three days prior to the closing of the survey. The school that scored the highest on the profile was selected for the case study.

Survey Design

The questionnaire, developed by Lickona and Davison, SCCP-II, consisted of 25 questions, some questions reversed-scored. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert-type response format. The developers of the survey confirmed through factor analysis that the survey could be divided into subscales, which represents aspects of the school climate. The subscales are: Perceptions of student respect (Items 1, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20, 23); Perceptions of student friendship and belonging (Items 2, 3, 5, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 24); and Perceptions of students shaping their environment (Items 6, 8, 11, 14, 19, 22, 25). The profile was chosen because it aligns the best to the conceptual framework (see Table 1).

Survey Administration

The SCCP-II was used in the identification of the selected school. The administration of the questionnaire was conducted in a manner to assure anonymity. The SCCP-II was sent to all

staff members of the selected 12 schools. A cover letter from the district's PBSS explained the purpose and importance of the survey and encouraged all staff to respond to the survey. The responses were disaggregated by school. Surveys were completed by a total of 518 staff members at 10 of the 12 schools. Two schools chose not to participate. Table 2 provides a summary of respondents at each school.

Table 2

Staff Survey Participation

School	Staff	Percent
1	65	89
2	35	85
3	60	87
4	71	84
5	31	55
6	48	67
7	71	92
8	82	98
9	27	45
10	29	56
11	0	0
12	0	0

Of the ten elementary schools that responded to the survey, schools 5, 6, 9 and 10 were removed from consideration because they had a response rate of less than 75% (Table 2). Schools 11 and 12 chose not to participate. Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 were further analyzed and responses to each question were compared (Table 3). For each question, the highest mean is bolded. School 4 reported the highest mean score in most areas of the SCPP-II profile and was selected as the case study school. The mean scores of the selected school were uniformly high across the profile in all areas.

Demographics and Background of Selected School

The selected school is one of 139 elementary schools in the school district in Northern Virginia. There are 22 middle schools, 4 secondary (7-12) schools, 21 high (9-12) schools, 3 alternative high schools and 8 special education centers in the school district. The school district serves a population of approximately 1,055,580 residents.

Table 3

Comparison of Means

Question	School 1 Mean	School 2 Mean	School 3 Mean	School 4 Mean	School 7 Mean	School 8 Mean
1	4.32	4.14	3.97	**4.51**	4.24	4.28
2**	3.53	**3.71**	3.36	3.32	3.34	3.48
3	4.19	3.94	3.78	**4.45**	4.07	4.14
4	4.17	3.80	3.69	**4.34**	4.10	4.22
5	3.88	3.57	3.38	**4.19**	3.68	3.84
6	3.88	3.46	3.46	**4.07**	3.63	3.71
7	**4.34**	3.91	3.71	4.16	4.14	4.10
8	4.06	3.60	3.58	**4.24**	3.87	4.10
9	4.31	4.23	4.00	**4.44**	4.37	4.40
10	4.22	3.89	4.03	**4.38**	4.17	4.22
11	4.00	3.76	3.41	**4.01**	3.84	3.84
12**	3.19	3.31	3.17	3.26	**3.27**	**3.27**
13	4.36	4.13	3.73	4.33	4.22	**4.41**
14	4.02	3.60	3.38	**4.11**	3.66	3.94
15**	3.13	3.09	2.93	**3.26**	3.17	3.22
16	4.10	4.00	3.69	**4.31**	4.03	4.15
17**	3.27	**3.38**	3.10	3.32	3.29	3.22
18	3.86	3.50	3.59	**4.03**	3.74	3.73
19	3.92	3.76	3.44	3.99	3.93	**4.00**
20**	3.20	3.23	3.03	**3.31**	3.01	3.25
21	4.08	3.88	3.83	**4.33**	3.90	4.23
22	3.09	2.94	2.81	**3.48**	3.34	3.20
23	3.48	3.14	3.13	**3.97**	3.64	3.51
24	3.86	3.85	3.56	**4.06**	3.90	3.95
25	3.49	3.64	3.19	3.59	**3.69**	3.56

**Items are reversed-scored

The community surrounding the selected school is made up of families from diverse backgrounds with regard to race and income. Based on the school's November 2009 attendance report, the school has 784 students in preschool through sixth grade with approximately 100 students at each grade level. There are 57 teachers and specialists, 23 instructional assistants, and 3 administrators. Based on the school district's yearly report from the 2008-2009 school year, race/ethnicity was as follows: 46% White; 19% Black; 13% Asian or Pacific Islander; 11% Hispanic; and 11% other. The enrollment report from the 2008-2009 school year was as follows: 55% of the students are in general education; 23% receive some level of gifted instruction; 11% receive English as a Second Language instruction; and 22% receive some level of special

education during the school day. About 13% of the students receive free or reduced-priced lunch. The school has a 12% mobility rate of students transferring in and out of school.

The school was constructed starting in 2002 and opened its doors in September 2003. The building is nearly 100,000 square feet and equipped with a variety of creative space options, including a stage and theater arts room, 3 multi-purpose rooms, a comprehensive media center, computer lab, TV production studio, 2 choral music rooms, band and orchestra rooms, and a weather center. Students and teachers have wired and wireless Internet access, multiple computers in each room, as well as wireless mobile laptop labs that travel to students, providing networked access for an entire classroom. In addition, all classrooms are equipped with smart boards and audio enhancement sound systems for use in classrooms.

According to the school's website, the schools vision calls for developing the citizens of tomorrow. The school's academic mission represents collaboration and a singular commitment to excellence. Franklin's mission statement, as it is written in the school hallway, is: "Franklin Elementary School Community is committed to academic achievement by building a cooperative, safe, and challenging learning environment. Through high expectations, we will foster citizens who are: Respectful, Responsible, Kind, Honest, Safe, and Cooperative."

The school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a formal liaison group between school and parents that provides a strong base for parent involvement and input into the school. According to the school principal, once a month the leadership from the PTA meets with the principal to discuss a variety of issues, provide feedback, and discuss ways to support the school's programs and student achievement. The PTA is the link between the school and the community, and the programs the PTA provides enhance the quality of education for the students.

<div align="center">Research Methodology</div>

Parent Survey

The SCCP-II was sent to all 468 of 643 parents with students at Franklin who reported having an e-mail address to the school. The survey was sent directly to the parent's e-mail address twice over the course of two weeks. The school principal explained the purpose and importance of the survey and encouraged all parents to respond to the survey in the e-mail and newsletter (Appendix G). Surveys were completed by 150 of 643 parents.

Data from the parent survey and staff survey was analyzed using inferential statistics. An independent t-test was used to help determine if differences between the means were significant. The Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of the equivalent variances in the different samples. If the resulting p-value (sig) of the Levene's test was less than .05, there was a significant difference between the variances. If the p-value (sig) is not significant (greater than .05), the two variances were not significantly different and are approximately equal. The inferential statistics of the staff and parent survey are given in Appendix X, as well as discussed in the report of findings.

Interviews

As part of the study, individual and small group interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators at the case study site. The purpose of these interviews was to gather additional information about the school and the administrators', teachers', and parents' perceptions of students' SOC. The interview questions were taken from the Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics (Khmelkov & Davidson, 2005) interview matrix which addresses ethical learning communities and school climate, and other questions were developed to address the six dimensions of SOC (Appendix J and K). The principal and assistant principals were interviewed individually. The teachers and staff participated in the study focus groups. The principal nominated 15 individuals to participate in the focus group, and the researcher selected five from this group to participate. On the day of the focus group, three of the selected individuals participated in the interview and two were unable to attend the interview. During the focus group interview, one of the members had to leave during the progression of the interview. Questions were developed to gain a deeper understanding of the themes that contribute to the school's SOC.

Journal

Excluding the 5 members selected for the focus group, the researcher selected 1 individual teacher from the 15 individuals to keep a journal of her perceptions of the school's program and practices that encourage students SOC. The researcher provided the staff member with the six dimensions identified in the literature review – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline – to help guide the journaling process (see Appendix N). Each Friday, the researcher e-mailed the teacher a

reminder about the journal and asked for any completed journal entries. The teacher submitted three journal entries over the course of four weeks.

Description of Participants

For the purpose of this study, the school district, school, and participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Every attempt was made to remove from the research any elements that might indicate the subject's identity. The primary participants in this study consisted of the school's principal and assistant principals and school staff.

Dr. Smith has been the principal of the selected school since the building opened in 2003. Dr. Smith has been in the school system for over 25 years and has been a principal in a number of elementary schools in the district. Mr. White has been an assistant principal since 2003 when the school opened. Before that, he was the physical education teacher of his previous school. Mr. Geer became the assistant principal in the middle of March of last year. Previously, he was a school counselor and Positive Behavior Support coach in his former school.

The teachers involved in the focus group consisted of two specialists and one classroom teacher. Teacher A has been an educator for over 15 years, 4 years at Franklin, and teaches fifth grade. Teacher B has been a specialist for 10 years and has been at Franklin since its opening. Teacher C has been a specialist at Franklin for 4 years. Teacher D, who wrote the journal, has been a teacher for over 15 years and has been a teacher at Franklin since opening in 2003.

Observations

In the process of gathering data at Franklin Elementary School, conducting interviews, and gathering documents, observations were made of teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students. Students were observed arriving at school, playing on the playground, eating lunch in the lunchroom, and during arrival and dismissal. A total of nine visits and observations were made during the school day. In addition, the researcher attended one PTA meeting. Notes were kept of observations to keep a record of experiences and perceptions observed. An observation guide identifying the six elements of an SOC – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline – was used during observations that outlined examples to look for of activities identified in the literature review (Appendix H).

Field notes were coded by identifying the presence of one or more of the six characteristics: respect; trust and kindness (RTK); sense of belonging (B); caring (C); regular contact (RC); shared governance (G); order and discipline (D); and (O) for other, and

categorized by the six dimensions contributing to a students' SOC. Using the Constant Comparative Method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), the following format was used for analysis: (a) carefully reading and coding each piece of data; (b) organizing each piece of datum into categories; (c) comparing each new piece of datum to existing categories to determine whether the new datum fit into existing categories or fell into new categories; (d) looking for emerging themes into each category; and (e) repeating the process for finding the most salient themes.

The researcher used a mix of manual and computer management of documents and data. Microsoft Excel was used to enter the type of data and the coding and Microsoft Word was used in transcribing documents and documenting observations. Data were grouped under the codes and sub-codes if needed and organized and stored in a secure location.

Document Review

Documents that revealed information about the students' SOC and were reviewed included staff communications, school and staff handbook, school calendars, teacher newsletters, lesson plans, classroom schedules, teacher electronic blackboard sites, principal newsletters, school letters, the schools wiki site, the School Improvement Plan, PTA newsletters, and PTA communications. The document review guide (Appendix L) used to focus the document analysis on the six elements of an SOC identified respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; order and discipline. Documents were reviewed, coded, and categorized by the six dimensions contributing to the students' sense of community.

Report of Findings

The following section identifies the findings from parent and staff survey, principal and assistant principal interviews, focus group interview, document review, and observations. The survey data were summarized by the mean responses to each item within each subscale of the survey. Each question on the survey offered five possible answers and was scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Almost never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = As often as not; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Almost always. Most items on the SCCP-II are worded such that "Almost always" represents the most desirable or positive response, but certain questions are phrased such that "Almost always" is the least desirable response. In order to compare items, the items that fall in the latter category needed to be reversed for consistency. The reverse scored items were tagged with an asterisk. After reverse scoring, a higher mean indicates a more positive school climate for each question.

The section is formatted to provide a detailed description of the research questions. Data include the school's perceptions of why the school has a SOC, to what extent the six characteristics are present, and the results of the parent and staff survey. The section is organized according to the research questions.

Question 1: How Does the School Support Its Student's SOC?

One of the most prominent features found that supports the students' SOC at the study site was the character education program called the Crocs Creed. Data from several sources indicated the importance of this aspect of the school's operation. As noted in the Crocs Creed Handbook and confirmed in administration and focus group interviews, Franklin considers character education a fundamental dimension of good teaching. "Our Crocs Creed program is instrumental in the development of our students' sense of community," Dr. Smith explained. According to the school's school improvement plan, Franklin's goal is to develop good habits and dispositions that will lead their students to responsible and mature adulthood. Franklin adopted respect, responsibility, kindness, honesty, safety, and cooperation as their sustaining values. These qualities are modeled, taught, expected, celebrated, and practiced throughout the school.

In order to teach students the six character qualities (responsibility, respect, cooperation, safety, honesty, and kindness), they are displayed on posters throughout the school and classrooms (Figure 3), and lessons are taught to students through the classroom teacher and school counselors. Interviewees agreed that Franklin staff is committed to professionally embodying these qualities through their daily interactions with fellow colleagues, students, and parents. "In my opinion, from the second they are here, to the second they leave, they are living the Crocs Creed," Mr. Smith said. Mr. White concurred, "Our students, staff and parents are committed to supporting the Crocs Creed."

Students can earn Croc Stock for following the Crocs Creed behavior expectations. Croc Stock is a little green slip of paper (Figure 4). Staff is encouraged to hand out approximately 10 Croc Stocks per week. These stocks are given to individual students when they are following the school rules or demonstrating one of the designated character qualities.

Figure 3

Crocs Creed Poster

Figure 4

Croc Stock
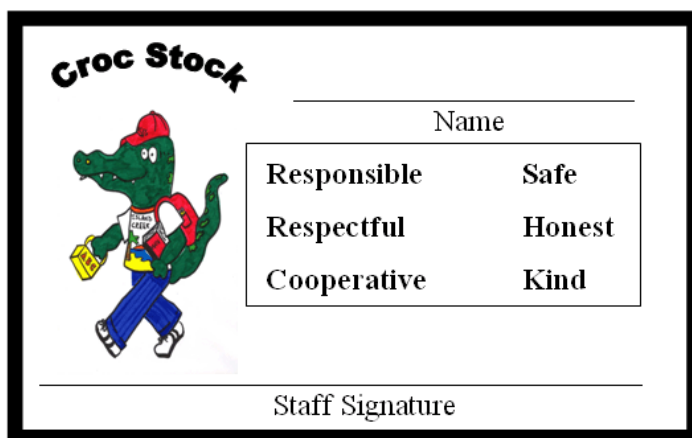
The Importance of the Croc Stocks was seen in observations and echoed in the interviews conducted with the teachers and administrators. "Kids…really respond to earning Croc Stock,"

Teacher D explained. Dr. Smith reflected, "Our Crocs Creed program is instrumental in the development of our students' sense of community." As noted in the Crocs Creed Handbook, the main idea is to "catch" students making good choices and reward them with Croc Stock. Students are responsible for keeping track of the Croc Stocks they have earned.

Once students have earned 10 Croc Stocks, then they give them to their homeroom teacher and receive a Croc Stock certificate. After students receive 2 certificates, they have their name displayed on the news show and are recognized by going to the office to get a ribbon. Dr. White explained, if a student earns 2 or more ribbons throughout the school year, they will earn a citizenship pin in the shape of a crocodile at the end of the year awards ceremony. As noted in the Crocs Creed handbook, an entire class can also earn Croc Stock. Teachers are encouraged to keep track of the number of whole class Croc Stocks earned and have a whole class reward once a certain number of whole class Croc Stocks are earned.

Question 2: What are the Administrator, Teacher, and Parent Perceptions on Why the Students Have an SOC

Table 4, and subsequent tables for each research question, shows data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, and journal comments in response to the research question. Two or more responses identified a common theme. The table contains three columns. The first column shows the question, the second column shows the administration and focus group responses, the third column shows the parent comments that reference the research question. The themes included the number of times (n) each response was listed.

Table 4

Common Data on Why the Students' Have an SOC

Question	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Parent Survey Responses
Perceptions of why the students' have an SOC?	Administration support (n=3) Administration consistency (n=3) Teachers, staff, and administration (n=5) Common vocabulary (n=3) Common expectations (n=3) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Teacher and staff ownership and commitment (n=3) Crocs Creed committee (n=3) Student commitment (n=4) Parent support (n=3) Consistency (n=4)	Common vocabulary (n=2) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Teachers, staff, and administration (n=>5) Sense of community (n=>5)

Table 5 presents common responses from the administration and focus group interviews, teacher's journal, and the open-ended comments on the parent survey that support the research question, "What are the administrator, teacher, and parent perceptions on why they have an SOC?"

Table 5

Perceptions on Why the Students' Have an SOC Sample Responses

Perceptions on SOC	Comments Supporting Research Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"One of them I can promise you is that the administration has been here since day one."
	"All of our Crocs Creed program is instrumental in the development of our students' sense of community."
	"[The Crocs Creed] is key…and we've developed this program and you will find it in every place of the school."
	"We also had parents who served on the committee when developing the program."
	"We have a lot of community involvement and we encourage our families to support the Crocs Creed and student success."
	"The biggest thing is consistency."
	"We're selling the same program."
	"Consistency is a factor; they're hearing the same message over and over."
	"The core teachers that developed the program have remained on the committee."
	"Developing ownership of the program with the staff is key to the success of the program."
	"Our students, staff, and parents are committed to supporting the Crocs Creed."
	"Here, the students and staff are very invested in the program we have in place."
	"So, you also have 100% buy-in because those teachers are still here promoting the program."
	"A critical piece is that the ownership isn't to the classroom. The ownership is to the whole building."
	"There's that whole sense that it takes a village to raise a child."
	"Since our teachers have bought into [the Crocs Creed program], our students see it and buy-in [to it] as well."

(Table 5 continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Focus Group and Journal
"I think the minute they walk in the door, they are greeted in the office with consistency and a friendly face."
"We're always are using the six words."
"The biggest thing is consistency."
"And the other thing that creates a sense of community is our Crocs Creed."
"You will see that it starts from the top, the administration. [Dr. Smith] is looking for people that will fit into this program."
"[Dr. Smith] makes sure everyone is committed to [the Crocs Creed].
"The kids want to jump on the bandwagon."
"The Crocs Creed is very positive and the kids like it a lot."
"Getting a Crock Stock…is a meaningful thing [to the students].
"Students can recite all of the characters and are committed and dedicated to following the program."
"Parents…support our efforts and the program."
"Our parents are very involved."
"The school has a close-knit feeling that is hard to explain."
"They draw you in and you feel like you want to be involved."

Parent Survey
"This is a credit to the principal who designed the program and the staff, and the students who live it."
"[Franklin] and its amazing staff have helped to instill such important qualities as being kind to others, helping those in need in our community, and respecting people, places and property."
"The traits are student reinforced and teacher modeled."
"Students have a strong sense of community."
"Our small community, where most people are a short walk or drive to the school, adds greatly to the overall sense of community and closeness exhibited at [Franklin]."
"[Students] buy into the character education program fully. They love to hear Croc Stock certificates/ribbons/pins by being caught doing something kind, responsible, respectful, cooperative, honest, and safe."

Administrators', staff, and parents' interviews report that there are many variables that contribute to the students' SOC at Franklin. One common variable that contributes to the students' SOC is administration commitment, consistency, and vision. Different sources of data show that the school administrators have an impact on the students' SOC. "One of them I can promise you is that administration has been here since day one. Since the day we broke ground, we've been here. That's a huge piece because we're selling the same program," Mr. White explained. Teacher B agreed, "The biggest thing is consistency." By having the same

administrators and expectations, teachers know the expectations and how to support students' SOC." A parent also credited Dr. Smith's leadership, "The children are polite and respectful to adults entering the school as volunteers. This is a credit to the principal who designed the program and the staff and students who live it."

Interviewees also reflected that the principal is instrumental in developing the vision of the school and the students' SOC. In her interview, Dr. Smith explained. "I came here with a clear vision on how to set up an effective and successful program." Dr. Smith suggests that being a new school has helped Franklin establish a students' SOC. However, she reflected, "We had a similar approach and it was equally effective." She explained, "I'm not your traditional Principal. I build ownership and consensus in everything I do. Not everyone likes my approach, but it works and we're successful. Developing ownership of the [Crocs Creed] with the staff is key to the success of the program."

Dr. Smith and the administration also make a point to hire teachers who are a match for the school and who would strengthen the school's vision. The administration, along with a panel of teachers, interview prospective teacher candidates. Mr. White explained the interview process. "We are looking for teachers who are learners, committed to students, and the character qualities they hold true to themselves need to be a match for our school. Not only are we looking for teacher leaders, but we're looking for teachers who are willing to work with the administration and collaborate with their [prospective] team." Dr. Smith reflected that the school is lucky to have a unique group of dedicated teachers. "We don't have much [teacher] turnover mainly because I think the teachers find it a professionally stimulating environment because of their colleagues. Everyone is willing to work with each other on new things and ideas."

A second variable interviewees overwhelmingly reported was that the school's character education program, the Crocs Creed, contributes to the students' SOC. "The Crocs Creed program is instrumental in the development of our students' sense of community," Dr. Smith explained. The Crocs Creed program is everywhere in the school and it is a common language that everyone uses. "I think having a common creed (Crocs creed) that all students follow helps to foster a sense of community and personal development/growth," one parent reflected. Another parent said, "I am extremely impressed with the sense of community at Franklin. The Croc's Creed and associated Croc Stock are excellent tools that help promote good citizenship among students. Good behavior is modeled and incorporated into all aspects of the school environment."

"From our custodians to our cafeteria workers, everyone gives out Croc Stock," Teacher A explained. "There's that whole sense that it takes a village to raise a child, so if someone is acting inappropriately, we all have a responsibility to those children," Mr. White explained. Everyone, including the bus drivers, participate actively in the program. Bus drivers nominate bus riders of the month who follow the Crocs Creed and student pictures are taken and displayed in the front hallway.

According to Dr. Smith, the Crocs Creed program is "inbred and intertwined throughout our school." "You see the words everywhere [and] they are constantly pushed," Mr. Geer agreed. "The ownership is to the whole building! Wherever you walk, you will find the Crocs Creed," Mr. White exclaimed. For example, Teacher A explained how her class is creating an Olympic bulletin board where they have used the Crocs Creed and incorporated it into their learning. "In order to be an athlete, you would need to have all of these characteristics," she explained. As another example, for Veteran's day, "The Student Council Association (SCA) officers went to all the different services (Army, Navy, Marines, etc.) and got their core values and creeds and compared them to our Crocs Creed," Teacher A explained. Similarly, the common language is used on the student news show. Students pause for a respectful minute and the student anchors sign-off saying, "Have a respectful, responsible, cooperative, safe, kind, and honest day."

Third, those interviewed reported that another common variable that contributes to the students' SOC is teacher ownership. The administration reported that "Developing ownership with the staff is key to the success of the program." Dr. Smith explained, during the first year, Franklin did not have any type of character education program and consequently had a lot of discipline problems. "Our first year was quite a story! We had a lot of discipline issues," Dr. Smith explained. After the first year, the administration met with the teachers and they were motivated to address the behavior issues. "We met in the summer and developed the Crocs Creed program. Once they knew the areas of need, we were able to address them. We had rich discussions in developing the Crocs Creed and it represents the values of our teachers and community," Dr. Smith added. "[Franklin] and its amazing staff have helped to instill such important qualities as being kind to others, helping those in need in our community, and respecting people, places, and property," a parent reflected. "Everyone is supportive of [the Crocs Creed] and Dr. Smith makes sure that everyone is committed [to the program]," Teacher B

explained. Teacher A added, "The moment I walked [into Franklin], [Crocs Creed] made sense to me. It was easy to transition into using it."

Dr. Smith credited part of the schools success to strong teacher leadership. "We have a lot of teacher leadership thanks to the fact that we got to hire all of our teachers. We have a lot of big fishes, but it's amazing. They're a lot like the Coy in our pond. You give them food and they all rush up to get some and then swim off to eat. If we throw out an idea to our staff, they take it and try it out. It's not like that in all schools." "The Crocs Creed committee is instrumental in the sustainability of the program," Dr. Smith explained. Mr. White agreed, "The core of the teachers that created the Crocs Creed are still here. So, you also have 100% buy-in because those teachers are still here promoting the program." In addition, Dr. Smith explained that she only hires teachers who are willing to commit to the Crocs Creed program. "If they're not on board with the program, then they are not a match for our school'. Teacher B acknowledged, "[Dr. Smith] is looking for people that will fit into this program. When we first started, there was some struggle and some resistance. She made it quite clear that at this school we are dedicated to following this program and was quite clear that people could go elsewhere if they weren't happy."

Another common variable those interviewed reported that contributes to the students SOC is student buy-in. "Since our teachers have bought into [the Crocs Creed program], our student see it and buy in [to it] as well," Mr. Geer explained. Teacher A suggested, "The kids want to jump on the bandwagon and…be part of [the] enthusiasm." Teacher C added, "Crocs Creed is very positive and the kids like it a lot." Students who demonstrate the Crocs Creed can be recognized, praised, and can also receive a Croc Stock. Mr. White explained, "Let me tell you, [the pin] is like gold. And we treat it like gold." The school administration also hands out the ribbons to the students and students wear their ribbons all day long. "You wouldn't think sixth graders would buy into it, but I would say 70 to 80% of them eat it up," Mr. White explained. Mr. Geer concurred, "Getting a Croc Stock for the kids, even in sixth grade, is a meaningful thing." Teacher A added, the program is meaningful and "[The students] can recite all of the characters." A parent agreed, "Students have a strong sense of community. They buy into the character education program fully. They love to earn Croc Stock certificates/ribbons/pins by being caught doing something kind, responsible, respectful, cooperative, honest, and safe. There is a great school-to-home connection. They are proud to display and tell about their character achievements at home."

An example of the student commitment to the Crocs Creed and Franklin that the teachers, administration, and parents speak of is displayed in recent writing by a group of sixth graders. Dr. Smith explained how these students thought it would be fun to write a Crocstitution which was playfully written to look like the Constitution and identifies the Crocs Creed character traits. "[The Crocstitution] is revealing about what the students think about the Crocs Creed program," Dr. Smith commented.

The student-created Crocstitution declared the following:

<div align="center">Crocstitution</div>

We the people of the Croctopia will stand hand in hand together and will never fall apart. We shall follow all the Crocs Creed at ALL TIMES!! We must stay strong everyday and feel that we are important in the school and that no one will bring us down. Again, we will follow the Crocs Creed every day and night no matter if anyone sees it or not. We shall become one and only one in the name of Croc. Follow all the rules and do as you are told to do. Obey the King, Prince, and Princess but most of all the Empire.

<div align="center">*The Most Important Rule*</div>

Always Obey the King, Queen, Princess and Prince but most of all the Empire.

When you sign this paper, you are saying that you will follow all the Crocs Creed and follow all the rules of the game. Thank you.

Signed,

Six Fifth graders and Dr. Smith

In addition, different sources of data shows that another common variable that contributes to the students' SOC is parent support and buy-in to the Crocs Creed program. "Parents have bought into it," Mr. White said. Dr. Smith explained, "We have a lot of community involvement and we encourage our families to support the Crocs Creed and student success." Teacher A commented, "If we were to write home that a student needs to be more kind, the parents will talk to their child about their behavior, and they support our efforts and the program." Mr. White explained that they have an active parent community. "Our community is a community of educated parents. Their core values are the same core values we hold true to the Crocs Creed. The parents saw the number of behavior issues we faced our first year and warmly welcomed the Crocs Creed." As noted in the Crocs Creed Handbook, Franklin views parents as the primary

moral educators of their children and believe schools build a partnership with parents. Parents actively foster in their students personal and civic virtues as an integral part of our school life.

Franklin asks parents to use the six character qualities at home and has informed parents about each of the six character traits through their monthly newsletters, teacher newsletters, and Crocs Creed Handbook. Through the commonalities in the parent responses, parents are knowledgeable of the Crocs Creed character education program and behavior plan. "The reinforcement of positive behavior with the use of a common vocabulary (six character traits) has increased clear behavioral expectations for our school. The use of these six traits has increased their presence in teacher-to-student behavior as well. Thus, the traits are student reinforced and teacher modeled," acknowledged a parent.

Another way parents are informed about the Crocs Creed program is through the principal. Dr. Smith sends home a welcome letter at the beginning of each school year describing the program in addition to devoting a PTA meeting at the beginning of the school year teaching the parents about the program and their expectations. "[Parents] understand [the character qualities] and reinforce them at home," Mr. White explained.

A final common variable discovered in the case study that the school reported that contributes to the students' SOC is the community-like feeling that the school exudes. "The school has a close-knit feeling that is hard to explain," Teacher D explained. Teacher C added, "You feel involved. They draw you in and you feel like you want to be involved. The kids feel like this is their home and it's wonderful. It's not even a school, it's a little community." A parent reflected, "Our small community, where most people are a short walk or drive to the school, adds greatly to the overall sense of community and closeness exhibited at Franklin. [It's] a wonderful school."

In summary, the administrators, teachers, and parents involved in the interviews, focus group, journal, and survey identified common perceptions of the perceptions of students' SOC. Participants reported that the school's character education program, the administration, consistency, school-wide ownership, and total buy-in to the character education program contributes to the students' SOC.

Question 3A: What Evidence is There That Respect, Trust, and Kindness Are Present in the Selected School?

The extent to which a student feels respected, trusted, and treated fairly by others is a strong determinant of a students' SOC. The following are data gathered to provide evidence on how respect, trust, and kindness are present in the selected school. Table 6 presents data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, journals, and parent survey comments in response to the research question.

Table 6

Respect, Trust, and Kindness Common Themes of Data

Question	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Journal/Document Review Data	Parent Survey Responses
Respect, Trust, and Kindness	Crocs Creed (n=>5) Teaching appropriate behaviors (n=4) Service learning (n=4) School Improvement Plan (n=2) Character education (n=2) Class meetings (n=4) Guidance lessons (n=4) Daily conversations (n=3) Consistency (n=>5)	Unlimited book check-out (n=2) 6th Grade Book Club School Improvement Plan (n=2) Guidance lessons (n=>5) conflict resolution training (n=2) Student Achievement Goal (n=1) Service learning (n=3) Character Education Crocs Creed (n=>5)	Crocs Creed (n=>5) Character education (n=1) Respect (n=>5)

Interviewees at the study site overwhelmingly reported that students are taught how to show respect, trust, and kindness through the Crocs Creed. "I think our approach is teaching those characteristics [respect, trust, and kindness] through the Crocs Creed," Respectful, honest, and kind are three of the six character qualities of the Crocs Creed. Dr. Smith reflected, "We are teaching behaviors that are developmentally appropriate. So, when we say, 'You are demonstrating respect,' it actually means something to them." Table 7 presents common responses from the administration and focus group interviews, teacher's journal, and the open-ended comments on the parent survey that support the research question, "What evidence is there that respect, trust, and kindness are present in the school?"

Table 7

Respect, Trust, and Kindness Sample Responses

Evidence of Respect, Trust, and Kindness	Comments Supporting the Research Question
	Administrators Comments
	"I think our approach is teaching those characteristics [respect, trust, and kindness] through the Crocs Creed."
	"In Kindergarten, we are teaching respectful behaviors differently than we are in sixth grade."
	"Our guidance counselors teach lessons throughout the year on those [respect, honesty, and kindness] character qualities."
	"You see the words everywhere, they are constantly pushed."
	"The six character qualities are taught by their classroom teachers at the beginning of the year."
	"Our counselors go into the classroom and each month is a character."
	"Our guidance counselors teach lessons throughout the year on those character traits."
	Focus Group and Journal Comments
	"At the beginning of the year, all of us go through the Crocs Creed expectations [including respect, honesty, and kindness character qualities]."
	"We're always using the six words."
	"It's consistency. Everyone is building and using the same verbiage over and over again."
	"The guidance counselors and the school have one Crocs Creed per month."
	Parent Comments
	"Staff has helped instill such important qualities as being kind to others, helping those in need in our community, and respecting people, places, and property." " [The students] are very respectful, well-behaved group of students."
	"The children are polite and respectful to adults."
	"Overall, a respectful and responsible learning community."
	"The staff at [Franklin] does a great job teaching the kids how to behave respectfully."
	"This school and its amazing staff have helped to instill such important qualities as being kind to others, helping those in need in our community, and respecting people, places, and property."

Through the review of documents, one of the objectives identified in the School

Improvement Plan (SIP) is to focus Crocs Creed lessons on the respect character quality. The SIP

states that by focusing on this character quality, referrals and suspensions due to hitting, verbal attacks, and other behaviors that demonstrate disrespect will decrease. The majority of office referrals and suspensions have come from the classroom and center around disrespect. As stated in the SIP, the goal for this year is to decrease referrals by 10% and for the numbers of suspensions to decrease by 50%. Franklin plans to provide training to staff on conflict resolution and to increase the number of counseling lessons dealing with respect. According to the SIP, the school plans to survey staff midyear to identify areas that need improvement so that the total number of referrals and suspensions decreases.

The quotes identified for respect, trust, and kindness in Table 7 supported evidence for respect, trust, and kindness. Interviewees overwhelmingly reported that the Croc Creed character qualities, including respect, trust, and kind behaviors, are taught to the students in many different ways and are reinforced throughout the school. The character qualities are taught by the students' classroom teachers at the beginning of the school year. Teacher A explained, "At the beginning of the year, all of [the teachers] go through the Crocs Creed expectations. [For example], I have each of my groups do a cooperative learning project and they make posters that we hang in the hallway." Teacher D explained,

> Besides our school-wide initiative of promoting character qualities, we also promote them in the classroom on our own developmental level. Each month, during [class] meetings, we discuss what each character quality looks like in fifth grade. In the beginning of the year, we actually spent time brainstorming these qualities so that the kids knew it was still important and relevant. I have found that kids in the upper grades really respond to earning Class Croc Stocks. For every 25 my class earns (this is separate from individual earnings), we have Breakfast with Board Games. They love this! I also think this really promotes my community/team model within Room 100.

Interviewees also identified the importance of the school counselors. "Our counselors go into the classroom and each month is a character." Each month, one of the character qualities is highlighted and the school counselors teach lessons focused on that character quality. Teacher A explained how the previous month, for example, the students created a rap about kindness during their guidance lesson.

In addition, the interviewees reported that the character traits are often used in daily conversations with the students and the program is embedded in the culture of the practices of the school. Administration often asks students how they are following the Crocs Creed in their day-to-day interactions with students and how they are being respectful, caring citizens. "We're always using the 6 words," Teacher A explained. "[They] are used in anything that we do and that makes a big difference since we're always using the same verbiage and we're always on the same page." Teacher C concurred, "It's consistency. Everyone in the building is using the same verbiage over and over again." "The reinforcement is through the teachers, administrators, staff, and whole school," Mr. White explained. "This school and its amazing staff have helped to instill such important qualities as being kind to others, helping those in need in our community, and respecting people, places, and property," one parent reflected. Another parent commented, "[The students are] a very respectful, well-behaved group of students. They have a high sense of morals and it is obvious that they come from households that value honesty and respect. Having similar values and morals lends itself to a strong sense of community." While another parent expressed thoughtfully, "The staff at [Franklin] does a great job teaching the kids how to behave respectfully."

Question 4A: What Are the Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Respect, Trust, and Kindness?

Similarities and differences in the perceptions of respect, trust, and kindness were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. Table 8 provides a summary of responses to the Subscale 1A, Respect, that make up a SCCP-II. Table 9 provides a closer look at the items within the subscale. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parents. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p) under Levene's Test was less than 0.05, there was a significant difference between the variances, and equal variances could not be assumed. Based on the results of Levene's Test, the appropriate t-test was used and reported below.

Table 8

Responses to Overall Subscale, Respect

	Staff	Parents
Survey Subscale	**Mean**	**Mean**
1A: Perceptions of student respect	3.84	3.99

Table 9

Detailed Survey Items to Subscale: Student Respect

	Staff	Parents			
Survey Items in Subscale 1A:	**Mean**	**Mean**	**t**	**df**	**p**
1. Students treat classmates with respect	4.51	4.59	.935	218	.351
4. Students respect the personal property of others	4.34	4.38	.314	215	.754
7. Students show respect for school property	4.16	4.76	5.274	94.6	.000
9. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff	4.44	4.76	3.196	96.7	.002
12. Students are disrespectful toward their teachers**	3.26	3.61	-2.57	212	.011
15. Students pick on other students**	3.26	3.22	.386	210	.700
17. Students show poor sportsmanship**	3.33	3.38	-4.23	202	.673
20. Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates**	3.31	3.42	-.983	206	.327
23. Students refrain from put-downs	3.97	3.75	-1.43	207	.155

**Items are reversed-scored

On the nine items within Subscale 1A, the parents' responses to the all but two items (15 and 23) were slightly more positive than the responses by staff. Parent responses differed significantly from staff responses on three of the nine items within Subscale 1A. No significant differences existed with regard to the other six questions. The parent mean for students show more respect for property was 0.6 points higher than the staff mean (t = 5.274, p = 0.000). Parents thought that children showed respect for property more than the staff thought that the students showed respect for property. The parent mean for students behave respectfully toward all school staff was .33 points higher than the staff mean (t=3.196, p=.002). Parents also thought students behave respectfully toward all staff members more than the staff thought that students behaved respectfully towards all staff members. Finally, the parent mean for students are

disrespectful towards their teachers (reversed) was .35 higher than the staff mean (t=-2.569, p=.011). Parents thought students show respect toward their teachers more than the staff thought students showed respect to their teachers.

In addition to the similarities in all but three questions, the data also reveals additional similarities in the perceptions of student respect, trust, and kindness. Through the Crocs Creed positive reinforcement program, monthly guidance lessons, and day-to-day conversations, interviews, document reviews, and observations suggest students are experiencing community and are motivated to show respect, kindness, and concern for others. Other than the differences reported in the survey, no additional differences were noted.

In summary, data supported that the study school creates a climate of respect, trust, and kindness. Common themes of data emerged identifying the study's schools character education program, the schools focus on the respect quality as indicated in their school's SIP, the importance of the school counselors' lessons focused on respect, trust, and kindness, and the consistency in their Crocs Creed program and common expectations supported the students' SOC and evidence of respect, trust, and kindness.

Question 3B: What Evidence Is There That Sense of Belonging Is Present in the Selected School?

In schools where there is a sense of belonging, there is a shared emotional connection within the group that provides a sense of identity and a feeling that one is part of the group. The following are data gathered to provide evidence on whether a sense of belonging is present within the selected school. Schools that create a sense of belonging provide activities and programs for students and recognize student success. The following two sub-questions were identified in the literature review as evidence indicative of a sense of belonging and were answered by the administrators and focus group:

1. What activities or programs are in place to encourage students to get to know each other?
2. How do you recognize student's success?

Data from the parent survey overwhelmingly supports that a students' sense of belonging is supported at the study site. More than half of the parents reflected positively on the parent survey that students feel like they "just belong" and that the school is "a second family for my children." A sample of common parent responses that mentioned a sense of belonging is listed in Table 10.

Table 11 presents common themes of data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, journals, and parent survey comments in response to the research question regarding sense of belonging.

Table 10

Parents Perceptions of a Sense of Belonging

Evidence of Sense of Belonging	Parent Comments Supporting the Research Question
	"The staff at [Franklin] continues to stress the 'group' concept of life." "[My child] would rather be at school than home!" "Our children feel that [Franklin} is a big part of the community and makes our 'community' complete." "Franklin is not just a school; it is a second home, a safe haven, and an investment in their lives; one that will be everlasting." "My daughter is new to the school, yet we feel like we've been there forever."

Table 11

Sense of Belonging Common Themes of Data

Theme	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Journal/Documents Review Data	Parent Survey Responses
Sense of Belonging	Book Buddies (n=2) Crocs Creed (n=>5) School counselors (n=4) Distinguishing Student Award (n=3) Lunch bunches (n=2) PTA Events (n=4) Helping Hands (n=4) Writer's Block (n=3)	PTA Restaurant Night (n=3) Yearbook Cover Contest (n=2) School-wide open house (n=2) School-wide art show (n=1) Chorus Concert (n=1) 5K Croc Trot (n=3) Health Fair (n=1) Dance-a-Thon (n=2) Gems program (n=1) Harvest family festival (n=2) Girls on the Run (n=3) Daily student produced and performed news show (n=3) Writer's Block (n=3) Literacy and Arts Night (n=3) Book Buddies (n=3) Crocs Creed (n=>5) School counselors (n=3) Helping Hands (n=2)	Community feeling (n=>5) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Happy (n=4)

Sub-Question 1: What Activities or Programs Are in Place to Encourage Students to Get to Know Each Other? Data from the administration and focus group interviews suggests that activities and programs are in place to encourage students to get to know each other. A sample of the administrator and focus group common responses that mentioned activities and programs to encourage students to get to know each other are listed in Table 12.

Table 12

Sense of Belonging Sub-Question 1 Sample Responses

Sense of Belonging Sub-Question 1	Comments Supporting the Research Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"Our school counselors do a welcome lunch for all new students." "We have a preschool buddy program." "We have the book buddies geared towards third and fourth graders." We have classes that buddy up with classes and we have third graders who are third grade helpers who help out in preschool "Teachers create programs within grade levels, but [share] it to everyone." "We have Girls on the Run, Chess Club and Writer's Block." "We have a program called Helping Hands." "The Helping Hands is one place."
	Focus Group and Journal Comments
	"We have many after school activities from FLEX, Chess Club, Writer's Block, Sixth grade book club." "Fourth grade had a colonial day and invited other classes to come in and participate." "We have buddies and Helping Hands."

Administrators and teachers interviewed at the study site overwhelmingly indicated that the school has a number of activities, programs, traditions, and events to support students' sense of belonging, such as Helping Hands, Foreign Language Experience (FLEX), Chess Club, Sixth Grade book club, Girls on the Run, Chess Club, and Writer's Block. Girls on the Run is an afterschool club that focuses on self-esteem and image issues with girls in grades three through sixth. Chess Club is a weekly afterschool program for students to stay, learn and play chess, interact with peers, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Helping Hands is an after-school activity that students can participate in that provides students with a unique

opportunity to research, plan, and execute their own service learning projects. From supporting a local animal shelter to making blankets for homeless people, the students learn how to help others while learning valuable lessons themselves at the same time, Dr. Smith explained.

Data also revealed that activities are in place during the school day to encourage students to get to know each other. For example, Franklin's sixth graders are book buddies with first graders, and third graders are buddies with the preschool students. Through the buddy program, "They can be role models and establish relationships with the younger grades," Mr. White explained. Another example, Writer's Block, Dr. Smith explained, "is a program where a group of students meet in the mornings to write. They decide what genre they want to publish in and get together in groups to work on their piece." Students in sixth grade can also participate in a 6th Grade Book Club, which is a before-school opportunity for students to discuss literature and show respect and understanding for the interest and opinions of others.

Sub-Question 2: How Do You Recognize Student's Success? Research Literature Suggests the feeling of belonging can be created by a school program that recognizes positive behavior and success of students which link students, families, teachers, and administration to the school's traditions. Table 13 presents common responses from the administration interviews, focus group, and the teacher journal that address student recognition.

Through a review of documents and interview data, data supports the conclusion that students are recognized for positive behavior through the Crocs Creed and subsequently receiving Croc Stock, certificates, ribbons, and pin. Students can be recognized for positive behavior by earning a Croc Stock for following one of the character qualities. By collecting Crock Stock, they can also earn certificates, ribbons, or a pin at the end of the school year. "Our goal is for 60% of our students to receive a pin," Dr. Smith explained.

Interviewees overwhelmingly reported that students are also recognized for success through the school's Distinguishing Student Award. A student can earn the Distinguishing Student award for any reason. From improving their behavior, demonstrating the Crocs Creed, to improving their academics or success in physical education, the award can recognize improvement or success. How teachers identify a student is up to them and students are encouraged to work toward receiving the award. The open definition of the award allows teachers to recognize all students and not just academic success.

Table 13

Sense of Belonging Sub-Question 2 Sample Responses

Sense of Belonging Sub-Question 2	Comments Supporting the Research Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We have a Distinguishing Student award." "We have what is called the Distinguishing Student Award." "The Crocs Creed is for character development." "Students can earn a Croc Stock…certificate…and pin." "Students earn Croc Stock for positive behavior."
	Focus Group and Journal Comments
	"Students can earn Croc Stock for positive behavior." "The kids love getting a Croc Stock and they're very proud of themselves." "We have a Distinguishing Student Award three times a year that recognizes student success."

The Distinguishing Student Award has been in place for five years and parents are invited to celebrate the student's success at a special awards celebration. At the ceremony, an adult dresses in a crocodile costume and the students pictures are taken with the crocodile. "It's a winner. [The Distinguishing Student Award] is centered more towards those students who are not necessarily getting the As in academics but what they are doing well in. So, it reaches all students and they're all getting something," Mr. White explained. To ensure that many students are recognized, "We limit the number of times a student can be nominated so that hopefully by sixth grade a majority of our students have received the award," Dr. Smith explained. The school's goal is for "99% percent of [their] students by 6th grade to receive the award," Mr. White explained.

Question 4B: What Are the Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Sense of Belonging?

Similarities and differences in the perceptions of sense of belonging were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. Table 14 provides a summary of responses to the Subscale 1B, Sense of Belonging that make up a SCCP-II. Table 15 provides a closer look at the items within the subscale. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parents. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p)

under Levene's Test was less than 0.05, there was a significant difference between the variances, and equal variances could not be assumed. Based on the results of Levene's Test, the appropriate t-test was used and reported below. Table 15 summarizes the average responses of each group to the nine survey items making up Subscale 1B, Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging.

Table 14

Responses to Overall Subscale: Friendship and Belonging

	Staff	Parents
Survey Subscale:	**Mean**	**Mean**
1B: Perceptions of student friendship and belonging	4.14	4.20

Table 15

Detailed Survey Item on Subscale: Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging

	Staff	Parents			
Survey Items in Subscale 1B:	**Mean**	**Mean**	**t**	**df**	**p**
2. Students exclude those who are different**	3.32	3.64	-2.21	111.47	.029
3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness	4.44	4.18	-2.27	183.77	.042
5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends	4.18	4.17	-.087	214	.931
10. Students work well together	4.37	4.55	1.86	217	.064
13. Students help new students feel accepted	4.33	4.37	.359	210	.720
16. Students are willing to forgive each other	4.31	4.22	-.647	212	.518
18. Students are patient with each other	4.03	4.09	.556	217	.579
21. Students listen to each other in class	4.33	4.37	.344	209	.731
24. Students share what they have with others	4.06	4.29	1.75	212	.083

**Items are reversed-scored

On the nine items within Subscale 1B, the parents' responses to all but two items (3 and 18) were slightly more positive than the responses by staff. Parent responses differed significantly from staff responses on two of the nine items within Subscale 1B. No significant differences existed with regard to the other seven questions. The parent mean for students exclude those who are different (reversed) was .32 points higher than staff mean (t=-2.21, p=.029). Parents report that students include those who are different more than staff reported

students include those who are different. The parent mean for students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness was .27 points lower than staff. Staff perceived that students comfort peers who experience sadness more than parents perceived students comfort peers.

In addition to the similarities in all but two questions, qualitative data also revealed additional similarities in the perceptions of students' sense of belonging through the Crocs Creed positive reinforcement program, Distinguishing Student award, and the similar comments of a community feeling. Through the activities and programs that are in place, the perception of administrators, teachers, and parents is that students feel that they belong. Other than the differences reported in the survey, no additional differences were noted.

In summary, commonalities emerged providing evidence of the student's sense of belonging at the study site. Data overwhelmingly indicated that programs and activities are in place to support a students' sense of belonging. In addition, data also confirmed that the study site creates opportunities to recognize positive behavior and success of students through their Crocs Creed program and Distinguishing Student Award.

Question 3C: What Evidence Is There That Caring Is Present in the Selected School?

A defining element of community is a student feeling that they are cared for and connected to the group. The following data provide evidence that caring is present within Franklin. Caring is evident in schools in the actions of teachers who work beyond what is required and who assist students when they are struggling, and when students are comfortable asking adults in the school for help. Data suggests that students are cared for in many ways. "It's a big school of 800, but we try to get to know all of the students." Mr. White explained. "They are not just numbers here, they're names." Mr. White added, "We care about them."

The following sub-questions were identified in the literature review as evidence indicative evidence of caring in a school:

1. Are there any programs in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?

2. Who do the students go to if they have a concern or problem?

Table 16 presents common themes of data of data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, journals, and parent survey comments in response to the research question.

Table 16

Caring Common Themes of Data

Questions	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Journal/Document Review Data	Parent Survey Responses
Evidence of Caring	Helping Hands (n=4) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Service Learning (n=3) Promise Mentors (n=>5) Academic At-risk list (n=1) Child Study Team (n=1) Teacher Advisory Committee (n=1) Teacher, counselor, administration support (n=>5) Visibility (n=4)	Helping Hands (n=2) Crocs Creed Service Learning (n=2) Promise Mentors (n=2) Child Study Team (n=1) Promise Mentors (n=2) Academic At-risk list (n=1) Teacher Advisory Committee (n=2)	Crocs Creed (n=>5)

Caring Sub-Question 1: Are There programs in Place to Help Students Who Are Having Difficulty with Their Work? In the review of research on students' SOC, an element of caring is evident in the actions of teachers who work beyond what is required and assist students when they are struggling. Interviewees reported that there are programs in place to meet the needs of all of the students and there is a feeling of cooperation among teachers in helping each other and their students. Table 17 presents common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support evidence of programs that are in place to support caring sub-question 1, "Are there any programs in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?"

Interviewees all discussed a new mentoring program they are putting in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work. The goal for the mentoring program is to build students' self esteem and to help them "believe that [Franklin] is a safe place to come and that they have friends here. Friends meaning administrators and teachers," Mr. Smith explained. School staff identified 200 students to consider for support for academics or behavioral issues. They are narrowing down the list to more manageable number and matching the students with staff members who will serve as their mentor. Dr. Smith explained, "Our goal is to develop a relationship with the students who have been identified carefully." To identify at-risk students, Franklin looked at the traditional standardized test scores, but also non-traditional things, such as tardies, child study recommendations, retention recommendations, and access to a computer at

home. "Some of our students are just not prepared for learning right now so we're taking it one student at a time. We need students to want to come to school, where they can get a high five from a teacher, and they're open to learning," Mr. White reflected.

Table 17

Caring Sub-Question 1 Sample Responses

Caring: Sub-Question 1	Comments Supporting the Research Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We have a program called Helping Hands."
	"We're developing a mentorship program now."
	We also have a Promise Mentor group.
	"Some teachers are doing lunch bunches with students in math."
	"Administrators do lunch bunches with students, counselors, and reading teacher work with students."
	"We are developing a mentor program right now."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"We're establishing a mentoring program now to help students with work."
	"The administration also provides us with data at the beginning of the year of who failed the SOLs (Standards of Learning) or are on our watch list."
	"Many of us have at-risk groups before or after school."
	"There are a lot of teachers who have lunch bunches."

The mentoring program is still in the development stage, but "We're looking at each student individually and pairing them up with a teacher that is a match," Mr. White said. "The expectation is that it will be a multi-year mentoring program that will follow the student through [Franklin]," Dr. Smith explained. The mentoring program was piloted in the preschool program and the school is now expanding the program through sixth grade. "It's a specific program so we wanted to make sure we got it right…before introducing it to the other grade levels," Dr. Smith explained.

Data also confirmed that Franklin has additional supports for students who are at risk of failing. Mr. White elaborated, "[The students are] not numbers who failed. We need to know their names and get to know them." The school created an academic at-risk list and shared that list with appropriate staff members during the start of the school year. "Teachers know within the

first 20 to 30 days of school [who is on the at-risk list]" and they are able to prepare and provide extra support to those students. To support these at-risk students, the focus group explained that some teachers and the administration do lunch bunches with the at-risk students where they meet with the students in small groups during their lunch time to provide extra support in their academics. In addition, Mr. White added that the counselors also work with students to provide support for them both behaviorally and academically. The staff is "keeping a pulse on [our] students."

Data resources also confirmed that Franklin provides help to teachers who need additional support to meet student needs and issues. For example, the Child Study team includes teachers, specialists, and administration who meet to provide teachers and staff with an opportunity to discuss students who are having difficulty in the classroom. The Child Study team discusses accommodations, services, and interventions for the teacher to try that will enable the child to be successful in school. "[Our] Child Study…is successful…in helping teachers identify students who need assistance and get extra ideas and strategies [to support them]," Mr. Geer explained. Mr. Geer believes their Child Study is more successful than other schools he has worked in by helping teachers identify students who need assistance and providing them unique ideas and strategies.

Caring Sub-Question 2: Who Do the Students Go to If They Have a Concern or Problem? The administrators and focus group overwhelmingly reported that students go to their teacher if they have a concern or problem. Teacher D explained, "I give my students my home phone number and [parents or students] can call me anytime if they have a question about homework or for anything else." Students also see the administrators and school counselors on a daily basis since they often are in the cafeteria during lunch time and seen in classrooms and hallways. "We try to be visible…and involved," Mr. Geer explained. "I think the more visible and accessible we are, the more comfortable they are to come to us." Mr. White suggested that students also go to the reading teacher, librarian, or specialists for help. He explained that since the librarians and specialists teach lessons to students on a weekly basis, they know the students well. Additionally, the Physical Education teachers are also the Student Council Association sponsors "so they are seen as leaders of the building" and students often seek them out for assistance if needed.

Table 18 presents common responses from the administration and focus group interviews and teacher's journal that support evidence of caring and sub-question 2, "Who do the students go to if they have a concern or problem?"

Table 18

Caring Sub-Question 2 Sample Responses

Caring: Sub-Question 2	Comments Supporting the Research Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We also have a Promise Mentor group."
	"Typically our teachers."
	"I think they use our counselors."
	"The [administrators] try to be visible as we can."
	"They go to their teachers to talk about their concern."
	"They can go to the administrators."
	"Administrators are always [visible]"
	"[The Administrators] try to be visible and involved."
	"They can also go to the reading teacher, librarian."
	Focus Group Comments
	"I would hope that they would come to [the teacher] first."
	"I think they feel like they can go to anybody."
	"The guidance counselor has a piece of paper and they can write to them."
	"They know that they can go write to the administration."
	"I give my home phone number and [parents or students] can call me anytime if they have question."

Question 4C: What Are Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Caring?

Similarities and differences in the perceptions of caring were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. Table 19 summarizes the average response item three that was identified in the methodology that reflects perception of caring: Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parents. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p) under Levene's Test is less than 0.05, there is a significant difference between the variances.

Table 19

Response to Item 7: Caring

Survey Items in Subscale 1A:	Staff Mean	Parents Mean	t	df	p
3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness	4.44	4.18	-2.27	183.77	.042

Staff responses differed significantly from parent responses on question three. The staff mean for students comforting peers was 0.26 points higher than the staff mean (t = -2.27, p = .042). Staff thought that students try to comfort their peers who have experiences sadness more than the parents thought students try to comfort their peers. Similarities of qualitative data confirm that students are cared for and structures are in place to teach students the importance of being a community and caring for each other. Data confirmed that there are structures in place, such as the new mentoring program, the at-risk list, and Child Study team to maintain and support caring relationships with the students. Caring is evident in the actions of the school. Other than the difference reported in the survey, no additional differences were noted.

In summary, research indicates in a school that is perceived to be a community, relations among teachers and students are personal. Data support that the study school is building personal relationships between teachers and students through their new mentoring program. In addition, data support that caring is evident in the actions of teachers who work beyond what is required and assist students when they are struggling. Finally, data indicated that the classroom teacher is the first adult that students approach if they have a concern or problem.

Question 3D: What Evidence Is There That Regular Contact Is Present in the Selected School?

In schools that have an SOC, ample opportunities for students to interact with each other and develop relationships in and out of school is necessary. The following are data gathered to provide evidence if regular contact is present within the selected school. The following sub-questions were identified in the literature review as evidence indicative regular contact in a school:

1. Do teachers attend school functions (such as chorus concert, PTA events, etc.) outside of the workday?

2. What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another both informally and formally?

Table 20 presents common themes of data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, journals, and parent survey comments in response to the research question. Two or more responses identified a common theme.

Table 20

Regular Contact Common Themes of Data

Questions	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Journal/Document Review Data	Parent Survey Responses
Evidence of Regular Contact	Crocs Run (n=3) Literacy Night (n=1) Writer's Block (n=3) Field Day (n=2) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Basketball game (n=1) Literacy Night (n=2) PTA events (n=4) Visibility (n=4) Book Club (n=1)	Book Club (n=3) Open House (n=1) Writer's Block (n=3) Basketball Game (n=2) Croctoberfest (n=3) Math Night (n=2) Field Day (n=2) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Literacy Night (n=1) PTA events (n=>5)	Crocs Creed (n=>5)

Regular Contact Sub-Question 1: Do Teachers Attend School Functions (Such as Chorus Concerts, PTA Events, etc.) Outside of the Workday? Table 21 presents common responses from the administration and focus group interviews, teacher's journal, and the open-ended comments on the parent survey that support the research question, "Do teachers attend school functions outside of the workday?"

Data resources confirmed that the PTA holds a number of after-school events for students, parents, and staff and many teachers attend these events. Teacher A explained, "There is never a time that you wouldn't see at least 10 to15 teachers [at an event]. Recently, there was a restaurant night and all of the fifth grade teachers went." Teacher C added, "I also see teachers at student's activities, such as recitals or baseball games [which] makes such a positive impact on the students." "Teachers are not forced to participate in after-school activities and nothing is forced down from the administrators," Mr. White explained. "Dr. Smith and I truly believe our teachers work very, very hard so it's not an expectation that they come to those types of things and that it's their choice." Teacher D concurred, "We have no pressure from the administration to attend, but are always thanked for our efforts."

Table 21

Regular Contact Sub-Question 1 Sample Responses

Regular Contact Sub-Question 1	Comments Supporting the Research Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We ask teachers to come to 1 PTA meeting a year so that they can be recognized."
	"Each team signs up for a PTA meeting throughout the year so each PTA meeting has a team of teachers there."
	"One event that has a large turnout is the Croc Run."
	"Every after-school event, like we have a 5K in the Spring on Saturday mornings, there were 15-20 teachers there."
	"I think we have a good representation of staff at things like that."
	"I think the more visible and accessible we are, the more comfortable [students] are to come to us."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"There is never a time that you wouldn't see at least 10-15 teachers."
	"Recently there was a restaurant night and the entire fifth grade went."
	"At our carnival there were a ton of teachers and the administrators [and staff]."
	"I think everyone wants to support the PTA."
	"Most of [us] go and the kids love to see us there."
	"As students come into the building, 99 to 100% of the time our administration are outside greeting the students good morning and you'll see them saying goodbye to students as they are leaving for the day."

Teacher D explained, "Many of us will go to things to show support, to see our students (like at PTA restaurant night), or we attend things for our kids." Teacher A added, "I think everyone wants to support the PTA. Most of us go and the kids love to see us there." Mr. White elaborated, "We're hiring great teachers who are willing to go above and beyond and are invested in our students. Teachers make it a point to be connected to the community. They're going to things by choice." In addition to teacher attendance, Mr. White added that the administration attends all school events and activities. "The administration goes to everything. Sometimes we make cameos, but at least one of us goes to school functions so that the community sees the investment in our students and community."

One event that has a large turnout of students and staff is the 5K Croc Trot. Dr. Smith explained. "It's a PTA event that a lot of staff members participate in." Also, "Each team signs up for a PTA meeting throughout the year, so each PTA meeting has a team of teachers there," Mr. Geer stated. In a number of school documents, events and activities that encouraged student and staff contact were highlighted:

- PTA Restaurant Nights. An evening event open to all families.
- Open House. School-wide event where parents are invited to visit their classroom and teachers.
- Art show. School-wide art show to celebrate student's work.
- Chorus, band, and strings concerts for students grades fourth through sixth grade.
- Health Fair.
- Science Explorers. Program that encourages girls toward careers in math and science.
- Harvest family festival. Event for all students and families to celebrate autumn with family and friends.
- Family Bingo night.

Interviewees also discussed the importance of being visible to promote regular contact. The school administration makes a point to be visible throughout the school day. Teacher B explained, "As students come into the building, 99% to 100% of the time our administration are outside greeting the students good morning and you'll see them saying goodbye to students as they are leaving for the day." Teachers A agreed, "They're in the cafeteria during lunchtime and often walking around the building." Mr. White reflected, "Administrators are always in the cafeteria during lunch time since it's a hot spot for behavior issues." Mr. Geer added, "I think the more visible and accessible we are, the more comfortable [students] are to come to us." In addition to the administration, specialists and teachers were observed standing at their classroom doors or assigned locations during student arrival and dismissal greeting student arrival. In addition, the school patrols were visible during student arrival and dismissal monitoring students assisting preschool students getting to and from their classrooms safely.

Regular Contact Sub-Question 2: What Opportunities Are Provided for Students to Interact with One Another Both Informally and Formally? Table 22 shows common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support the research question, "What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another both informally and formally?"

Table 22

Regular Contact Sub-Question 2 Sample Responses

Regular Contact Sub-Question 2	Comments Supporting the Sub-Question
	Administrator Interview
	"Our school-wide programs and functions differ every year." "In the past we have had a math night, science night, and even a dance a thon." "We have Girls on the Run, Chess Club, and Writer's Block." "We have the sixth grade party at the end of the year." "There is a dance towards the end of the year that is a family dance for all grades." "There was a PTA event in the Fall that was a Fall Festival."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"There are a lot of school activities during the day and after school that students can be together." "We have so many after-school activities."

Data suggest that students and staff interact through a number of yearly school-wide events and activities. For example, the sixth grade students have an end-of-the-year party, and there is a school-wide family dance each year as well. Students also participate in a school-wide field day. "Our field day is all centered around the Crocs Creed and academics so it's not your traditional field day," Mr. White explained. The physical education in charge of organizing the field day explained, "Every year, we do different themed Field Days—Academic Field Day, A Trip to Our Nation's Capitol Field Day, CROCS Creed Field Day, etc. Our Field Day stations emphasize more cooperative, less competitive activities with the mottos 'If you had fun, you've won!' and 'No child left on their behind.' In addition, parents volunteer at each station and all of the teachers give out Croc Stock to students and classes that show any of the six Crocs Creed characteristics during Field Day.

Teachers also create special programs with their classrooms by grade level and they then share these programs with the whole school. For example, fifth grade students participated in a medieval day and fourth grade organized a colonial day and the entire school had an opportunity to visit and participate in the activities. Mr. White also explained that each year the school has a staff and student basketball game with sixth graders where other grade levels can watch the game. "The scoring is made so that sixth graders receive 3 points for a basket, adults only get 1 point. Eventually we stop keeping score and just have fun," Mr. White explained. The study school even also has a few teachers who play in the student advanced band for fun. Interviewees also discussed a yearly school-wide pep rally to celebrate the character qualities and to encourage contact and a sense of belonging. Teachers create skits that demonstrate the character qualities and the students "love it," exclaimed Mr. White. The music teacher also teaches the students a Crocs Creed chant and song that they sing at the pep rally as well.

While some school-wide events are held annually, Dr. Smith stated that she does not believe in having a lot of annual events. "I try to avoid annual events and instead let each year unravel. I think it keeps things fresh and keeps us from being on automatic pilot. I believe in letting teachers follow their passions and interests each year." For example, this year Franklin held a Literacy Night which was a student and parent event that celebrated student reading, writing, and art through interactive activities and presentations of student work and also taught parents how to develop student literacy skills at home. Teacher B concurred, "We try to do different activities and keep everything fresh and new. We always try to change it up and not do the same thing every year. Even if we have continual activities, we change it enough to keep it fresh and different which keeps the students interested."

Question 4D: What Are the Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Regular Contact?

Similarities and differences in the perceptions of caring were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. Table 23 summarizes the average response of item two on student contact: Students exclude those who are different (reversed) was identified in the methodology to reflect perception of student contact. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parents. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p) under Levene's Test is less than 0.05, there is a significant difference between the variances.

Table 23

Response to Item 2: Student Contact

	Staff	Parents			
Survey Items in Subscale 1B:	**Mean**	**Mean**	**t**	**df**	**p**
2. Students exclude those who are different**	3.32	3.64	-2.21	111.47	.029

**Items are reversed scored

The parent mean for students exclude those who are different (reversed) was .32 points higher than the staff mean (t=-2.21, p=.029) Parents perceive that students include those who are different more than staff perceive students include others.

Similarities of qualitative data confirm that structures are in place to provide students opportunities for students to interact with each other and to develop relationships that extend beyond the classroom. Examples such as the buddy program, mentoring program, Helping Hands, Girls on the Run, Chess Club, and Writer's block are all activities that were reported to provide students with time to interact together. Additional similarities reported to support student contact included yearly school-wide events that provided students opportunities to interact with students and teachers informally and formally. Other than the differences reported in the survey, no additional differences were noted.

In summary, data indicated that the study school provided opportunities for students to interact with each other and to develop caring relationships through school-wide activities and programs during and after school. In addition, interviewees concurred that teachers promote regular contact by participating in school functions outside of the workday.

Question 3E: What Evidence Is There That Shared Governance Is Present in the Selected School?

Schools that operate as communities encourage students to take an active role in school and classroom governance (Solomon et al., 2000; Watkins, 2005). The following are data gathered to provide evidence if regular contact is present within the selected school. The following sub-question was identified in the literature review as evidence indicative of regular contact in a school:

1. How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning, and decision-making?

The following are data gathered to provide evidence on how shared governance is present in the selected school. Table 24 presents common themes of data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, journals, and parent survey comments

in response to the research question. Table 25 presents common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support the research question, "How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning, and decision-making?"

Table 24

Shared Governance Common Themes of Data

Questions	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Journal/Document Review Data	Parent Survey Responses
Evidence of Shared Governance	SCA (n=>5) Student voting (n=3) Helping Hands (n=4) Student Voice (n=2) Class Meetings (n=>5)	Cooperative Paintings (n=1) Safety Patrols (n=2) SCA (n=>5) Class Meetings (n=2)	—

Note. Dash indicates no data was reported

Table 25

Shared Governance Sub-Question 1 Sample Responses

Shared Governance Sub-Question 1	Comments Supporting the Sub-Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"Everything is voted on." "We own this school. We as in our teachers, staff, students and community." "We also have the SCA and student elects their representatives." "We have the SCA and patrols." "Most of it is through the SCA." "Students have buy-in by creating their own classroom rules and the students help create those rules to have a sense of community." "We do online voting for SCA." "We've really put an emphasis on class meetings and morning's meetings." "We encourage, but not yet require, teachers to have morning meetings."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"We have a group of SCA officers that plan out the entire year from activities to service projects." "Everyone makes classroom decision making differently." "Some of the teachers hold classroom meetings every day."

Evidence suggests most of school-wide decision making by students occurs through the Student Council Association (SCA). The SCA is a student governing body run by elected student leaders who work with a teacher sponsor to learn about democracy and leadership. Teacher A explained, "We have a group of SCA officers that plan out the entire year from activities to service projects and they are really involved in the school." The SCA selects and organizes collections for charity organizations or homeless programs. For example, recently students collected canned good for a homeless shelter and gifts for families in need during the holiday season. "We try to spread out our student leadership so that it's not all the same kids. If they are selected [to be] a [school safety] patrol, they cannot run on SCA," Dr. Smith explained. Student safety patrols assume posts throughout the school, on the bus, and at crosswalks to ensure the safety of fellow students during arrival and dismissal. Students who run for SCA, but are not elected become school ambassadors where they serve as tour guides during special events, Open House, and Back to School night.

Interview data confirmed students are encouraged to make decisions and to have a voice. For example, Franklin promotes service learning opportunities (teachable, relevant, and real life experiences) for all students. Each month, the SCA officers determine what service project the school will participate in. Most recently, the school had a coin drive to help those affected by the Haitian earthquake and raised over $1,500.

Students were also actively involved in many of the decisions about the school prior to its opening. Dr. Smith explained, "We started holding meetings with the community before the school was even built." Administration met with the community and with the students separately. The community determined the school name and the students voted for their school mascot and named their mascots. Students also voted to name the fish in their pond. "We own this school. We, as in teachers, staff, students, and community," Dr. Smith reflected.

The Helping Hands program is another opportunity for students to be involved in the decision making. The purpose of Helping Hands is for students to learn that they have the power to make a difference. The advisors let the students plan and execute their chosen activity and then they provide time afterwards to reflect and celebrate their achievements. "Students enjoy the ownership," Dr. Smith explained. "They have the power to make the difference by planning and executing a project and they learn to cooperate with each other and respect each other's opinions."

In addition to having student ownership in rule-making in the school, the administrators encourage, but do not require, classroom teachers to have morning meetings. Data supported this expectation. "[Morning meetings] is an expectation, but it's not currently mandated," Mr. White explained. Teacher A agreed, "Some of the teachers hold classroom meetings every day." By having morning meetings, Dr. Smith explained, "Students have an opportunity to provide input on decision making and discuss concerns." Mr. White added, "The expectation is that during the morning meetings, teachers are discussing the six character qualities of the Crocs Creed," Mr. White explained. "[Morning Meetings] gives the kids an opportunity to share if they have a concern," Mr. Geer explained. He noted that "The teachers who have class meetings and have developed a culture in the class where the Crocs Creed is the core, virtually have no office discipline referrals. Even when the students are not meeting as a class, the culture of the classroom is surrounded by the Crocs Creed." Teacher D explained the process of her morning meetings,

> Somewhere along the way, I read about middle school students having a class meeting referred to as Circle of Power and Respect (CPR). I figured if it's good for the older kids, it's good for Room 100. I also really loved the philosophy behind it. When kids enter my room each year, they usually have to be trained to face each other in a circle and relate to each other in a respectful, open way. We practice for several weeks how to make "I" statements and address problems. CPR is also a place where we can address "class" issues or just talk about news we want to share. I often find this empowers the kids the most—the attention they might not otherwise [receive] is given to them at that moment.
>
> We also have emergency CPR meetings occasionally – I can call these or a student can. These usually address an issue that really can't wait until our regularly scheduled meetings. During our meetings, someone starts talking, but we don't raise hands or anything – we just talk when there is an opening. There have been many emotions in these meetings: anger, hurt feelings, embarrassment, tears, laughter, and giggles. We have it all and deal with it all.

Through all of these opportunities, "[Students] have a voice. I think [they] feel like they're part of the community," acknowledged Mr. Geer. Teacher A agreed, "We're trying to empower them to do more, communicate, and be leaders." For example, "This morning a sixth

grade student is having students sign a petition during bus arrival to have the sixth grade basketball game rescheduled since it was canceled because of snow." I think they see that we're open to what they are doing and that they have a voice," Mr. Geer explained.

Question 4E: What Are the Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Shared Governance?

Similarities and differences in the perceptions of sense of belonging were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. Table 26 provides a summary of responses to the Subscale 1C, Shaping of their Environment that make up a SCCP-II. Table 27 provides a closer look at the items within the subscale. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parents. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p) under Levene's Test is less than 0.05, there is a significant difference between the variances.

Table 26

Responses to Overall Subscale: Shaping of Their Environment

	Staff	Parents
Survey Subscale:	**Mean**	**Mean**
1C: Perceptions of students' shaping of their environment	3.90	4.17

Table 27 summarizes the average responses of each group to the seven survey items making up Subscale 1B, Shaping of their Environment. On the seven items within Subscale 1C the parents' responded to the all the items more positively than the staff. Parent responses differed significantly from staff responses on three of the nine items within Subscale 1C. No significant differences existed with regard to the other six questions. The parent mean for students help to improve the school was .43 points higher than the staff mean (t=3.196, p=.002). Parents thought that students helped to improve the school more than the staff thought students helped to improve the school. The parent mean for students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats was .33 points higher than the staff mean (t=2.456, p=.015). Parents thought students resolve threats without fighting, insults, or threats more than staff thought students resolved threats. Finally, the parent mean for students are involved in helping to solve school problems was .45 points higher than the staff mean (t=.59, p=.012). Parents thought that students are involved in helping to solve school problems more than staff thought students helped to solve problems.

Table 27

Detailed Survey Items on Subscale: Shaping the Environment

Survey Items in Subscale 1C:	Staff Mean	Parents Mean	t	df	p
6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it	4.07	4.15	.567	212	.571
8. Students try to get other students to follow school rules	4.24	4.30	.491	213	.624
11. Students help to improve the school	4.01	4.44	3.49	207	.001
14. Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students	4.11	4.26	1.197	211	.233
19. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats	3.99	4.32	2.456	215	.015
22. When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it	3.48	3.69	1.300	178	.195
25. Students are involved in helping to solve school problems	3.59	4.05	2.569	111	.012

Similarities in the qualitative data confirm that structures are in place to provide students opportunities for students to take an active role in school and classroom governance. Through active participation in the SCA and the Helping Hands program, data supports that students are working collaboratively to make decisions. One difference identified in the data was that some, but not all classrooms hold class meetings that provide students opportunities to have a say in the classroom. Evidence from the parent survey also indicated that each classroom is inconsistent. As a parent reflected on the survey, "It is not as consistent within classrooms as I'd like to see…and it changes year to year depending on the teacher." Another parent added, "[The student's sense of community] var[ies] from teacher to teacher. I would like to see all of the teachers spend time building community and classroom spirit/teamwork."

In summary, schools that operate as communities encourage students to take an active role in school governance. Through the SCA, morning meetings and programs such as the Helping Hands, data reveals that the study school encourages students to have a voice in classroom, school-wide planning, and decision-making.

Question 3F: What Evidence Is There That Order and Discipline is Present in the Selected School?

In schools that students perceive of as a community, order and discipline is an essential component. Research indicates that clear, reasonable rules that are fairly and consistently enforced promote an SOC among students. The following data were gathered to provide evidence if regular contact is present within the selected school. The following sub-questions were identified in the literature review as evidence indicative of regular contact in a school:

1. What does the school do to make students feel safe?
2. How are students involved in rule-making in the classroom?
3. Describe the school's discipline plan?
4. How is the school discipline plan enforced?

The following are data gathered to provide information on how order and discipline is present in the selected school. Observational, interview, and document review data suggests school safety is as an overriding priority at Franklin. Table 28 presents common themes of data that emerged from the administrator interviews, focus group, document review, journals, and parent survey comments in response to the research question.

Table 28

Order and Discipline Common Data Themes

Questions	Interviews/Focus Group Responses	Journal/Document Review Data	Parent Survey Responses
Evidence of Order and Discipline	Crocs Creed (n=>5) Safety (n=3) Classroom rules (n=3) Class Meetings (n=4) Crocs Blocks (n=1) School-wide discipline plan (n=2) Teacher and administrator support (n=2) Positive Behavior Support (n=4)	Praise and reinforcement (n=2) Crocs Creed (n=>5) Crocs Blocks (n=2) School-wide discipline plan (n=2) Teacher Advisory Committee (n=2) Child Study Team (n=1) Positive Behavior Support (n=2)	Crocs Creed (n=>5) Safe (n=3)

Observational and interview data supported the assertion that there is also a sense of order to the school and discipline. "Students are orderly in the building and the building is organized," Teacher C noted. According to Mr. White and a review of documents, during the

first year of the school's opening, without a character education program in place, the school reported 16 suspensions. As it enters its seventh year, Franklin reported 9 suspensions, a reduction of 44%. The first year Franklin reported 146 office referrals compared to last year's 59, a reduction of 60% since implementation of the Crocs Creed.

According to the Crocs Creed handbook, teachers are encouraged to have students practice routines until habits are firmly established, and to allow time at the end of the school day to require children to leave their desks and workstations clean and for general housekeeping. The Croc's Creed committee of teachers reported that these behaviors contribute to desired school behavior and an orderly way of working. Students were observed being orderly following the "Crocs on the Move" behavior expectations outlined in the Crocs Creed handbook by moving quietly, in a single, straight line and stopping at the Crocs Crossings in the hallway. These Crocs Crossings are posted throughout the building and are named in accordance with the character qualities: Honest Alley, Responsibility Road, Safe Circle, Respectful Road, Kind Way, Cooperative Way, Croc court, and Christy Court and Cosmo Court, named after the school mascots.

During lunch, students were observed following the Crocs Creed table manners and following the arrival and dismissal procedures and food line procedures outlined in the Crocs Creed Handbook. These specific behaviors include:

1) Proceed in a single line through the cafeteria to the food line.

2) Be safe and use an inside voice.

3) Show respect and be polite.

4) Be prepared.

Students were also observed following the Crocs Blocks Cafeteria Program which is also outlined in the Crocs Creed Handbook. The Crocs Blocks Program is a variation of the Crocs Creed school behavior plan designed specifically for the cafeteria. There are four colored squares taped to each cafeteria table. Each square represents expected behaviors in the cafeteria (Respect, Responsible, Safe, and Cooperative). Cafeteria hostesses and other staff members can place a black square on one of the squares if the cafeteria rules are not being followed at a particular table. A staff member explained, "When teachers arrive to pick up their class, if they see any of their tables that have a black square on a square (the color will identify the behavior problem), the teacher will know if their class was or was not following the Crocs Creed." If no squares are

covered, then the class did a good job following the Crocs Blocks rules and expected behaviors, and students can earn a class Croc Stock from the teacher.

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 1: What Does the School Do to Make Students Feel Safe? Table 29 presents common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support the question, "What does the school do to make students feel safe?"

Table 29

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 1

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 1	Comments Supporting the Sub-Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"It starts in the classroom by having them make their own rules on what makes a safe classroom in the classroom so that's one piece of it." "The second piece of it is the Crocs Creed." "Our Crocs Creed is big because the values we chose encompass safety." "All areas that you would see for discipline or safety is weaved into our Crocs Creed behavior expectations." "I think partly its Crocs Creed and talking about safety and the expectations and following through on those expectations."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"We talk about safety." "We go out to the playground and talk about all of the safety on the playground." "I can't tell you how much I use these [Croc Creed] key words [including safety] during the day." "I think the number one thing is that they feel safe." "The first thing I always say is that I will make sure they are safe." "Students are orderly in the building and the building is organized." "They know the rules and expectations and it creates a safe environment." "There is a routine." There is a sense of safety if you do the same thing day after day." "Everyone feels safe from the moment they walk in the door."

Observational and interview data confirmed that student safety is a priority. "Everyone feels safe from the moment they walk in the door," Teacher C explained. "The first thing I always say is that I will make sure [the students] are safe," Teacher A added. Safety begins at the entrance of Franklin. All visitors and volunteers are required to sign in at the school office and to leave photo identification which can be picked up as the visitor signs out. A visitor was observed being challenged by school personnel for not displaying the visitor badge issued at the office. Interviewees agreed that "[Student safety] starts in the classroom by having [students] make their own rules. Students have buy-in by creating their own classroom rules…and a sense of safety through their daily interactions," Mr. White explained. "They know the rules and expectations and it creates a safe environment," Teacher A agreed.

Interviewees concurred that students feel safe through the use of the Crocs Creed. "I can't tell you how much I use the [Croc Creed] key words [including safety] during the day," reflected Teacher A. "Our Crocs Creed is big because the values we chose encompass safety. All areas that you would see for discipline or safety is weaved into our Crocs Creed behavior expectations," Mr. White explained. He added, "I think the number one thing is that they feel safe."

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 2: How Are Students Involved in Rule-Making in the Classroom? Table 30 presents common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support the question, "How are students involved in rule-making in the classroom?"

Observational data confirmed that individual classroom rules were posted in all five of the classrooms observed. According to Franklin's staff handbook, teachers are asked to set standards of student behavior and routines. Mr. White elaborated that by having students create their own classroom rules, "They develop the culture of their classroom." Teacher D concurred, "Students are always treated respectfully, which begins with the class creating a set of Class Expectations—this includes what they expect of themselves, each other and of me as their teacher. Then, "[Our Class Expectations] are posted for the entire year and are essentially our classroom rules."

Interviewees agreed that some teachers are holding class meetings to involve students in rule-making. Mr. Geer explained, "We've really put an emphasis on class meetings and morning's meetings…so that kids can have a voice. Usually through [these meetings] they talk

about the class rules, expectations, and give the kids an opportunity to share if they have a concern." Mr. White stressed the importance of morning meetings, "[Students need to] have opportunities to have input on decision making and discuss concerns."

Table 30

Order and Discipline Sub-Question Sample Responses

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 2	Comments Supporting the Sub-Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We've really put an emphasis on class meetings and morning's meetings."
	"We encourage, but not yet require, teachers to have morning meetings where students have opportunities to have input on decision making and discuss concerns."
	"Students have buy-in by creating their own classroom rules and the students help create those rules to have a sense of community."
	"[Students] develop the culture of their classroom [by making their own rules]."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"Students are always treated respectfully, which begins with the class creating a set of Class Expectations—this includes what they expect of themselves, each other, and of me as their teacher."
	"[The rules] are posted for the entire year and are essentially our version of class rules."
	"Some of the teachers hold classroom meetings every day."

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 3: Describe the School's Discipline Plan

Table 31 presents common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support the question, "Describe the school's discipline plan."

The interviewees concurred that the school does not have a set discipline plan and instead the school has "Steps we follow in terms of talking to an administrator," Mr. Geer explained. Teacher A agreed, "There are consequences, but we really don't have a set discipline plan." Mr. Geer explained, "When a child comes to the office, we ask teachers to make sure that they have tried a variety of things."

Table 31

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 3 Sample Responses

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 3	Comments Supporting the Sub-Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We look at each child individually and treat them as such."
	"We have things that we follow in steps that we follow in terms of talking to an administrator."
	"When a child comes to the office, we ask teachers to make sure that they have tried a variety of things before coming to the office."
	"I think having a specific discipline plan would be tough for us in the way that we do things."
	"[Dr. Smith] takes every situation and person differently so I think we handle each situation uniquely based on the student and teacher."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"There are consequences, but we really don't have a set discipline plan."
	"If anyone hurts someone, then that is an automatic office referral."
	"We also have a guideline of consequences to follow.'

The negative consequences at Franklin that the interviewees are referring to for student misbehavior are a set of sequential steps that teachers are encouraged to take before referring a student to the office. These steps are outlined in the Crocs Creed Handbook for staff (Table 32). The purpose of Level 4 Personal Reflection is to give the student some time to refocus their behavior and take a "time-out" from the escalating situation. This reflection time can take place in a designated area in the teacher's room or in another teacher's room that has been agreed upon in advance.

Observational and document review data supported evidence of another type of discipline plan for student misconduct in the cafeteria. In additional to the general sequential steps for misbehavior, there are also steps outlined in the Crocs Creed handbook and displayed in the cafeteria for what to do when a single student is not following the Crocs Creed behavior in the cafeteria (Table 33). Students were observed showing positive behavior during lunch.

Table 32

General Sequential Steps for Misbehavior

Step	Actions
1	Nonverbal Cues (gestures, picture cues, proximity)
2	Verbal Class Reminder (Calm, gentle reminder of rules and consequences)
3	Individual Reminder (Calm, firm reminder of rules and consequences)
4	Personal Reflection Time (Time in or out of class to refocus student's behavior. Student should be thinking about what rule they were breaking, what influenced them to make a poor choice, and how they can fix the problem. This process will require adult intervention to help guide the student through developmentally appropriate moments of reflection.)
5	Home Contact (Phone call, letter, or e-mail)
6	Office Referral (Certain behaviors warrant immediate office referral)

Table 33

Cafeteria Sequential Steps for Misbehavior

Step	Actions
1	Reminder to the class or individual
2	Move student to a different seat within class tables
3	Solo lunch at the thinking person's table
4	Take lunch to the office.

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 4: How Is the School Discipline Plan Enforced? Table 34 presents common responses from the administration, focus group interviews, and teacher's journal that support the question, "How is the School Discipline Plan Enforced?"

Table 34

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 4 Sample Responses

Order and Discipline Sub-Question 4	Comments Supporting the Sub-Question
	Administrator Interviews
	"We deal with the behaviors within Teachers Advisory Team (TAT) and child study."
	"We look at the student and what triggers the behaviors."
	"A lot of dialogue is going on in this school [about student behavior].
	"We respond as quickly as we can, but I would say discipline is based on that student and situation."
	"What consequence a kindergarten receives for showing their hinny is different than what a sixth grader would receive."
	Focus Group and Journal
	"We try to take care of [issues] in the classrooms."
	"The more you have to pull in the administration, the more you lose your effectiveness as a teacher."
	"I usually will have the kids try to solve it themselves and everybody is about the same thing. "
	"If it's safety driven, the administration is always involved and quick to act."
	"I rarely send a student to the office for a discipline matter—I just think they respond better to me because of the relationship we have developed together."
	"The administration looks at each child individually."
	"We also have TAT and can get strategies there to help students."

Interviewees report and a review of documents confirmed that teachers are encouraged to handle disturbances in their classroom and discipline is primarily enforced through the teacher. Teacher A explained, "[The administration and I] do a lot of consultation about concerns I have with kids and we'll problem solve together," but teachers are asked to handle most situations in the classroom. As one parent reflected, "I've only once had an issue between one of my children and another student. The issue was resolved by their teacher the next day and they've been friends ever since." The staff handbook specifies that by using the administrative staff for less than severe disruptions, the teacher's individual discipline plan becomes less effective. Teacher A cautioned, "The more you have to pull in the administration, the more you lose your effectiveness as a teacher." And Teacher D agreed, "I rarely send a student to the office for a

discipline matter—I just think they respond better to me because of the relationship we have developed together."

Interview data unanimously agreed that when the administration handles disciplinary issues, each situation is handled individually and the administration does not follow a set of guidelines for discipline. The administration noted that while there are outlined levels of consequences for student misbehavior, they "don't really have a set discipline plan," according to Mr. Geer. For example, the consequence a Kindergartner receives is different than what a sixth grader would receive for doing the same misconduct. Mr. Geer explained, "[We take] every situation and person differently so I think we handle each situation uniquely based on the student and teacher." Mr. White concurred, "We do not take the traditional approach of 'if you do this again, you'll get suspended.' Instead we look at the student and what triggers the behaviors." Dr. Smith added, "We look at each child individually and treat them as such." Teacher A concurred, "The administration looks at each child individually." Mr. White explained how they address student discipline.

> We take a very unorthodox approach in addition to addressing an incident. We look at the student and what triggers the behaviors. The administration has the historical approach since we've been with these families since the beginning and that is huge because that carries with us from year to year because we've been working with these kids. It's not an automatic suspension if a kid gets into a fist fight. We…look at the [child's] history, the damage [that occurred] and the parents. There is a lot goes into that and we take time to look at it from an educational standpoint because in the end is about getting them ready for middle school. It's not just that particular event that will satisfy the thirst of discipline. By sending them home with a suspension so that they can stay home to play their video games, is not the answer. We've already tried that and it doesn't work. If we send them home, what is that going to accomplish? Our history and data says that doesn't work. [We ask teachers], 'So what are we going to do about it?' There is a lot of talking going on [about students].

Dr. Smith added, "Sometimes we [even] consult with the parents in determining the consequences. We have built trust and relationships with our parents in order to do that." Mr. White explained how the administration has the benefit of having a historical approach since

they've been with the families since the building opened. "Because we know our students and families, the administration has an opportunity to build relationships with them that they may not have been able to do otherwise."

In addition to discussing behavior concerns with administration, data suggests that Franklin has additional supports for teachers to talk to other teachers about student behavior concerns. Mr. White explained that they also have a TAT where teachers work with each other among their grade level to discuss student academics and behaviors and to problem solve those issues. Teacher A concurred, "We also have TAT and get strategies there to help students." In a review of documents, if the TAT team has exhausted their ideas or options for a student, then that child can be referred to the Child Study team which involves more adults and specialists who can provide assistance with the issue.

Question 4F: What Are the Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Order and Discipline?

*S*imilarities and differences in the perceptions of caring were analyzed using inferential statistics and the review of qualitative data. Table 35 summarizes the average response of item 19 on order and discipline: Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats. An Independent Sample t-test was used to check whether there were significant differences between the means of the staff and the parents. Levene's Test was used to test the assumption of equality of variances. If the significance (p) under Levene's Test is less than 0.05, there is a significant difference between the variances.

Table 35

Response to Item 1: Order and Discipline

	Staff	Parents			
Survey Items in Subscale 1C:	**Mean**	**Mean**	**t**	**df**	**p**
19. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats	3.99	4.32	2.456	215	.015

The parent mean for students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats was .33 points higher than the staff mean (t=2.456, p=.015). Parents thought students resolve threats without fighting, insults, or threats more than staff thought students resolved threats. Similarities in the perceptions of student sense of order and discipline is supported in the qualitative data. In addition, data reported similar views that sense of order and discipline is taught and expected

through the Crocs Creed program, positive behavior is rewarded through the Crocs Creed program, and sequential steps for misbehavior is expected from the administration. Again, one difference identified in the data was that some, but not all classrooms hold class meetings that provide students opportunities to have students create their own rules and resolve conflicts.

In summary, research suggests that clear, reasonable rules that are fairly and consistently enforced promote an SOC among students. Data reveals evidence of order and discipline at the study school. While Franklin does not have a set discipline plan; instead, it has a set of sequential steps for teachers to follow for student misbehavior. Data also reveals that students are involved in rule-making in the classroom and most discipline is enforced by the classroom teacher.

<center>Summary of Findings</center>

This mixed methods study was used to describe one elementary school that reports a student's SOC. The researcher examined the key characteristics of a school's program to increase our understanding of school conditions that support an SOC among students. The study was designed to develop a rich, detailed description of the school and to identify themes related to the following study dimensions: respect, trust, and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline.

The principal, assistant principal, teachers, staff members, and parents gave their perceptions concerning the ways the school supports a student's SOC. Interviews, observations, surveys, and review of documents were data collection methods using to describe the selected school. The results of this study and the review of literature revealed the attributes that seem to contribute to creating a students' SOC in an elementary school which includes: consistency, administrative support, a strong character education program, whole school commitment, and the presence of the collective key characteristics identified in research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school.

A discussion of the findings and how conclusions were drawn from the data is discussed in Chapter 5. In addition, limitations of the study, implications, and suggestions for future research are given.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Summary

The purpose of this study is to explore, analyze, and describe characteristics of an elementary school that reports a high SOC among students and to describe adult perceptions on the school's program, activities, and practices that are in place to contribute to the SOC. A mixed methods approach was used to utilize the benefits from both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The study used a staff and parent survey, interviews, document reviews, and observations, to investigate parent, staff, and administration perceptions of the students' SOC. Data triangulation supported the hypothesis that a school that has an SOC demonstrates the key characteristics identified in the literature review – student respect, trust and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline within a school's program.

Schools that provide a high SOC appear to have certain collective key characteristics that have been identified in the research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school. The following overall research questions focus this study:

1. How does an elementary school identified as having a strong SOC support its students' SOC?

2. What are the administrator, teacher, and parent perceptions of why the students have a SOC within the selected elementary school?

3. What evidence is there that these six key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) are present within the selected elementary school?

4. What similarities and differences are seen between the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and parents regarding these key characteristics (respect, trust, and kindness; a sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline) within the selected elementary school?

The results presented in this study both confirm and add to the research findings previously described in the review of literature. A discussion of the findings from the data is

discussed. In addition, limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations for future research studies is given.

<div align="center">Findings</div>

The 12 findings reported in this chapter are based on data collected from the principal, assistant principals, teachers, staff members, parents, observations, and a review of documents conducted during the months of November 2009 through February 2010. The researcher believes that the first four findings which relate to the pivotal role of the school character education program and the strength of the administrator's leadership, are the most important components to the students' sense of community.

<div align="center">Finding 1: Character Education Program Supports Students' SOC</div>

Research literature indicates that there are a number of isolated interventions aimed at developing an SOC through a character education program. Schools with fully-implemented character education programs experience greater improvement in perceived character-driven behaviors (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). In schools where there is an SOC, it is a shared feeling that is created by recognizing positive performance, contributions of individual members, and the acceptance of everyone (Beck, 1994; McMillan and Chavis, 1986). The data gathered in this study indicated that the character education program is paramount in the development of the school's SOC. Findings suggest that the Crocs Creed program at the selected elementary school creates a caring community through positive recognition; the teaching of the six core values: responsibility; respect; cooperation; safety; honesty; and kindness in the classroom; through school-wide activities, and parental involvement.

Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data gathering process regarding the school's character education program influencing the students' SOC included the following examples:

- "The Croc's Creed [is an] excellent tool that helps promote good citizenship among students. Good behavior is modeled and incorporated into all aspects of the environment."
- "Franklin is not just a school; it is a safe home, a safe haven, and an investment in their lives; one that will be everlasting."
- "Our Crocs Creed program is instrumental in the development of our students' sense of community."

Finding 2: Whole School Commitment to Character Education

A priority identified in the literature review is for a school to be committed to character education and to model and teach it in actions and words. The core virtues of the school should be integrated into the curriculum and daily life of the school (Stein & Burger, 1999). Sergiovanni (1994) views communities as schools where administrators, teachers, and students learn and live together dedicated to knowing themselves and others. The data gathered in this study indicated that the whole school commitment to the character education program is equally important in the development of the school's SOC. Surveys, interview, observation data, and document review reveal that the administration, staff, parents, and students are committed to their character education program and supporting a student's SOC.

An analysis of the data revealed that whole school buy-in and commitment is critical for the success of the character education program and students' SOC. "The ownership is to the whole building," Mr. White explained. "Our students, staff and parents are committed to supporting the Crocs Creed," Mr. White concurred. Whole school commitment was communicated through the interviews, surveys, and observations. This involvement was demonstrated through: (a) administration; (b) teachers and staff; (c) students; and (d) parents.

First, the administration's involvement and dedication to the school and program is essential to the development of the student's SOC. Two of the three administrators have been at Franklin since its opening and "That's a huge piece because we're selling the same program," Mr. White reflected. The focus group concurred that the principal is instrumental in developing the students' SOC. Through common expectations and consistent communication, staff, students, and parents know what to expect and the vision of the school.

Second, evidence also suggests that Franklin teachers and staff are also fully committed to the Crocs Creed program and students' SOC. From teachers to bus drivers, the entire school is dedicated to the Crocs Creed program and supporting students' SOC. The staff has helped instill the Crocs Creed character qualities that are as important as the students' academics. As one parent noted, "[The] amazing staff have helped instill such important qualities of being kind to others, helping those in need in our community, and respecting people, places, and property." Teacher B concurred, "Everyone is supportive of the [Crocs Creed]."

Third, the perceptions of the teachers, administrators, and parents are that students are equally committed to the Crocs Creed program. Data indicated that students find the school's

character education program meaningful. As one staff member indicated, students "love…being caught doing something kind, responsible, respectful, cooperative, honest, and safe" and they are proud to be students at Franklin. New students learn about the Crocs Creed program through a welcome lunch with the counselors and administration. Teacher A explained how new students "Want to jump on the bandwagon" and be part of the school. The Crocs Creed virtues are taught through teacher and guidance counselor lessons, the yearly school-wide pep rally and reinforced daily through student and staff interactions.

Finally, the administrators, teachers, and staff perceptions are that parents are also dedicated to using the program at home and are knowledgeable of the character education program. This is evident in the parent survey's comments about the Crocs Creed. For example, as one parent wrote, "The reinforcement of positive behavior with the use of a common vocabulary has increased clear behavior expectations for our school." Another parent reflected, "There is a great school-to-home-connection." Parents learn about the program through the principal and staff newsletters, as well as parent meeting devoted to informing the community about the program. Data suggests parents are eager to support the Crocs Creed program and can relate to the Crocs Creed core values: responsibility, respect, cooperative, safety, honesty, and kindness.

Finding 3: Consistency of Character Education Program

A common agenda of activities and traditions that links students, teachers, and administrators together supports a students' SOC (Beck, 1994l; McMillan and Chavis, 1986). A high level of coherence across classrooms, grade levels, and varied school contexts is a priority. Findings suggest that the Crocs Creed program is everywhere in the school and it is a common language that everyone uses. The data gathered in this study indicated that consistency is also extremely important in the development of the school's SOC. Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data gathering process regarding consistency included the following examples:

- From observations of students signing off the news show saying the Crocs Creed, to monthly themed guidance lessons, students are taught the core virtues: responsible, respectful, cooperative, safe, honest, and kind in and out of school.
- Students are hearing the Crocs Creed language at home, on the school bus, and at school.
- "Wherever [the students] walk, [they] will find the Crocs Creed."

- "It's consistency. Everyone in the building is using the same verbiage over and over again."

Finding 4: Pivotal Role of the Principal

The data gathered in this study indicated that the principal's leadership is vital in the development of the school's vision and SOC. Wendell, Hoke and Joekel (1994) surveyed 70 outstanding middle school administrators and found an administration's ability to create the students' SOC was essential for a successful school operation. The principal's actions impact the schools' SOC and any effort to support a student's SOC must begin with the principal. The principal sets the vision of the school. A shared vision uniting teachers, parents, and students is a best practice for schools with an SOC (Boyer, 1995).Wendell, Hoke and Joekel (1994) found an administration's ability to create the students' SOC was essential for successful school operation. Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data gathering process regarding the principal's role in support the student's SOC included the following examples:

- The focus group reflected that the principal has been instrumental in developing the students' SOC.
- The principal communicates high expectations to ensure that all stakeholders have the same values in the school community.
- The principal communicates the school's vision with all stakeholders through newsletters, assembly programs, and PTA meetings to promote a student's SOC.

Finding 5: Effective Hiring Practices

One of the most important parts of an educational administrator's job is putting the best people possible in the classroom. The teacher must be personally committed to fostering a sense of community at school and know how to translate this vision into the classroom. The data gathered in the study indicated that the principal's hiring practices is pivotal to creating an environment conducive to developing the students' SOC. Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data gathering process regarding the principal's hiring practices included the following examples:

- The principal hires only staff members willing to commit to the school's character education program, and provides training about the Crocs Creed to newly hired teachers.

- The school is hiring teachers who are willing to go above and beyond, invest in their students, and connect with the community.
- The school hires teachers who are learners and are committed to students.

<div align="center">Finding 6: Evidence of Common Activities</div>

Common community-building activities link students and teachers and help foster new traditions and the students' SOC (Schaps, 2003). Bateman (2002) found that schools that had the highest rate of SOC reported a range of school-wide activities, such as spirit squads, assemblies, and student councils. Data confirmed that Franklin has a number of activities that support a student's SOC. These activities involve students, teachers and staff, such as the school-wide pep rally, sixth grade basketball game, field day, PTA events and before- and after-school activities, such as the Helping Hands, Writer's Block, Chess Club, and Girls on the Run. The activities Franklin offers confirmed Schap's research finding that "School-wide activities help educators make significant changes in norms, practices, routines, and policies" (2003). Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data gathering process regarding the principal's leadership included a number of examples of common activities. "There are a lot of school activities during the day and after school that students can be together," a teacher explained.

<div align="center">Finding 7: Evidence of Respect, Trust, and Kindness</div>

The data gathered in this study supported the conceptual framework identified in the literature review relating to respect, trust, and kindness. Literature indicates by experiencing community, students are often more respectful, trusting, and kind to peers and others (Watkins, 2005; Hayes, 1996). Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data process that supported evidence of respect, trust, and kindness included the following examples:
- "Students are taught to be respectful, trusting, and kind through the Crocs Creed program and related activities."
- "[We] teach those characters [respect, trust, and kindness] through the Crocs Creed."
- One of the School Improvement Plan's goals is to focus on the Respect character quality.
- Parents and staff responded positively to the survey question, "Students treat classmates with respect"

<div align="center">Finding 8: Evidence of a Sense of Belonging</div>

The data gathered is this study supported the conceptual framework identified in the literature review relating to students' sense of belonging. Research specifies that the school's

SOC can be reflected in its ceremonies and the accomplishments it recognizes. Evidence that repeatedly surfaced regarding the students' sense of belonging includes the following examples:

- Croc Stock is given to students to recognize student success and positive behavior.
- Students are recognized for being successful through the Distinguishing Student Award and ceremony.
- The shared rituals unite students to the school that creates a sense of belonging to something of value.
- "[My child] would rather be at school than home," a parent reflected.

Finding 9: Evidence of Caring

The data gathered is this study supported the conceptual framework identified in the literature review relating to caring. Literature indicates a defining element to a students' sense of community is the feeling that they are cared for. Students care for their classmates and are also cared for. Caring is evident in schools with an SOC in the actions teachers take in providing assistance with students who are struggling. An analysis of the data revealed that the staff created a caring environment. Care for students was unanimously communicated through the interviews, surveys, and observations. Based on the data analysis, the sense of caring demonstrated at the study school, contributed to the student's SOC. There are many aspects of the school that made it caring environment including the following examples:

- The Helping Hands Program creates wonderful opportunities for students to form special caring connections with other student
- Students are encouraged to care for others through monthly service learning opportunities
- Teachers identify at-risk students and provide a supportive mentoring program
- Supports are in place for teachers, such as the Teacher Advisory Team and Child Study Team to provide resources and strategies for teachers to use to support students.

Finding 10: Evidence of Regular Contact

The data gathered in this study supported the conceptual framework identified in the literature review relating to regular contact. Research suggests that schools that provide ample opportunities for students to interact with each other and opportunities to develop relationships are necessary for supporting a student's SOC (Driscoll, 1995; Watkins, 2005). Franklin is dedicated to providing opportunities for students to interact during the day inside and outside their classroom, as well as beyond the normal school day. The way in which the activities are

structured provides students an opportunity to get to know each other, as well as benefit socially and academically. Franklin provides opportunities for teachers and staff to interact with students informally to promote relationships beyond the classroom. Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data process regarding the opportunities for student interaction included the following examples:

- Student activities, such as Girls on the Run, Chess Club, Book Club, and Writer's Block encourage regular contact between students and adults.
- School-wide events, such as the pep rally, end-of-the-year party, and PTA gatherings also encourage regular contact between teachers, students, and parents.
- A buddy program establishes relationships with the older and younger students.
- Teachers, staff, and administrators are visible during the school day and often attend after-school activities and events.

<div align="center">Finding 11: Evidence of Shared Governance</div>

The data gathered is this study supported the conceptual framework identified in the literature review relating to shared governance. Schools that operate as communities encourage students to take an active role in school and classroom governance (Solomon et al., 2000; Watkins, 2005). To build a community at school, students must be part of the process. It's up to the school and teachers to structure experiences for students to have an opportunity to contribute to the school community. Aspects of the school that encourage shared governance that repeatedly surfaced in the data included the following examples:

- Most decision making is done by the school's Student Council and decisions are voted on.
- Many of Franklin's teachers hold regular class discussions where students have opportunities to discuss concerns, issues, and opinions.
- The Helping Hands program encourages students to have an active role in decision making and to form relationships with each other.

<div align="center">Finding 12: Evidence of Order and Discipline</div>

The data gathered in this study supported the conceptual framework identified in the literature review relating to order and discipline. Research suggests that order and discipline is an essential component to an SOC. Clear, reasonable rules that are fair and consistently enforced

promote an SOC among students (Purkey & Smith, 1993). Evidence that repeatedly surfaced during the data process regarding student order and discipline included the following examples:

- Student order and discipline is taught through the Crocs Creed.
- One of the character qualities taught through the Crocs Creed is safety.
- Franklin has documented a significant 60% decline in suspensions and discipline referrals since inception of the Crocs Creed.
- Students are rewarded for positive behavior through the Crocs Creed.
- Staff and teachers have been informed of expectations of order and discipline and sequential steps are in place for handling student misbehavior.

Limitations

As Sergiovanni (2004, p.5) warned, "There is no recipe for community building." With that in mind, care should be taken in interpreting the findings. Since only one school was thoroughly studied and the survey was completed by 23% of parents and 84% of staff, care should be taken in not generalizing the results to all elementary schools. The following are additional limitations of this study:

1. The study sample was limited by the willingness of the respondents to complete the surveys. Respondents for the School as a Caring Profile II Survey were selected from among those who volunteered to participate. This aspect has to be considered when analyzing the data from the study because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected their participation in the survey.

2. The initial 12 schools surveyed were based on the perceptions of the Positive Behavior Support Specialist of the school district. The person may have a tainted perception of the school's SOC or may have used ineffective criteria in identifying the initial pool of schools.

3. The study school is a relatively new school and the administration had a unique opportunity to hire all of their school staff. While the school's practices could be useful to many, schools that are not already staffed or fully staffed have to take the uniqueness of the study school in account while seeking to establish or further develop a SOC.

4. Data were collected in the form of survey responses, focus group, interviews, observations, and document review from teachers, parents, and administrators, but not from students. The study limits the inquiry to the perceptions of the students' SOC, and

the ability to evaluate the accuracy of the administrator, teacher, and parent perspective of the students' SOC is limited.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

Lewis, Schaps and Watson (1997) stated that community in the classroom exists when students feel that they are personally known and respected, when they have a voice in decision making and planning, and when they feel that fellow students not only care about them, but also their learning. Research specifies that teacher practices impact students' SOC. The researcher recommends two classroom strategies for to improving students' SOC at the case study school: (a) regular class meetings; and (b) school-wide buddy programs.

An instructional strategy research identifies the use of class meetings as building students' sense of belonging. Regular class meetings encourage prosocial values, shared commitment to each other, and build a students' SOC (Bryant, 1999). At Franklin, administrators and teachers reported that some, but not all classroom teachers, hold regular class meetings. Parents indicated on the survey that classrooms are inconsistent in supporting the students' SOC. To further strengthen the students' SOC and to improve consistency between classrooms, the researcher recommends that all classroom teachers hold regular class meetings. By providing students an opportunity to have a voice, the teachers can further develop the students' SOC. Teachers can further support each child in establishing membership in the class while continuing to develop a classroom community and culture.

Second, while Franklin currently matches some students with buddies, the practice is not in place for all grades. The researcher recommends Franklin expand the school's current program to a school-wide program where every student is matched with a buddy. Research indicates a buddy system that matches younger students with an older student contributes to a student's sense of community (Osterman, 2000). Positive gains in self-concept, behavior, and academics were attributed to opportunities to support cross-aged activities (Maher, 1984).

<div align="center">Implications for Future Practice</div>

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following implications for practice:

1. Since buy-in by all stakeholders is crucial for success in a program such as this, schools trying to increase students' SOC should incorporate strategies, such as Franklin's hiring practices, open communications, and school-wide collaboration that Franklin has

established to get all stakeholders on board to support the program as they move forward with their efforts.

2. Schools trying to increase their SOC should consider the critical role the principal plays in establishing the climate in the school. The principal is influential in affecting the students' SOC. Principals can positively influence the students' SOC and the climate of their schools can contribute to the students' SOC in the following ways:

   - Set the tone for the students' SOC by hiring teachers who are willing to commit to the character education program and support positive behavior.

   - Be highly visible throughout the school and make concerted efforts to involve parents in the students' school lives and create a strong sense of school community.

   - Establish high expectations for students and staff to treat each other with the character identified traits, such as: responsibility, respect, cooperation, honesty, kindness, and safety.

   - Clearly articulate the vision of a student's SOC to the staff, students, and community.

3. Schools that wish to support students' SOC should create opportunities to support students through the key characteristics of community: respect, trust, and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline. Schools can implement the programs and activities that the study school implemented to develop students' SOC.

4. Schools that wish to support their students' SOC should create a school-wide character education program that is implemented throughout the school and supported at home, which identifies core character traits that are valued by the school and community, such as the Crocs Creed values: responsibility, respect, cooperation, honesty, kindness, and safety. Schools can replicate the approaches and strategies used in the study school that supported the students' SOC.

5. Higher-education institutions should provide prospective teachers with experiences in building caring classroom communities and positive character traits among their students.

6. The conceptual framework from this study was developed by the researcher based on an extensive literature review and was used to examine and analyze the school's SOC. The

six measures – respect, trust and kindness; sense of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline, were used to understand and examine the multiple factors that define students' SOC (Figure 5). This conceptual framework contributes to the research on students' SOC and can provide a foundation for further research and exploration of a variety of topics relating to the students' SOC.

Figure 5

Theoretical Framework
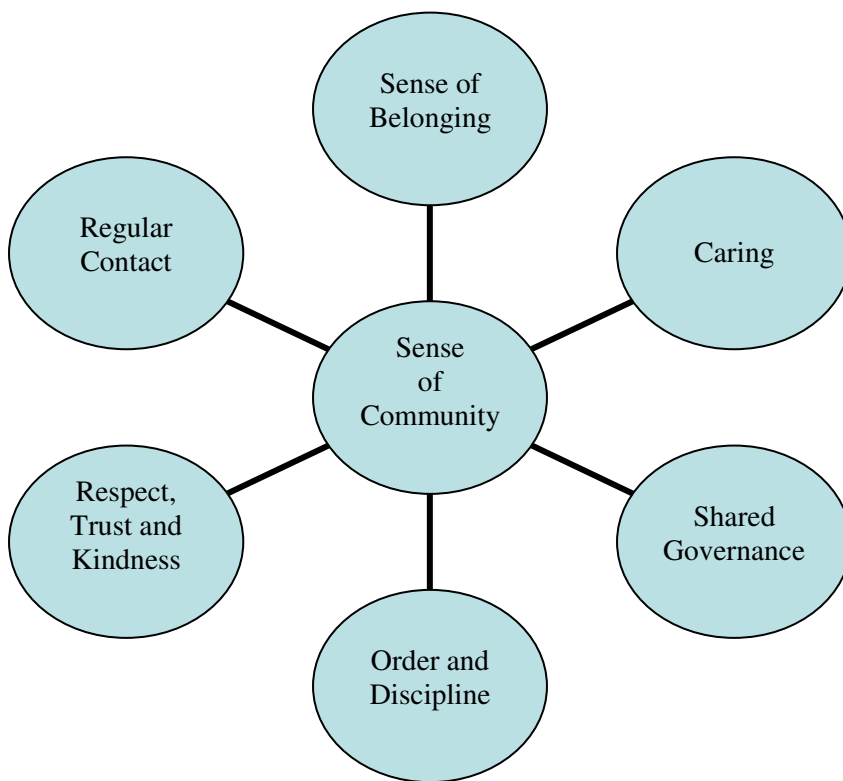
Recommendations for Future Research

The study provided a rich, detailed description of the qualities of an elementary school that reports a strong students' SOC. Though the data provided some details and answers regarding the practices of supporting a student's SOC, it raised other questions for further research. Suggestions for further research would include the following:

1. Principals' beliefs, opinions, and values influence the school's administrative practice. This study did not look into a detailed description of Franklin principal's administrative

practices and leadership style. Future studies could investigate the principals' beliefs, opinions, values, and leadership style and their impact on a character education program.

2. Future researchers may want to replicate the study in a middle or high school to provide additional information on practices that support a student's SOC in those learning environments.

3. This study was conducted at one Pre-K-6 school with a small sample size. The study's design could be used to investigate stakeholder's perspectives of a student's SOC in different geographical locations, as well as broaden the participants to give a broader perspective of the perceptions of students' SOC.

4. Research establishes that the students' SOC has important implications for school success. Studies in selected schools that report a SOC could examine the relationship between student academics and the students' SOC.

5. Research studies have shown that students who experience their school as a community enjoy school more, are more actively engaged, motivated, and less disruptive. Studies in selected schools that report a SOC could examine the relationship between student behavior and the students' SOC.

Conclusion

This study confirmed the findings from the literature review which identified the common themes of a school's SOC with respect to the six dimensions: (a) respect, trust, and kindness; (b) sense of belonging; (c) caring; (d) regular contact; (e) shared governance; and (f) order and discipline.

Schaps (2003) stated that having supportive relationships among stakeholders, having common purposes and ideals, providing opportunities for students to do service, to work together, and to have some decision making are important to building community. This study supports Schaps' findings in that all of these elements were found to contribute to Franklin's SOC.

The results of this study showed that Franklin's study participants have positive views of the students' SOC. The results of this study and the review of literature reveal the attributes that appear to contribute to creating a student's SOC in an elementary school: consistency, administrative support, a strong character education program, whole school commitment, and the collective key characteristics identified in research literature: respect, trust, and kindness; a sense

of belonging; caring; regular contact; shared governance; and order and discipline among the students of the school.

Schools that wish to improve their learning environment can use this study's design to investigate stakeholders' perceptions of their students' SOC. The research will provide the schools with information on areas where they can make improvements. If needed, schools may want to consider using a robust character education program such as the Crocs Creed to help them create a students' SOC. Many children today are lonely and less connected with their schools, adults, and their families (Sergiovanni, 1994). It is pertinent that schools expand ways to support their students' SOC.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Study: Teacher, Parent and Administrator Perceptions of Students' Sense of Community in One Elementary School
Investigators: John Eller and Kelly Sheers

Purpose of this Project:
The purpose of this study is to explore, analyze and describe characteristics of an elementary school that reports a high sense on community among students and to describe adult perceptions on the school's program, activities and practices that are in place to contribute to the SOC. The teachers, staff and administrators will be included in the study. Information gained from the study will be made available to assist schools in understanding the program's characteristics that may influence a student's sense of community.

Procedures:
The following activities will take place to complete the study: staff survey, an interview with the school administrators, a focus group interview; observations of the school day before, during and after school, and a review of documents. The school administrator's interviews is expected to be from forty-five to sixty minutes in length; the focus group interviews is expected to be from one to two hours in one session for staff and parents. Copies of the interviews and transcriptions will be shared with the interviewees. The observations will be unobtrusive to the learning environment. They staff survey will be voluntary and will ask no more that twenty multiple choice and open-ended questions.

Risks
There are expected to be minimal risks to the participants of this study. Staff members who do not wish to participate may opt-out of the process.

Benefits:
There is no guarantee benefits associated with this study. A student's sense of community has appeared consistently in discussion of effective schools and the direct benefit of studying the characteristics of a school's program that reports a sense of community can benefit the school as well as other principal's in schools by learning more about the a school's sense of community.

Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
Pseudonyms will be used to preserve the confidentiality of the participants. The principal interview and focus group interview will be taped recorded in order to have accurate transcriptions. These tapes will be stored at home of the investigator during the data collection, given to the committee chair to store for 5 years, and destroyed at the end of the study. Transcriptions will be shared with the principal and focus groups to determine accuracy.

Compensation
There is no compensation with participation of this study.

Freedom of Withdrawal
Any participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Subjects Responsibility
I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:
Complete the interview
Complete the survey

Subject Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____
Subject Name

_____ Date_____
Subject signature

Kelly Sheers (703) 531-4000 klsheers@hotmail.com
Investigator

John Eller (703) 538-8496 jeller@vt.edu
Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

VirginiaTech

DATE: May 15, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Eller
          Kelly Sheers

          Approval date: 5/14/2009
          Continuing Review Due Date:4/29/2010
FROM: David M. Moore   Expiration Date: 5/13/2010

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Approval:** "Teacher, Parent, and Administrator Perceptions of
          Students' Sense of Community in One Elementary School" , IRB # 09-337

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for
expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110.
As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a
period of 12 months, effective May 14, 2009.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research
    activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and
    investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated
    without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent
    immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events
    involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data
    analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration
    date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing
    review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's
    responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as
    closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and
    data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate
    apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Important:
If you are conducting **federally funded non-exempt research**, please send the applicable OSP/grant
proposal to the IRB office, once available. OSP funds may not be released until the IRB has
compared and found consistent the proposal and related IRB applicaton.

cc: File

Invent the Future

APPENDIX C

DISTRICT CONTACT LETTER

August 1, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy studies at Virginia Tech. I am conducting research for my dissertation. The purpose of my study is to examine the key characteristics of a school's program that reports a sense of community among students. I am respectfully requesting your permission to conduct research in school district.

For this research, I propose to survey staff members at 12 elementary schools in the school district. One school will be selected for a case study based on their survey response.

Findings of the study will be presented as a case study and individual participants will not be identified. I am enclosing a copy of the survey for your review. I have also enclosed a copy of my Informed Consent Protocol, a copy of my prospectus, a copy of the application submitted to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct research. It is my intent to begin conducting the research in May of this year.

I believe the results of this research will benefit the school district, specifically the school that is chosen for the case study, by providing data that will support and enhance the importance of a sense of community among students. At the conclusion of the study, I will provide the school district with a final copy of the study results.

Feel free to contact me via e-mail at Kelly.Sheers@hotmail.com if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Kelly Sheers

INFORMATIONAL LETTER TO POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT SPECIALIST

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy studies at Virginia Tech. I am conducting research for my dissertation. The purpose of my study is to examine the key characteristics of a school's program that reports a high sense of community among students. A sense of community is defined as a student's feeling of being known by, accepted, valued by, and having influence with their teachers and classmates.

The study has been approved by the district's research committee to conduct research in the school district.

I am respectfully requesting your assistance identifying twelve elementary schools in that you feel has a high sense of community among students. Once identified, the 12 elementary schools will be asked to complete a 25-question survey. I am enclosing a copy of the survey for your review. The school that responds the most positively to the survey will be selected for my study.

There appears to be a consensus among educators that a positive classroom and school environment promotes character development and is conducive to academic achievement. This can be achieved through the concept of community. While the value of building community in schools is becoming widely recognized; many schools feel ill-equipped in building a students sense of community. I believe the results of this research will benefit the school district by providing data that will support, enhance and inform schools on the program qualities of a school that reports a high sense of community among students.

A school that is perceived to have a high sense of community among students displays the following six characteristics identified in a review of recent research. Please consider the following when making your recommendations:

Regular Contact
- Ample opportunities for students to interact with each other and develop relationships.

Shared Governance
- Encourage students to take an active role in school and classroom governance.

Order and Discipline
- Safe environment with clear, reasonable rules that are fairly and consistently reinforced.

Sense of Belonging
- Shared emotional connection within the group that provides a sense of identity and a feeling that one is part of the group

Caring

- Relations among teachers and students are personal that goes beyond the boundaries of formal classrooms.

Respect, Trust and Kindness
- Schools create a climate of respect, trust and kindness by establishing a school community in which students feel comfortable and at home.

At the conclusion of the study, I will provide the school district with a final copy of the study results. Findings of the study will be presented as a case study and individual participants will not be identified. I would be happy to sit down with you to review your individual school's survey data as well as share the information gained from the study.

I have enclosed a nomination form for your convenience with a self-addressed envelope. Feel contact me via e-mail at Klsheers@hotmail.com if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Kelly Sheers

APPENDIX E

INFORMATION LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Dear Principals,

PBS along with the district's Research Committee is actively supporting another research study to determine its effects of the perceptions of teachers, staff, and administration. Select schools that scored at the maintenance level based upon the 2008-09 implementation data are being asked to participate.

The study consists of two phases with the initial phase requiring the completion on an electronic survey that serves as a screener. The second phase requires the school with the most positive results to serve as a case study. At this site, more in depth knowledge about the practices implemented will be collected (e.g., interviews with the administration, conversations with a selected focus group, observations and a review of school artifacts, parent survey). The principal and other participants will need to agree to participate. As part of data collection for PBS, we are studying the perceptions of teachers, staff and administration in selected schools in the district. Your school has been selected to participate in this study.

Below is a link to the survey to be disseminated to your staff. We are hopeful for 100% participation. The 25-question survey should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete and should be completed by no later than Friday, November 13.

What follows is a description that can be copied and pasted in your email to staff for your convenience:

> *Teachers and Staff,*
> *As part of data collection for PBS, PBS along with FCPS Research Committee is supporting a research study that is evaluating g the perceptions of teachers, staff and administration in selected schools. Our school has been selected to participate in this study. Below is a link to the survey and we are hopeful for 100% participation. The 25-question survey should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete and should be completed by no later than Friday, November 13. Please click on the link below to access the survey*
> *http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=G5UBzDm2P0nw8Yub_2ffIpmQ_3d_3d*
>
> *Your participation is valuable and is greatly appreciated. Thank you very much for your time and response.*

Your school's participation in this research effort is greatly appreciated. Feel free to contact me via e-mail at Kelly.Sheers@hotmail.com if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

APPENDIX F

SCHOOL AS A CARING COMMUNITY PROFILE II SURVEY

Choose one: (1) Administrator (2) Teacher (3) Staff (4) Other _____

Please choose the appropriate number that describes how frequently you observe the following behaviors in your school.	**Almost Never**	**Sometimes**	**As often as not**	**Frequently**	**Almost always**
1. Students treat classmates with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students exclude those who are different (e.g., belong to a different race, religion, or culture).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Students respect the personal property of others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends. 1	1	2	3	4	5
6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize or they do something nice).	1	2	3	4	5
7. Students show respect for school property (such as desks, walls, bathrooms, busses, buildings, and grounds).	1	2	3	4	5
8. Students try to get other students to follow school rules.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, aides, and bus drivers).	1	2	3	4	5
10 Students work well together.	1	2	3	4	5
11 Students help to improve the school.	1	2	3	4	5
12 Students are disrespectful toward their teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
13 Students help new students feel accepted.	1	2	3	4	5
14 Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students.	1	2	3	4	5
15 Students pick on other students.	1	2	3	4	5
16 Students are willing to forgive each other.	1	2	3	4	5
17 Students show poor sportsmanship.	1	2	3	4	5
18 Students are patient with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
19 Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	1	2	3	4	5
20 Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates.	1	2	3	4	5
21 Students listen to each other in class discussions	1	2	3	4	5
22 When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it.	1	2	3	4	5
23 Students refrain from put-downs (negative, hurtful comments).	1	2	3	4	5
24 Students share what they have with others.	1	2	3	4	5
25 Students are involved in helping to solve school problems.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX G

INFORMATIONAL LETTER TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Dear Teachers and Parents,

Recently our staff took a PBS survey and of the ten schools surveyed and our school responded the most positively on the School as a Caring Community Profile and has been selected to participate in a case study.

Kelly Sheers is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy studies at Virginia Tech and assistant principal at Haycock Elementary in FCPS and will be the researcher for the case study.

The purpose of the study is to examine the key characteristics of a school's program that reports a sense of community among students and to increase our understanding of school conditions that supports a sense of community among students.

Kelly plans to explore, analyze and describe the characteristics of Franklin and describe the adult perceptions on the school's program, activities and practices that are in place to support a students' sense of community. To do this, she will conduct two focus group interviews with a randomly selected group of staff members, complete some observations of school-wide events (PTA meeting, student arrival and dismissal, class changes, etc), review school artifacts (newsletters, staff handbooks, SIP, etc.) and survey the parent community to deepen her understanding of Franklin.

Her study has been approved by our school district. Findings of the study will be presented as a case study and Franklin and individual participants will not be identified.

Feel free to contact Kelly via e-mail at klsheers@hotmail.com if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

School Principal

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Date of Observation: _____   Activity: _____

DIMENSIONS	OBSERVATIONS
Respect, Trust and Kindness • Student interactions • Student responses to situations • Lessons/Activities • Conflict resolution	
Sense of Belonging • Shared activities • Recognition of positive behavior • Student recognition	
Caring • Connected to staff and others • Programs to assist students • Teacher involvement	
Regular Contact • Staff/student interactions • Opportunities for regular contact • Contact in and outside school day • Classroom/school activities	
Shared Governance • Student involvement in decision making and day-to-day operations • Class meetings	
Order and Discipline • Student behavior • Discipline Plan • Enforcement of rules	
Other	

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Physical Setting
- What is the physical environment like?
- What is the school design?
- How is the space allocated?
- What resources are in the setting?

The Participants
- How many adults and students are in the building?
- What is their parent involvement like?

Activities and Interactions
- How do the adults/students interact with the activity and with one another?
- How are the adults/students and activity connected or interrelated?
- What norms or rules structure the activities and interactions?
- When did the activity begin?
- How long does it last?
- Is it a typical activity, or unusual?
- How involved are the adults/students?
- How do the adults/students respond?

Conversations
- What is the content of conversations in this setting?

Other Factors
- What nonverbal communication such as dress and physical space is observed?

APPENDIX J

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am interested in studying the characteristics of your school's program and how you support a student's sense of community. A series of questions will be asked to assist with understanding the characteristics of the student's sense of community.

I will be recording our interview in order to have an accurate transcription. You will be provided a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy.

1. How long have you been an administrator of this school?
2. Some people think a school should be a community. What is your idea of being a school community?
3. Do you feel that your school creates a sense of community among students? If so, how?

Respect, Trust and Kindness
- Are students taught respect, trust and kindness? How?

Sense of Belonging
1. What activities or programs are in place to encourage students to get to know each other?
2. How do you recognize student's positive behavior and successes?

Caring
- Are there any programs in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?
- Who do the students go to if they have a concern or problem?

Regular Contact
- Do teachers attend school functions outside of the workday?
- What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another both informally and formally?

Shared Governance
- How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning and decision-making?

Order and Discipline
- What does the school do to make students feel safe?
- How are students involved in rule making in the classroom?
- Describe the school's discipline plan?
- How is the school discipline plan enforced?

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

        I am interested in studying the characteristics of your school's program and how you support a student's sense of community. A series of questions will be asked to assist with understanding the characteristics of the student's sense of community.

        I will be recording our interview in order to have an accurate transcription. You will be provided a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy.

1. How long have you been an administrator of this school?
2. Some people think a school should be a community. What is your idea of being a school community?
3. Do you feel that your school creates a sense of community among students? If so, how?

Respect, Trust and Kindness
- Are students taught respect, trust and kindness? How?

Sense of Belonging
- What activities or programs are in place to encourage students to get to know each other?
- How do you recognize student's positive behavior and successes?

Caring
- Are there any programs in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?
- Who do the students go to if they have a concern or problem?

Regular Contact
- Do teachers attend school functions outside of the workday?
- What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another both informally and formally?

Shared Governance
- How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning and decision-making?

Order and Discipline
- What does the school do to make students feel safe?
- How are students involved in rule making in the classroom?
- Describe the school's discipline plan?
- How is the school discipline plan enforced?

APPENDIX L

DOCUMENT REVIEW GUIDE

Document: _____   Date: _____

DIMENSIONS	COMMENTS
Respect, Trust and Kindness	
Sense of Belonging	
Caring	
Regular Contact	
Shared Governance	
Order and Discipline	
Other	

APPENDIX M

DOCUMENT REVIEW CHECKLIST

DOCUMENT	DATE(S) REVIEWED	COMMENTS
School Handbook		
Parent Handbook		
Principal Newsletters		
School Letters		
Staff Communication		
School Improvement Plan		
PTA Communications		

Staff Blackboard Sites		
Classroom Schedules		
Student Work		
Lesson Plans		
Other		

JOURNAL ENTRY FORM

JOURNAL ENTRY # _____   DATE: _____

Please consider the week's activities you that observed in and out of classrooms that would promote to a students sense of community. When reflecting on the week, please also consider what activities, events, or procedures you observed that promoted the following:
- Students sense of community
- Student shared governance
- Student order and discipline
- Students feel that the belong
- Students are cared for
- Student climate of respect, trust and kindness

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- Heartville—When I lived in New York, teaching in a Brooklyn classroom, I decided to call me classroom this. It seemed very "southern" to me, and since I am a native Tennessean, it eased some of my yearnings for the south. This was very popular in New York. Eventually, it became my trademark, and students enjoyed saying they were a part of Heartville. We worked hard at creating a "small town" feel in the room, and at that time, class meetings weren't a central part of my classroom. When I began teaching in Scarsdale, NY, I actually received a professionally made metal sign from the parents that reads: Heartville, Mayor: Julie Heart, population 24. Pretty clever. At the time it didn't bother me that I was the mayor of my world. I began having class meetings on a regular basis, and this all created a cohesive classroom community. I then moved to Virginia, and the sign followed me. I think it's one of the things my current principal liked about me—the town thing. My first few years here in the county, I was Heartville, and the kids loved it. My students were even being referred to as Heartonites by some of the specialists in the building. We were a real community and the name worked. Then, one day, I walked up to my classroom door and the metal sign that hung outside my door hit a nerve with me: It was completely egocentric—not student-centric. It was all about me, and I didn't want my classroom to be all about me.
- Room 100—After the "sign" incident, as I refer to it now, I discussed my concerns with my students at the time. Although most of them wanted to be Heartville out of tradition, some understood where I was coming from and they appreciated it. We then officially renamed our classroom Room 100, and the kids became the Kids in Room 100. This seemed to be what we were really about. It fit the times.

APPENDIX P

JOURNAL ENTRY 2

- CPR—Somewhere along the way, I read about middle school students having a class meeting referred to as Circle of Power and Respect. I figured if it's good for the older kids, it's good for Room 100. I also really loved the philosophy behind it. When kids enter my room each year, they usually have to be trained to face each other in a circle and relate to each other in a respectful, open way. We practice for several weeks how to make "I" statements and address problems. CPR is also a place where we can address "class" issues or just talk about news we want to share. I often find this empowers the kids the most—the attention they might not otherwise is given to them at that moment. We also have emergency CPR meetings occasionally---I can call these or a student can. These usually address an issue that really can't wait until our regularly scheduled meetings. During our meetings, someone starts talking, but we don't raise hands or anything—we just talk when there is an opening. There have been many emotions in these meetings: anger, hurt feelings, embarrassment, tears, laughter and giggles. We have it all and deal with it all. The key, I have found, is being a totally engaged teacher/leader with this meeting. I am the facilitator and mediator.

- Crocs Creed—Besides our school wide initiative of promoting character qualities, we also promote them in the classroom on our own developmental level. Each month, during CPR meetings, we discuss what each character quality looks like in fifth grade. In the beginning of the year, we actually spent time brainstorming these qualities so that the kids knew it was still important and relevant. I have found that kids in the upper grades really respond to earning Class Croc Stocks. For every 25 my class earns (this is separate from individual earnings), we have Breakfast with Board Games. They love this! I also think this really promotes my community/team model within Room 10.

- Discipline—Students are always treated respectfully, which begins with the class creating a set if Class Expectations—this includes what they expect of themselves, each other and of me as their teacher. These are posted for the entire year and are essentially our version of class rules. We remind each other of these expectations on a regular basis during CPR meetings. On the rare occasion that there is a problem, students sign The Book. This is a reflection log for the class—a student will sign his/her name, the rule broken or expectation not met, and then write down how to fix the problem. We agreed when school began that one signature in The Book would be a warning, two signatures, a note in the child's assignment notebook, and three signatures means a call home to parents. More often than not, I have the student call the parents. I believe in working out issues whenever possible with the student before parents are called in. I think this lends itself to building a respectful, trusting relationship between us. I rarely send a student to the office for a discipline matter—I just think they respond better to me because of the relationship we have developed together. I have also found that the kids are much harder on themselves than I could ever be, so usually all I need to do is talk privately with a student or address an issue in CPR. As far as reminders of expectations, students are reminded of the right things to do with croc stocks and in my room, Compliment forms. Kids and I fill them out for each other all the time---I might compliment a student on his great behavior during a lesson—especially if this isn't always the case. I might compliment a student on how he/she handled a problem with another peer. These really help us promote the positive behaviors we expect. I have had a few students who might need something different to get headed on the right path. For example, I have a student who needed his dad to make a surprise visit to his son during school—during a lesson. After exhausting all my tricks, this was all I had left. Well, that lasted a month, we were doing great, and then he got way off track again. This time, his dad and I decided he needed a bigger shock, so during dinner one night, I showed up in his kitchen. He almost fell out of his chair. After a long talk at his table, I left. The next day, he came in and handed me a letter—thanking me for caring enough about him to show up at his house. It

was great and he is now on track. Keep your fingers crossed!   This, combined with all the other things I have in place, is key to the success I have had in the classroom. Expectations are high and clear—for students and for me.

APPENDIX R

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW DATA

Background	Over 25 years of experience as a school principal. Has been a principal in a number of elementary schools in Northern Virginia. Background in Special Education. Principal of Franklin for 7 years, since opening.
How does your school build a sense of community among students?	Our Crocs Creed program is instrumental in the development of our students' sense of community. All of our youngsters are into the Crocs Creed. For example, a group of fifth grade students decided it would be fun to create and write a Crocstitution. That is revealing about what the students think about the Crocs Creed program. Being a new school has helped the program, however in my previous school, we had a similar approach and it was equally effective. I came here with a clear vision on how to set up an effective and successful program. Our Crocs Creed committee is instrumental in the sustainability of the program. Teachers can sign up at the beginning of the year to be part the committee. The core teachers that developed the program have remained on the committee. Our PBS coach is instrumental in the leadership of the committee. He is our PE teacher as well. I see our specialists a critical faculty members and vital to our Crocs Creed program. They have relationships with all of our youngsters and have a whole school perspective. The first year we didn't have anything and we had a lot of discipline issues in and out of the classroom. After the first year, teachers were motivated to do something about it. We met in the summer and developed the Crocs Creed program. Developing ownership of the program with the staff is key to the success of the program. I don't believe in Character Counts. It's a waste of money and time because it's uniform. We had rich discussions in developing the Crocs Creed and it represents the values of our teachers and community. We also had parents who served on the committee when developing the program. We were primed for it from our first year because of all of the student misbehavior. We spent purposeful time identifying our behavior expectations in all aspects of the school. From bathroom behavior to walking in the hallway, we look at all areas of the school and we talk everything out. I'm from Seattle where I believe it's a very different culture of consensus building. I'm not your traditional Virginia Principal. I build ownership and consensus in everything I do. Not everyone likes my approach, but it works and we're successful. We have a lot of teacher leadership thanks to the fact that we got to hire all of our teachers. We have a lot of big fishes, but it's amazing. They're a lot like the Coy in our pond. You give them food and they all rush up to get some and then swim off to eat. If we throw out an idea to our staff, they take it and try it out. It's not like that in all schools. We don't have much turnover mainly because I think the teachers find it a professionally stimulating environment because

	of their colleagues. Everyone is willing to work with each other on new things and ideas.
What is your idea of being a school community?	The students love coming to school and are proud of their school. The biggest compliment is for our students to have wonderful memories and be proud to be students at our school. I hope for them to form lasting relationships. Our ultimate goal is that they internalize our values and reflect those values when no one is watching and they're not getting a Croc Stock. We know we're doing a good job if they are successful in secondary school.
How is a PBS program different than what you have now?	That is a good question. A PBS program is very standard. They provide you with a lot of suggestions on implementation, but the program addresses uniformity. What is paramount to our program is that it is customized for our community, teachers and student's needs. I received my education from the University of Washington and PBS has its roots there. PBS is grounded in every decision being made by data. Every decision made by data isn't always pragmatic.
How are students taught Respect, Trust and Kindness?	I think our approach to teaching those characteristics is from our Crocs Creed. We are teaching behaviors that are developmentally appropriate. In Kindergarten, we are teaching respectful behaviors differently than we are in sixth grade. The Crocs Creed is not a reinforcement system, but it helps students recognize behaviors associated with a skill set so when we say, "You are demonstrating respect", it actually means something to them.
What school-wide programs, traditions or events does your school hold yearly?	For the past couple years we start each year with a Crocs Creed assembly. It's a pep rally where teachers perform skits that demonstrate the character qualities. They love it. There is also a song and a chant that our music teacher created and taught the students that they sing as well.
How do you recognize student's success?	We do it in a variety of ways. The Crocs Creed is for character development. We don't have an honor roll. We have a Distinguishing Student award three times a year. It's a big deal. Every teacher nominates one student for anything. Whether it's for keeping their desk clean if that was a goal, completing their homework and turning it in, or Challenge 24. We limit the number of times a student can be nominated so that hopefully by sixth grade a majority of our students have received the award. We have a crocodile costume that is worn and students get their picture taken with the crocodile and parents attend the celebration. Our goal this year is that 60% of our students receive a pin. Sustainability is huge and it always needs to be attended to. We have to have school-wide commitment to the program in order for it to be effective. It begins with the interview process where we

	explain our Crocs Creed program and expectations. If they're not on board with the program, than they are not a match for our school.
What programs are in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?	We have a program called Helping Hands. It targets two groups of students. The first group of youngsters are role models and the second youngsters are students who struggle with social interactions. Some have IEPs. The students are selected and work together. They choose a service project together and complete it. They have written to the military and people in the military came in and talked to the students. The invisible goal is that the students are developing their social skills. The program is successful thanks to our teachers who facilitate the group's activities.
Who do students go to if they have a concern or problem?	The Helping Hands is one place. We also have a Promise Mentor group. It is new this year. It's for at-risk students which we call youngsters with promise. One teacher is matched with one student. Our goal is to develop a relationship with the students who have been identified very carefully. When we identify students, we look at their traditional standardized test scores, but also non traditional things such as tardies, child study recommendations, retentions recommendations, and access to a computer at home. The expectation is that it will be a multi-year mentoring program that will follow the student through [Franklin]. It's also a great way for our preschool teachers to be involved. The piloted it last year. It's a specific program so we wanted to make sure we got it right so we piloted it first before introducing it to the other grade levels. Our reading specialist works as a coach to our mentors. It also requires training our teachers who refer students so that they don't have certain expectations. We have to maintain control of the program and the integrity needs to be identified and uniform.
Do teachers attend school functions outside of the work day, such as PTA events, band concerts, etc.?	I have seen a decline in attendance of after-school activities over the past few years. One event that has a large turnout is the Croc Run. It's a PTA event that a lot of staff members participate in. Our school-wide programs and functions differ every year. I try to avoid annual events and instead let each year unravel. I think it keeps things fresh and keeps us on automatic pilot. We would lose the excitement of if we did. I believe in letting teachers follow their passions and interests each year in deciding what they want to do. This year we are having a Literacy Night where we are teaching parents how to develop literacy skills at home. Each year events evolve into other things. In the past we have had a math night, science night and even a dance-a-thon. That was a lot of fun.
What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another	We have Girls on the Run, Chess Club and Writer's Block. Writer's Block is a program where a group of students meet in the mornings to write. They decide what genre they want to publish in and get together in groups to work on their piece. The culminating activity is when they get together to share their work with families.

both formally and informally?	We have a lot of community involvement and we encourage our families to support the Crocs Creed and student success. At our Back to School Night, I send home a letter describing the Crocs Creed character qualities and the program. At our first PTA meeting, I give a presentation to the parents about the program. I even show them our video that we show students. We have a puppet named Crocky, who demonstrates the character qualities. It's funny and the kids love it.
How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning and decision-making?	Everything is voted on. We started holding meetings with the community before the school was even built. We also had separate meetings with students. The community determined the name of our school and students voted on our mascots and mascot names. We own this school. We as in our teachers, staff, students and community. The sense of owning our school has been huge. Youngsters respect our pond. It's our pond. We make a big deal about it being their school. We also have the SCA and student elect their representatives. We try to spread out our student leadership so that it's not all the same kids. If they are selected as a patrol, they cannot run on the SCA. Students also apply to be a Helping Hands peer role model. We also have Student Ambassadors. The students who run for SCA and are not elected become our ambassadors. They serve as the tour guides of our school during Open House, Back to School night or any other special events. They wear special badges and show people around.
How does the school make students feel safe?	Our Crocs Creed is big because the values we chose encompass safety. All areas that you would see for discipline or safety is weaved into our Crocs Creed behavior expectations. We tend to focus on the positive. You can never take a croc away.
Are students involved in rule making in the classroom and school?	We encourage, but not yet require, teachers to have morning meetings where students have opportunities to have input on decision making and discuss concerns.
Describe the school's discipline plan	Since our first year, we have had a significant decline in suspensions. We track everything each year and keep track of that data to inform our decision making. The administration shares the discipline and our counselors are not involved. Sometimes we consult with the parents in determining the consequences. We have built trust and relationships with our parents in order to do that. What consequence a kindergarten receives for showing their hinny is different than what a sixth grader would receive. I have tried a referral process but found that it's not functional in a school. We look at each child individually and treat them as such.

APPENDIX S

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MR. WHITE, INTERVIEW DATA

Background	Assistant principal at Franklin for 7 years, since opening. Previously taught physical education.
What attributes to the students sense of community?	There are a thousand variables. One of them I can promise you is that administration has been here since day one. Since the day we broke grown, we've been here. That's a huge piece because we're selling the same program since day one. We didn't have anything the first year here and that's quite a story. So that's one piece. Second, the core of the teachers that created the Crocs Creed are still here. So, you also have 100% buy-in because those teachers are still here promoting the program. That's a huge piece. The third thing that I think is a critical piece is that the ownership isn't to the classroom. The ownership is to the whole building. Where ever you walk, you will find the Crocs Creed. The cafeteria, the gymnasium, the hallway, out on the playground. There's that whole sense that it takes a village to raise a child so if someone is acting inappropriate, we all have responsibility to those children.
	We have what is called the Crocs Creed. In the first year, we took half of Monroe Elementary which had 1,200 students and it was too big. They built this school and put half of that school here. You can imagine what 1,200 elementary students look like in the hallway. I know what Lanier was like, I taught there so I know we did a fantastic job, but there's still baulk, so we had inappropriate behaviors. In our first year, we had 16 suspensions and close to 200 referrals to the office. It was just ridiculous. So we pulled 15-20 teachers and we said, "Wow, what do you say about that?" "We got inappropriate behaviors, what do we want to target?" Well, the six words that we decided to focus on were: respectful, responsibility, kind, honest, safe and cooperative. Hence the beginning of the Crocs Creed program and those words have been here since. That is what our key is and we've developed this program and you will find it in every place of the school. New teachers get trained on it and we have a committee that meets throughout the year and also organizes programs for the school. Just two weeks ago we had a school-wide assembly on the Crocs Creed program. Each grade level did a demonstration of one of our character qualities. It's bigger, it's inbred, intertwined throughout our school. Susan and I decided not to bring in a canned program. We wanted to go through the first year without a program so that we could identify the behaviors. Once we knew what the behaviors were, we were able to tackle them and we did that through our program, the Crocs Creed.

How much discipline do you see now?	Our lowest year was 1 suspension and 89 referrals. Last year we had 4 suspensions, so we had a recommitment to the Crocs Creed this year because we also saw the referrals come up. That's why we had the assembly and there were also several changes to the program because you got to evolve with the kids coming in. We also had a change in our population. When we came in we were 53% white. Now were about 45% white. We're now a minority majority so we have to change with the culture.
If you see a student following one of the behaviors, what happens?	If they see students following the Crocs Creed, they receive a Crock Stock. 10 Crock Stocks equal 1 certificate. 2 certificates equal 1 ribbon. 2 ribbons equal a Croc Citizenship Pin. At the awards ceremony they receive a citizenship pin at the end of the year awards ceremony and let me tell you, that is like gold. And we treat it like gold. The administration hand out the ribbons and they get come to the office to get their ribbon. We pin it on them and they wear it all day. You wouldn't think sixth graders would buy into it, but I would say 70-80% of them eat it up. We say that you're preparing the 1st and 2nd graders, so we thank them for being leaders of our school and showing them how to act. They're also book buddies with the first graders so that they can be role models and establish relationships with the younger grades.
Can you explain your buddy program?	We have a preschool buddy program. Third graders go down and read to them. Some teachers buddy with first graders to read to them too to promote leadership among the building. Sixth graders are book buddies with first graders.
What is your idea of being a school community?	Everyone having buy-in with the programs going on in the school. That you develop a sense of culture in the school where everyone understands the expectations that we're looking for. Obviously the end result is to learn. We want children to learn. So we're developing a culture that allows children to learn. In my opinion, from the second they are here, to the second they leave, they are living the Crocs Creed. They are seeing it, doing it, showing it, and living it. The slips are spontaneous. I caught you doing this, you're doing a fantastic job, keep up the good work. It's not a positive reinforcement system.
Do you struggle with teacher buy-in?	No. I struggle with teachers not using it correctly Some try to use it as a positive reinforcement system and it doesn't work as well if it's used in that way. Everyone totally buys-in to it. It's just a matter of using it effectively. We created white slips for the special education students who wouldn't otherwise be able to meet the expectations and we do then use the slips as a positive reinforcement system. It's a little branch off of the original Crocs Creed program, but I don't believe it's as effective as the original system.
How are	We have had assemblies during the past few years to reinforce the Crocs

students taught the Crocs Creed?	Creed. The Six character qualities are taught by their classroom teachers each year at the beginning of the year. Our counselors go into the classrooms and each month is a character. They develop lessons according to those 6 qualities: respectful, responsible, kind, honest, safe, cooperative. So they do it that way and then we have the assemblies. Of course, it's all being reinforced when they get their ribbon award through us. We ask them what are some of the behaviors they are doing to earn the award. And, then of course right to the end of the year they get their citizenship they are talking about it again. The reinforcement is through the teachers, administrators, staff and whole school. Parents have bought into it. We've asked parents to use the six character qualities at home. That they understand them and reinforce them at home.
Do your teachers do morning meetings?	Yes, we're in the process of having all our teachers do morning meetings. It's an expectation, but it's currently not mandatory. But it's moving in that direction. Of course, inappropriate behaviors are discussed in those meetings and it circles around the six character qualities again. So, yes.
What school-wide programs, traditions or events does your school hold yearly?	We had the Crocs Creed school-wide assembly. Our field day is all centered around Crocs Creed and academics so it's not your traditional field day. Its language rich with what the centers look like. We have what is called the distinguished student award three times a year. A kid can earn the award in anything. Meaning the teachers can give them an award for better behavior, Crocs Creed, better in math, better in PE, etc. The definition is up to the teacher and that way everyone has a sense of ownership to getting better at something. It's not just academics. That's been going on for 5 or 6 years now and we invite the parents in for that. It's a sense of community where we're reaching out to all students and not just the academic students. A picture of them is taken with Cosmo, our crocodile and is added to a certificate. It's a winner. It's centered more towards those students who are not necessarily getting the As in academics but what they are doing well in. So, it reaches all students and they're all getting something. We look at it K-6 each year so that the same person isn't getting it each year. 99% of our students by 6th grade receive the award. We have the end of the awards ceremony. We do the student-driven news show. That's all that is coming off the top of my head right now.
What activities or programs are in place to encourage students to get to know each	Well we have the book buddies geared towards 3rd and 4th grade with preschool students. We work horizontally in teams and teachers create programs within grade levels. 5th grade does the medieval day horizontally, but shown to everyone sees it vertically. 4th does a colonial day, but it is shared out to everyone vertically. 6th grade does a party at the end of the year. There

other?	is the staff and student basketball game with 6th graders but it's shared with everyone. The scoring is made that 6th graders receive 3 points for a basket, adults only get 1 point. Eventually we stop keeping score and just have fun.
How is SCA is involved in the school?	They collect money or goods for homeless programs, canned food drive, canned food rive, hat and glove tree. There is a lot of teacher leadership on our SCA. They also do the traditional pajama day, sports day, etc.
How does the school make students feel that they are an important member of the school?	Through the Crocs Creed. It's a big school of 800 but we try to get to know all of the students. From an administration standpoint, we take more of an educational approach rather a punitive approach with discipline. We're in the process of starting a mentoring program. Part of it is behavioral because we want them ready for academics and we can't get them there through a tutoring program. We have to build their self-esteem, got them to believe that this is a safe place to come and that they have friends here. Friends meaning administrators and teachers. So, that's one way that we do that. They're not just numbers here, they're names. 1 to 1 ratio adult to student. We started the program in preschool and we're now moving it into our general education program to address at-risk students.
How many have you identified as at risk?	We over identified 200 to make sure we got everyone and now we're trying to break it down and look less at the academics and more at the behaviors. Some of our students are not just prepared for learning right now so we're taking it one student at a time. Some of this is being headed by our reading teacher.
What programs are in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?	We didn't make AYP for the first time this year. The expectation was that we were going to make it every year. Our first year we were in our 60s and 70s and now we're into the 80s mid 90s. We had 99 last year. And one reason is because we're getting to know who the students are. They're not numbers who failed, but we need to know their names and get to know them. That's why they're on the at-risk list. Teachers know within the first 20-30 days, they know the names of the at-risk students are. Some teachers are doing lunch bunches with students in math. We didn't make in math in our low socioeconomic in math. By 1.8. Administrators do lunch bunches with students, counselors and reading teacher work with students. Not a mentorship program, but keeping a pulse on students. We're developing a mentorship program now. We want to look at students who are struggling and develop a program so that they are open for learning. We need students to want to come to school, where they can get a high five from a teacher, and they're open to learning. It's still in the beginning stages, but we're looking at each student individually and pairing them up with a teacher that is a match.

Who do students go to if they have a concern or problem?	They go to their teachers to talk about their concern. They can go to the administrators. Administrators are always in the cafeteria during lunch time since it's a hot spot for behavior issues. So we're in their every day. Counselors are also in there every day. They can also go to the reading teacher, librarian. Our librarians teach lessons and provide flex time for kids to come in and do research. So, she knows the students. PE, music and art teachers are deeply involved in the Crocs Creed so our kids know them well. Our PE teachers are also the SCA sponsors so they are seen as leaders of the building.
Do teachers attend school functions outside of the work day, such as PTA events, band concerts, etc.?	It's nothing forced down from the administrators. [Dr. Smith] and I truly believe our teachers work very very hard so it's not an expectation that they come to those types of things and that it's their choice. We have 2 or 3 teachers that play in the band and that's their choice. We ask teachers to come to 1 PTA meeting a year so that they can be recognized. Not just so that they can be part of the community, but also be recognized. They can also get a taste of PTA. They do come. It's not 100%, but they come. It's not mandatory though.
How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning and decision-making?	Most of it is through the SCA. Students have buy-in by creating their own classroom rules and the students help create those rules to have a sense of community. They develop the culture of their classroom.
How is leadership among students determined?	We do online voting for SCA. They vote in the POD on computers. The representatives are voted on by the class. Total kid-generated as far as who is involved.
How does the school make students feel safe?	It starts in the classroom by having them make their own rules on what makes a safe classroom in the classroom so that's one piece of it. The second piece of it is the Crocs Creed. You'll see throughout the Crocs Creed is about a sense of safety in the school. Kind is another one that allows children to be safe. If they're being kind to each other, safety sort of ties in to each other. The administration promotes that to the teachers too.
Do you have a school discipline plan? And what is it?	PBS is a part of our school. Level 1, Level 2, Level 3. Red, yellow kids are deep within our school. But, they are kids. When a child comes to the office, we ask teachers to make sure that they have tried a variety of things before coming to the office. Obviously if it's a level 2 or 3 they're coming to the office, they automatically come to the office, we know that. We have TAT team, where teachers work with each other among their grade level. If that doesn't seem to be working, we have a child study which is horizontal. That is part 2 and it has a variety of staff

	members on the team. We also have a local screening, which is separate from those, but we're talking about if we suspect something else, then they go to Local Screening. Otherwise we deal with the behaviors within TAT and child study. This again is where we don't take the traditional approach, "If you do this again, you'll get suspended." Instead we look at the student and what triggers the behaviors. The administration has the historical approach since we've been with these families since the beginning and that is huge because that carries with us from year to year because we've been working with these kids. It's not an automatic suspension if a kid gets into a fist fight. Not that we have fist fights, but we need to look at the children the history, the damage and the parents. There is a lot goes into that and we take time to look at it from an educational standpoint because in the end is about getting them ready for high school or middle school. It's not just that particular event that will satisfy the thirst of discipline. It's about do we have the kids truly prepared for HS and MS. And by sending them home with a suspension so that they can stay home to play their video games, is not the answer. We've already tried that and it doesn't work. Historical data is huge here. We take a very unorthodox approach. If we send them home, what is that going to accomplish? Our history and data says that doesn't work. "So what are we going to do about it?" There is a lot of talking going on. A lot of dialogue is going on in this school. A lot of process-oriented behavior is going on to get to the end product. Teachers struggle with it from time to time.
Can you clarify your TAT team? Who is on it?	It's by grade level. The special education teacher, ESOL teacher, GT teacher, counselor all attend. They meet at minimum weekly and before they talk curriculum in their meetings and part of those meetings have to be for TAT.
What leadership teams do you have?	K-3 Child Study, 4-6 Child study, Language Arts, Math, Crocs Creed Committee – one from every grade level, total of 13 people. We also have the summer Best Practice Team which is all research based. Most schools flex out for math and we do not because we felt that building a culture within the classroom was more important than homogeneous classrooms. The only grade level that flexes out is the 6th grade classrooms because it's more of a middle school model. We feel that we're going to get better results by keeping our kids and differentiate instruction than a homogeneous group of lecture. A lot of dialogue among teachers goes on. We created a program for language arts called LIFE. Soup to nuts on how to teach Language Arts. All research-based. Taken about 4 years to create and it's a phenomenon program. Now we're doing it for Math.
Do you have a lot of teacher turnover?	Not the core. Not K-6. Pros and cons of a process-oriented admin than a product-oriented program. Teachers tend to resent if teachers are told to do something. If teachers have buy-in, it's more successful. Crocs

	Creed was created from scratch. Good size programs over 7 years. Teachers do it on their own time. Weekends, summer, after school, before school. They're fantastic. Administration attends team meetings. We reviewed the crisis plan at each grade level team individually and catered to their individual needs. Our counselors and teachers review the district's Students Rights and Responsibilties (SR&R) with the kids. Behaviorally, if they come to us, we often read parts of the SR&R to students about their responsibilities. We often use the creed to discuss with students about their behaviors.

APPENDIX T

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, MR. GEER, INTERVIEW DATA

Background	Became assistant principal in the middle of March in 2009. Previously a school counselor and PBS coach at his former elementary school.
What is your idea of being a school community?	Understanding of the school community, of what's expected and the school in general. It's just the feeling in the atmosphere. I always felt that when you walk into a school, there is a feeling of a community. Some schools have it and some schools don't have it as much. Here, the students and staff are very invested in the program we have in place. It starts the second they walk in the door and taught to Kindergartners and it's consistent to the day they leave. Consistency is a factor; they're hearing the same message over and over. Our students, staff and parents are committed to supporting the Crocs Creed.
How is a PBS program different than what you have now?	We're technically a PBS program here, but the Crocs Creed was developed prior to us being a PBS school. So I think Crocs Creed could fit into that mold. Where PBS tells you what you should do and here are some ideas, but it's all very generic. The Crocs Creed here was developed (and I wasn't here when it was done) to meet the needs of the school and the issues we were seeing there. I think it works very well because of that. One of us attends the Crocs Creed committee meetings each month and we are constantly talking to the committee about plans and ideas and keeping constant communication.
How are students taught Respect, Trust and Kindness?	Our guidance counselors teach lessons throughout the year on those character traits. We actually just recently had a pep assembly where all the kids were in the gym and each of the character traits were highlighted through different presentations by staff and students and things like that. They are constantly pushed. You see the words everywhere. Getting a Croc Stock for the kids even as a sixth grader is a meaningful thing. Where as other programs that I have been involved in, the sixth graders don't care. But it actually still means something to our kids
Why do you think that is?	I think because everyone is bought into it. More so than any school I've been involved with. Like I said, in my previous school we didn't have a character program or PBS and we had to develop it. We were still struggling for student and staff buy-in. Here, our students and staff have bought into the program. I think it probably starts with our teachers. Since our teachers have bought in, our students see it and buy in as well.
What school-wide programs, traditions or events does your school hold	Our counselors do a welcome lunch for all new students to welcome them. I think there is a great sense of community here. It starts with the character traits and how we stress them and I think our kids buy in and believe in it so I think those new kids sense that and they are treated in a way that is welcoming and friendly and I think a lot of it comes from our Crocs Creed

yearly?	here.
How do you recognize student's success?	Students can earn a Croc Stock. Once they earn a certain number of Crock Stocks they get a certificate, and once they get a certain one of those, they get a ribbon. There names are put on the news if they receive a ribbon and they come down to the office and are recognized by one of the administrators. They are recognized by doing that. And it's weird because other schools we have had to use pencils or cups or something like that to get them into it, but here we give them a green piece of paper and ribbon and that's something they are interested in. At the end of the year, they receive a pin.
What programs are in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?	I think that is something that we struggle with sometimes. I think we struggle with the homework piece. Especially sixth grade teams. They want to use it as a punitive piece like taking away recess and we've had to have conversations about that. Whether or not if that is appropriate and our philosophy compared to what the teachers want. So we struggle with that. In terms of assistance with work. We use our IAs a lot to provide assistance. We have a child study that we promote quite a bit and is more successful than other places I've been in helping teachers identify students who need assistance and get extra ideas and strategies. So, I think those things are important. The more successful teachers use Child Study, the more people buy into it.
Who do students go to if they have a concern or problem?	Typically our teachers. I think they use our counselors to some extent. I would like them to use them more. I've even see them come to us as administrators. We try to be visible as we can. We try to be involved as we can in terms of in the cafeteria and classrooms and that sort of thing and I think the more visible and accessible we are the more comfortable they are to come to us.
Do teachers attend school functions outside of the work day, such as PTA events, band concerts, etc.?	Oh yeah, definitely. Each team signs up for a PTA meeting throughout the year so each PTA meeting has a team of teachers there. Every after-school event, like we have a 5K in the Spring on Saturday mornings, there were 15-20 teachers there. So I think we have a good representation of staff at things like that. We have quite a few teachers that have kids here so that helps.
What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another both formally and informally?	Maybe we haven't done a great job in that. We probably could do more. We have the 6th grade party at the end of the year. There is a dance towards the end of the year that is a family dance for all grades. There was a PTA event in the Fall that was a Fall Festival. In terms of specific school-sponsored events, we don't have a lot of those. We are developing a mentor program right now and just had a meeting yesterday about it. We started a pilot program using our preschool program and we're developing a more extensive one that will hopefully begin in the next few weeks. We have classes that buddy up with classes and we have third graders who are third grade helpers who help out in preschool.

How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning and decision-making?	We have the SCA and patrols. Through both of those they have a voice. I think feeling like there behavior matters helps the kids really buy into the school and feel like they're part of the community. They really see that there behaviors are important. While there isn't a lot of formal ways, I think they see that we're open to what they are doing and their behavior matters. For example, this morning there was a 6th grader outside during bus arrival with a petition to have our 6th grade basketball game rescheduled since it was canceled because of the snow. So, I think they see that bringing things to us that there is a voice for that.
How does the school make students feel safe?	I think partly its Crocs Creed and talking about safety and the expectations and following through on those expectations. Unless you really stand up for those things and make them important, kids aren't going to see they are the backbone of the school. So I think we really stress those and push them and when students don't abide by those, we follow through on it.
How students involved in rule making in the classroom and school?	In classrooms many of them are involved in rule-making. We've really put an emphasis on class meetings and morning's meetings. We have a lot already are already doing it, but we're really pushing all our teachers to adopt those to incorporate those into their day somehow so that kids can have a voice and usually through those they talk about the class rules, expectations and give the kids an opportunity to share if they have a concern.
Describe the school's discipline plan	I don't think we have a specific discipline plan. We have things that we follow in steps that we follow in terms of talking to an administrator. I think having a specific discipline plan would be tough for us in the way that we do things because especially with [Dr. Smith]'s personality, she really takes every situation and person differently so I think we handle each situation uniquely based on the student and teacher. So, I think teachers definitely let us know when something happens and we respond as quickly as we can, but I would say discipline is based on that student and situation.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW DATA

How does your school build a sense of community among students?	Teacher C – Our parents are very involved. They come to school functions and volunteer in the school and involved in everyday school activities and lives.
	Teacher A –I think the minute they walk in the door, they are greeted in the office with consistency and a friendly face. The minute the doors open, it's consistency. We're using the same vocabulary. We're using positive reinforcement. We're looking for the good in all of them. I think that's a good way to put it.
	Teacher B – And the other thing too is that our Crocs Creed, everyone is supportive of that and Dr. Smith has made sure that everyone is committed to Crocs Creed.
	Teacher A - From our custodians to our cafeteria works, everyone gives out Croc Stock I have them all the time on me and the kids know what they are.
	Teacher B – They can recite all of the characters.
	Teacher A – Like today, we're collecting money for Haiti and I told our students how kind they were. We're always are using the six words. They are used in anything that we do and that makes a big difference since we're always using the same verbiage and we're always on the same page. When I pick up my kids from P.E., I can ask "How were they today? Well, they were responsible today. Okay, how were they responsible?' And the kids can tell me. Or, they can tell me today I wasn't very caring today and I say, "Okay, how can we make it better next time?' They know what the expectations are and there is no hidden agenda. Every single teacher has the same classroom management techniques.
	Teacher B – The biggest thing is consistency.
	Teacher A – And I've been to oversees schools and in many different states and I've never had a program that has been as successful as our program here.
	Teacher B – You will see that it starts from the top, the administration. As students come into the building, 99-100% of the time our administration are outside greeting the students good morning and you'll see them saying goodbye to students are leaving for the day. And I know that doesn't happen in other schools.

Teacher A – Yeah, and they're in the cafeteria during lunchtime and often walking around the building. When you see children when they're not in trouble, in a different situation or concern, you're not just seeing them for a consequence of behavior. It's not just a negative thing that I have to see Dr. Smith. It's, she's going to be disappointed in me because they've seen her in different aspects of the school.

Teacher B is instrumental in the program. From being in charge of the pep rally's to the safety patrols. I think that is a key part to this whole thing and I think he has been part of this the entire time. His enthusiasm made me as a newcomer be part of this and sing the song that you wrote. The kids want to jump on the bandwagon because they respect you and want to be part of your enthusiasm.

Teacher B – We try to do different activities and keep everything fresh and new. We always try to change it up and not do the same thing every year. Even if we have continual activities, we change it enough to keep it fresh and different which keeps the students interested

Teacher A – In order to be an athlete, you would need to have all of these characteristics. For Veteran's day, the SCA officers went to all the different services and got their core values and creeds and compared them to our Crocs Creed.

Teacher B – Teacher A goes the extra mile. She was in charge of Veteran's Day and invited Veteran's into the school and did special programming in the school and made them feel they were an important part of the school. It really values the community outside of our school.

Teacher A – As a teacher, I've gone through another programs and I saw something like this program begin to develop at another school and it was met with a lot of dragging feet and teachers are very territorial and they want their own thing and classroom management plan. The moment I walked in, this plan made sense to me. It was easy to transition into using the Crocs Creed. When she interviewed me, she asked me about my behavior management plan. I don't believe in punishment and believe that there are consequences for their actions, but every child needs to do well and you can praise for them that.

Teacher B – She is looking for people that will fit into this program. When we first started, there is always some struggle and some resistance. She made it quite clear that at this school we are dedicated to following this program and was quite clear that people could go elsewhere if they weren't happy.

Teacher A – I'm not one to complain and if you do complain, you have to

	have a solution to the program. I believe our cafeteria plan isn't working as well as it could. But the administration encourages those conversations and it's nice to know that they'll listen and be open to suggestion.
How are students taught Respect, Trust and Kindness?	Teacher A – Well first of all at the beginning of the year, all of us go through the Crocs Creed expectations. I have each of my groups do a cooperative learning project and they make posters that we hang in the hallway. The guidance counselors and the school have one Crocs Creed per month. This month is Caring. We're doing Caring Candy Grams for SCA. Each month the counselors teach a lesson on each math. Last guidance lesson the students made up raps about kindness. The first month we spend time reviewing all of these over and over and over again. We talk about safety. We go out to the playground and talk about all of the safety on the playground. I can't tell you how much I use these key words during the day. It just makes my life a lot easier and I've been through a lot of programs and this works. The older kids still want to get the certificate and ribbon. They are still motivated. Teacher C – It's consistency again. Everyone in the building is using the same verbiage over and over again. Students can earn Croc Stock for positive behavior. Teacher A – And the parents. If we were to write home that a student needs to be more kind. The parents will talk to their child about their behavior and they support our efforts and the program. Teacher C – I think the teachers, administrators, counselors, really everyone, really gets the kids involved and the kids love getting a Croc Stock and they're very proud of themselves. Crocs Creed is very positive and the kids like it a lot. I see teachers in the hallway that focus on the kids that are doing what they're suppose to rather than the kids that weren't. It makes the kids think about what they should be doing.
How do students feel like they belong? What school-wide programs, traditions or events does your school hold yearly?	Teacher C – I think the student council and they do a lot of different programs. Also, the families also live near each other too so students get to play together and parents get to know each other. The school really has a nice sense of community. Teacher A – We have a spirit day each month and a service project each month. We have a bulletin board in the cafeteria with pictures that are updated monthly so that they feel that they're doing their part. We have student ambassadors also so that we're trying to teach leadership which is something always easy to do. They didn't get elected as SCA officers, but we're using them for back to school night and orientation. We're trying to empower them to do more, communicate and be leaders. We have so many after school activities. From FLEX, Chess, Writer's Block, Sixth grade book club.

	Teacher C – Even patrols.
	Teacher A – Yeah. So we're trying to get them more involved. The PTA has so many events. Reflections for literature so they're getting to do academic things. Pizza nights, restaurant nights. They had a carnival this year and a spaghetti dinner.
	Teacher C – Craft shows.
	Teacher A – So it's a complete package and not just administrative driven. We have a great music program too that many students participate in. It's the little things too. Fourth grade had colonial day and invited all the other classes to come in and participate. We have buddies. So we're trying to get the kids, the older ones, be leaders and role models. We even have some of our special needs children work with preschool children. You know, give them the sense of that they are leaders and helping. We also have Helping Hands. You can't put your finger on one thing, it's just everything.
How do you recognize student's success?	Teacher C – We have a Distinguishing Student Award three times a year that recognizes student success and it's great. The kids really enjoy being recognized.
How do students know that they are cared for?	Teacher A – I think the number one thing is that they feel safe. I think that's really important. The positive reinforcement, the smile, like I said. There is always a kind face. Teacher C – The teachers here are great. I'd be at another school and parents are afraid of who there child's teacher was. It's not like that here. You're happy whomever you get. So the teachers are great and the kids sense that and it's wonderful. We love it.
Are there any programs in place to help students who are having difficulty with their work?	Teacher A – We're establishing a mentoring program now to help students with work. The administration also provides us with data at the beginning of the year who failed the SOLs or on our watch list. Some teachers do lunch bunches or works with students before or after school. Teacher C – The kids love those. Teacher A – We can always go to the administration for help or bring the student to Child Study.
Who do students go to if they have a concern or problem?	Teacher A – I would hope that they would come to me first. I think they feel like they can go to anybody. Sometimes they tell their friends. The guidance counselor has a piece of paper and they can write to them. They know that they can go write to the administration. Once a student wrote a letter to Dr. Smith and she was up here before the end of the day responding to him.

	Teacher C – Absolutely. Definitely.
What opportunities are provided for students to interact with one another both formally and informally?	Teacher A – There are a lot of teachers who have lunch bunches. Many of us have at-risk groups before or after school. Especially for SOL preparation. I think the kids know, if you want us there, we're there. I think they know that regardless, we're going to be there for the kids.
Do teachers attend afterschool functions?	Teacher A – Well I attend everything, but yes, there is never a time that you wouldn't see at least 10-15 teachers. Recently there was a restaurant night and the entire fifth grade went. At our carnival there were a ton of teachers and the administrators. Instructional assistants too. I think everyone wants to support the PTA. Most of go and the kids love to see us there.
	Teacher C – Besides that, I also see teachers at student's activities, such as recitals or baseball games and that is just wonderful and makes such a positive impact on the students. There are kids that don't have that so it's nice.
How are students involved in classroom, school-wide planning and decision-making?	Teacher A - We have a group of SCA officers that plan out the entire year from activities to service projects. We don't have a representative on the school plan so that type of planning we don't have. But, they are really involved in the school counsel. We meet with officers weekly and then we meet with the SCA the opposite week. Everyone makes classroom decision making differently. Some of the teachers hold classroom meetings every day and a few of us went to a conference about giving students choices which we've implemented. So, giving them daily choices like "do you want to do this, this, or this" makes them feel involved. I think it empowers the kids to make choices to the bigger scheme of things. I'd say, "Well, how do we want to organize our room?" I always say that this is their classroom which is probably why it's so messy! It makes them feel empowered that this is their space.
How does the school make students feel safe?	Teacher C – It's just a nice sense of community. Everyone feels safe from the moment they walk in the door. I'm a military family and we have a lot of military families and you don't necessarily have a sense of community. But, here you do. You feel involved. They draw you in and you feel like you want to be involved. The kids feel like this is their home and it's wonderful. It's the teachers and principals. The caring community that it is. It's not even a school, it's a little community. We live around another and close to each other so we know each other well.
	Teacher A – A lot of our teacher's students go here so they're living in the

	community too. Safety isn't just the feeling that you're going to get hurt. You should see our fire drill. It's a well-oiled machine. I think kids know, as my daughter says, when to hold them and when to fold them. When it is important, got to get serious and this has to be done. The first thing I always say that I will make sure they are safe. I don't put up with bullying or negative things. I tell them there is a difference between tattling and keeping people safe and secure. There isn't one teacher or anybody that they wouldn't feel comfortable going up to for help. They know that anyone or any person in the building; they would feel comfortable going up to. I don't know how that happened; it's just the way it is. Teacher C – Students are orderly in the building and the building is organized. Kids aren't running around. Teacher A – We don't dwell on it. We walk them to the crosswalks. They know the rules and expectations and it creates a safe environment. I have some students who might come to school late and their life is chaotic. I can look into their eyes and know they didn't have a good morning and by the afternoon they've turned it around and they're ready to learn. Teacher C – Well yeah, because they feel safe. Teacher A - And there is a routine. There is a sense of safety if you do the same thing day after day.
Describe the school's discipline plan	Teacher A – Dr. Smith's philosophy is very positive. The word punishment is sort of a bad word. There are consequences, but we really don't have a set discipline plan. The administration uses the SR&R, but also looks at each child individually. Teacher C – I've never heard that word used here. Teacher A – If anyone hurts someone, then that is an automatic office referral. We do a lot of consequence management and we also have a guideline of consequences to follow. We're going to works things out. I'm not saying that they're not having us bring kids down. We do a lot of consultation about concerns I have with kids and we'll problem solve together. The administrators are to be used as a proactive resource as well as the last resort. Last year I had an active group of boys and they did get suspended because they hurt another boy. A little WWF wresting in the book nook. It was handled swiftly and the administration called the families. We try to take care of it in the classrooms and see what you can do. The more you have to pull in the administration, the more you lose your effectiveness as a teacher. I usually will have the kids try to solve it themselves and everybody is about the same thing. If it's safety driven, the administration is always involved and quick to act. We also have TAT and can get strategies there to help students.

	Teacher C – On the parents' side, the parents are pretty good at responding to concerns and supporting the parents. Teacher A – Our parents are for the most part very supportive.
Anything else you'd like to share?	Teacher A – It's hard to put into words, it's just a great place here. One of the reason's why I think I feel so good is that Dr. Smith tells us always to put our family first and to keep that in perspective. It kind of helps you keep things in perspective.

APPENDIX V – PARENT SURVEY DATA

Franklin Caring Community Parent Survey

Please choose the appropriate answer that describes your perceptions of the following behaviors in your school.							
Answer Options	**Almost Never**	**Sometimes**	**As Often As Not**	**Frequently**	**Almost Always**	**Rating Average**	**Response Count**
1. Students treat classmates with respect.	0	1	4	49	95	4.60	150
2. Students exclude those who are different (e.g., belong to a different race, relation, or culture).	115	21	2	1	6	1.36	149
3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness.	1	12	13	47	64	4.18	150
4. Students respect the personal property of others.	2	4	14	43	83	4.38	150
5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends.	1	9	10	69	56	4.17	149
6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize or they do something nice).	2	9	14	59	59	4.15	150
7. Students show respect for school property (such as desks, walls, bathrooms, busses, buildings, and grounds).	0	2	1	28	117	4.76	150
8. Students try to get other students to follow school rules.	2	6	8	59	69	4.30	150

Answer Options	Almost Never	Sometimes	As Often As Not	Frequently	Almost Always	Rating Average	Response Count
9. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, aids, and bus drivers).	0	1	1	30	115	4.76	150
10. Students work well together.	0	3	3	52	91	4.55	150
11. Students help to improve the school.	0	6	5	51	78	4.44	146
12. Students are disrespectful toward their teachers.	109	28	1	2	5	1.39	149
13. Students help new students feel accepted.	1	7	10	44	80	4.37	149
14. Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students.	0	6	16	55	65	4.26	148
15. Students pick on other students.	53	75	7	6	2	1.78	150
16. Students are willing to forgive each other.	1	10	12	53	67	4.22	150

Answer Options	Almost Never	Sometimes	As Often As Not	Frequently	Almost Always	Rating Average	Response Count
17. Students show poor sportsmanship.	72	53	9	2	2	1.62	148
18. Students are patient with each other.	0	9	15	77	47	4.09	150
19. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	1	7	11	53	74	4.32	150
20. Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates.	80	55	8	2	2	1.58	150
21. Students listen to each other in class discussions.	0	5	9	56	72	4.37	150
22. When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it.	2	15	26	49	24	3.69	148
23. Students refrain from put-downs (negative, hurtful comments).	2	22	24	52	39	3.75	149
24. Students share what they have with others.	0	7	13	58	69	4.29	150
25. Students are involved in helping to solve school problems.	2	14	13	51	53	4.05	149

OPEN ENDED PARENT RESPONSES

Franklin Caring Community Parent Survey	
Optional: What are your perceptions of the students' sense of community at [Franklin]?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	55
answered question	55
skipped question	95

Number	Response Text
1	I am extremely impressed with the sense of community at [Franklin]. The Croc's Creed and associated Croc Stock are excellent tools that help promote good citizenship among students. Good behavior is modeled and incorporated into all aspects of the school environment. The children are polite and respectful to adults entering the school as volunteers. This is a credit to the principal who designed the program and the staff and students who live it. I have witnessed on many occasions children helping each other or providing each other with little reminders to make good cho[Franklin]. School events are packed with family participation. Keep up the good work!
2	At [Franklin] ES, there is a strong feeling of enthusiasm and support by the parents within the community for the school and the students feel that warm embrace.
3	good ones
4	I think the CROC Stocks put a positive on the students. All of the students want the certificate and ribbon - they all want class croc stocks, too - so they get something special. I wish all schools had the pride that [Franklin] does!
5	very good - so far no issues that I've heard from my child.
6	We're like family!!
7	Croc's Creed and Croc's stocks help students understand what is expected of them.
8	Most of the student's feel that [Franklin] is a community that they all are a part of and that there actions reflect on the rest of the school.
9	Very good school.
10	Students have a strong sense of community. They buy into the character education program fully. They love to earn croc stock certificates/ribbons/pins by being caught doing something kind, responsible, respectful, cooperative, honest, and safe. There is a great school to home connection. They are proud to display and tell about their character achievements at home.
11	Overall, a respectful and responsible learning community.
12	I have (3) children that have attended [Franklin] E/S; two have since "graduated" and move onto [Marshall] Secondary School. Our Children feel that [Franklin] E/S is a big part of the Community and makes our "community" complete. [Franklin] is not just a school; it is a second home, a safe haven, and an investment in their lives; one that will be ever-lasting.
13	[Franklin] Elementary school has the strongest sense of community I have ever seen. This school and it's amazing staff has helped to instill such important qualities as being kind to others, helping those in need in our community and respecting people, places and property.
14	We are military and have seen other elementary schools. [Franklin] is superior at everything. I love this school!
15	there is a strong sense of community from the principal, teachers, and staff that then inspires the students.
16	This is my child's first year at [Franklin] and he is already talking about cooperating and

	respecting others. I have been very impressed with the sense of community at [Franklin] :)
17	For students such as my oldest son, who has been at [Franklin] since it opened, the sense of community is very strong.
18	[Franklin] has a wonderful staff and is as healthy a school as I've seen.
19	It's an excellent school from top to bottom. It's not just the school house, but part of a community based on mutual respect for all people.
20	Although we are fairly new here, it appears that the community is quite close. I believe there is a definite sense of community.
21	The reinforcement of positive behavior with the use of a common vocabulary (six character traits) has increased clear behavioral expectations for our school. The use of these six traits has increased their presence in teacher to student behavior as well. Thus the traits are student reinforced and teacher modeled.
22	Hard for me to say exactly, however, my daughter Ailsa drew a lovely picture of her teacher at school with beautiful bright colours, green grass, blue sky, and lots of balloons for some reason, anyway, from the picture I could see that everything seemed nice and happy at that community. Thank you.
23	They are enthusiastic Crocodiles!
24	My class is a very respectful, well behaved group of students. They have a high sense of morals and it obvious that they come from households that value honesty and respect. Having similar values and morals lends itself to a strong sense of community.
25	The sense of community is a huge piece and building block of [Franklin]. Kudos to the administration, staff, and community who go above and beyond every year for [Franklin].
26	The students are very friendly and respectful at [Franklin]. My son loves his school, teacher, and classmates.
27	The Croc's Creed at [Franklin] really seems to be working. I've only once had an issue between one of my children and another student (when my 3rd grader was back in kindergarten). The issue was resolved by their teacher the next day and they've been friends ever since. The staff at [Franklin] does a great job teaching the kids how to behave respectfully.
28	Students and parents have a very good view of [Franklin] and the local community. Our small community, where most people are a short walk or drive to the school, adds greatly to the overall sense of community and closeness exhibited at [Franklin]. A wonderful school.
29	Overall, the students have a great sense of community amongst themselves, but an idea would be to extend that beyond the school to the community they live in. For example, they could visit a veteran's hospital or other entity to help in some way or learn to appreciate what others are doing in the community, allowing them to emulate key role figures.
30	Great school community sense.
31	I think having a common creed (Crocs creed) that all students follow helps to foster a sense of community and personal development/growth. "Earning croc stocks" is a great, positive enforcement.
32	Students are really proud of their school and look forward to going to [Franklin]. I volunteer there every week and I've never seen a child in preschool or older, acting like they were upset about being there and wanting to go home. Kids really buy into the Croc Creed and my 5th grader still likes to be rewarded with Croc Stocks. My first grader also really enjoys the atmosphere there. And that really is half the battle if the kids jump on the bus every morning, ready to get the day started at [Franklin]!
33	It is not as consistent within classrooms as I'd like to see and also changes from year to year depending on the teacher.
34	Are good kids
35	I think the school overall has a great sense of community, but it does vary from teacher to teacher. I would like all of the teachers, even in the higher grades, to spend time building

	community and classroom spirit/teamwork and trying to get kids to be kind to one another. Some teacher seem to be very good at getting all of their students to be on one "team" and avoid having some kids be outsiders or loners. My child's current teacher has helped with getting him to have at least one good friend.
36	The Croc stocks help kindergarteners develop a sense of community as well as citizenship.
37	My 4th Grader has a greater since of community than my first grader. Could be age....may just be a combination of circumstances. Both however are eager to live according to the "Croc's Creed". "Community" may develop with time for the younger one.
38	Overall good community togetherness.
39	My perception is that there is a good sense of community and family at [Franklin]. My child is only in Pre-K, but [Franklin] is a great place to work and play. The activities and festivals are wonderful.
40	Positive beyond belief. I wish the staff, which accomplishes this feat for three years now since I started watching them, could be called upon to use their skill in some government and corporate off[Franklin].
41	This is a place they go to for learning, fun, enjoyable activities such as art and music, and it gives them purpose at an early age. They would rather be in school then stay at home.
42	Pretty respectful.
43	The students at [Franklin] have a strong sense of community due to the influence of the PTA and the Croc's Creed. The staff at [Franklin] continue to stress the "group" concept of life and integrate the "world" concept of acceptance to the students. Often students do community service projects to benefit the community. This is consistent from year-to-year.
44	I am at work while the children are at school. This gives me little opportunity to observe student behavior. Therefore, I find it difficult to form an enlightened opinion or answer these questions with any degree of accuracy. I will say that, on the days when I am able to pick my children up from school, the students seem to be well mannered and properly supervised as they exit the building.
45	My child is part of the PAC program, so a sense of community is still being learned. However, the student body collectively in my experience shows a great sense of community.
46	Students have a very strong sense of community.
47	The teachers and principals have done an excellent job and instilling pride in the children. I think they really are proud to go to [Franklin]. The Croc Creed has been a wonderful tool for the kids.
48	Croc stocks make a wonderful incentive program for my kindergartner. She has learned a great deal by striving to earn them.
49	Safe, happy learning environment. [Franklin] is a second family for my children. WONDERFUL!!
50	Great student body and the teachers are wonderful!
51	I'm new to the area and school, but so far I've seen and heard only wonderful things. My son is so happy to be in this school, by day one he had already made many friends.
52	I think it's a good community. It has that feel. I wouldn't know first hand because I'm not there but I hope that it's as tight knit as it appears.
53	It's very family oriented. My daughter is new to the school, yet we feel like we've been there forever in regard to the way others treat us, especially the staff. The staff are very kind and patient, and the children my daughter encounters almost always leave such a good impression on her that she comes and tells me as soon as she gets in the car. We are both very happy with the school and the community within.
54	Both my children feel a strong sense of community at [Franklin] that has been fostered and reinforced by the wonderful & committed staff and teachers.
55	They are very nice to each other and out side of school.

Caring Community Staff Survey

Please choose the appropriate answer that describes your perceptions of the following behaviors in your school.

Answer Options	Almost Never	Sometimes	As Often As Not	Frequently	Almost Always	Rating Average	Response Count
1. Students treat classmates with respect.	0	2	3	25	41	4.59	71
2. Students exclude those who are different (e.g., belong to a different race, religion, or culture).	41	19	4	1	4	1.68	71
3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness.	0	2	2	29	37	4.44	71
4. Students respect the personal property of others.	1	3	3	30	34	4.34	71
5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends.	0	5	6	33	27	4.18	71
6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize or they do something nice).	0	6	10	30	25	4.07	71
7. Students show respect for school property (such as desks, walls, bathrooms, busses, buildings, and grounds).	0	6	6	32	27	4.15	71
8. Students try to get other students to follow school rules.	0	3	5	35	28	4.24	71

Answer Options	Almost Never	Sometimes	As Often As Not	Frequently	Almost Always	Rating Average	Response Count
9. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, aids, and bus drivers).	0	3	7	19	42	4.44	71
10. Students work well together.	0	2	3	32	33	4.37	70
11. Students help to improve the school.	0	8	6	34	21	4.01	69
12. Students are disrespectful toward their teachers.	36	27	1	1	5	1.74	71
13. Students help new students feel accepted.	0	4	3	29	34	4.33	71
14. Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students.	0	7	7	30	27	4.11	71
15. Students pick on other students.	28	32	6	3	0	1.74	71
16. Students are willing to forgive each other.	0	6	5	22	36	4.31	70

Answer Options	Almost Never	Sometimes	As Often As Not	Frequently	Almost Always	Rating Average	Response Count
17. Students show poor sportsmanship.	32	30	1	3	1	1.67	71
18. Students are patient with each other.	0	7	6	37	20	4.03	70
19. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	2	9	3	33	24	3.99	71
20. Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates.	31	34	4	1	1	1.69	71
21. Students listen to each other in class discussions.	1	2	5	26	34	4.33	71
22. When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it.	1	15	15	20	13	3.48	69
23. Students refrain from put-downs (negative, hurtful comments).	1	9	8	26	25	3.97	71
24. Students share what they have with others.	1	6	7	27	26	4.06	69
25. Students are involved in helping to solve school problems.	4	12	9	23	17	3.59	71

SURVEY DATA T-TEST

T-Test, Group Statistics

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1	Parents	149	4.59	.581	.048
	Staff	71	4.51	.694	.082
Q2	Parents	145	1.36	.847	.070
	Staff	69	1.68	1.064	.128
Q3	Parents	137	4.18	.977	.083
	Staff	70	4.44	.694	.083
Q4	Parents	146	4.38	.872	.072
	Staff	71	4.34	.810	.096
Q5	Parents	145	4.17	.861	.071
	Staff	71	4.18	.816	.097
Q6	Parents	143	4.15	.934	.078
	Staff	71	4.07	.915	.109
Q7	Parents	148	4.76	.530	.044
	Staff	71	4.15	.889	.105
Q8	Parents	144	4.30	.862	.072
	Staff	71	4.24	.765	.091
Q9	Parents	147	4.76	.487	.040
	Staff	71	4.44	.788	.094
Q10	Parents	149	4.55	.641	.053
	Staff	70	4.37	.705	.084
Q11	Parents	140	4.44	.761	.064
	Staff	69	4.01	.931	.112
Q12	Parents	144	1.39	.870	.072
	Staff	70	1.74	1.086	.130
Q13	Parents	142	4.37	.872	.073
	Staff	70	4.33	.812	.097
Q14	Parents	142	4.26	.822	.069
	Staff	71	4.11	.903	.107
Q15	Parents	143	1.78	.779	.065
	Staff	69	1.74	.779	.094
Q16	Parents	143	4.22	.922	.077
	Staff	71	4.31	.904	.107
Q17	Parents	137	1.62	.796	.068
	Staff	67	1.67	.842	.103
Q18	Parents	148	4.09	.811	.067
	Staff	71	4.03	.861	.102
Q19	Parents	146	4.32	.861	.071
	Staff	71	3.99	1.049	.124
Q20	Parents	137	1.58	.724	.062
	Staff	71	1.69	.767	.091

	Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q21	Parents	142	4.37	.759	.064
	Staff	69	4.33	.852	.103
Q22	Parents	115	3.69	.994	.093
	Staff	65	3.48	1.120	.139
Q23	Parents	139	3.75	1.077	.091
	Staff	70	3.97	1.049	.125
Q24	Parents	147	4.29	.819	.068
	Staff	67	4.06	.998	.122
Q25	Parents	133	4.05	1.029	.089
	Staff	66	3.59	1.240	.153

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Q1	Equal variances assumed	2.345	.127	.935	218	.351	.08	.089		-.093	.260
	Equal variances not assumed			.878	118.341	.382	.08	.095		-.105	.272
Q2	Equal variances assumed	5.936	.016	-2.391	212	.018	-.32	.135		-.588	-.057
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.207	110.469	.029	-.32	.146		-.612	-.033
Q3	Equal variances assumed	5.458	.020	-2.043	205	.042	-.27	.131		-.526	-.009
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.274	183.771	.024	-.27	.118		-.500	-.035
Q4	Equal variances assumed	1.054	.306	.314	215	.754	.04	.123		-.204	.282
	Equal variances not assumed			.322	148.458	.748	.04	.120		-.199	.276
Q5	Equal variances assumed	.049	.825	-.087	214	.931	-.01	.123		-.252	.231
	Equal variances not			-.089	145.977	.929	-.01	.120		-.249	.227

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	assumed									
Q6	Equal variances assumed	.069	.794	.567	212	.571	.08	.135	-.189	.342
	Equal variances not assumed			.571	142.353	.569	.08	.134	-.188	.341
Q7	Equal variances assumed	19.202	.000	6.250	217	.000	.60	.096	.412	.792
	Equal variances not assumed			5.274	94.579	.000	.60	.114	.375	.828
Q8	Equal variances assumed	.937	.334	.491	213	.624	.06	.121	-.178	.297
	Equal variances not assumed			.511	155.285	.610	.06	.116	-.169	.288
Q9	Equal variances assumed	34.133	.000	3.742	216	.000	.33	.087	.154	.497
	Equal variances not assumed			3.196	96.665	.002	.33	.102	.123	.527
Q10	Equal variances assumed	.758	.385	1.864	217	.064	.18	.096	-.010	.368
	Equal variances not assumed			1.801	124.244	.074	.18	.099	-.018	.376
Q11	Equal variances assumed	.000	.997	3.490	207	.001	.42	.121	.183	.659
	Equal variances not assumed			3.259	114.028	.001	.42	.129	.165	.677

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Q12	Equal variances assumed	3.271	.072	-2.569	212	.011	-.35	.138	-.626	-.082
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.381	113.438	.019	-.35	.149	-.648	-.059
Q13	Equal variances assumed	.551	.459	.359	210	.720	.04	.125	-.201	.290
	Equal variances not assumed			.368	146.650	.714	.04	.122	-.195	.285
Q14	Equal variances assumed	.001	.978	1.197	211	.233	.15	.124	-.096	.391
	Equal variances not assumed			1.160	129.057	.248	.15	.127	-.104	.400
Q15	Equal variances assumed	.307	.580	.386	210	.700	.04	.114	-.181	.269
	Equal variances not assumed			.386	134.481	.700	.04	.114	-.182	.270
Q16	Equal variances assumed	.020	.886	-.647	212	.518	-.09	.133	-.348	.176
	Equal variances not assumed			-.652	142.362	.516	-.09	.132	-.347	.175
Q17	Equal variances assumed	.000	.984	-.423	202	.673	-.05	.121	-.290	.187
	Equal variances not assumed			-.415	124.814	.679	-.05	.123	-.295	.193
Q18	Equal variances assumed	.000	.998	.556	217	.579	.07	.119	-.169	.302

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		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			.544	130.909	.587	.07	.122	-.175	.308
Q19	Equal variances assumed	.003	.957	2.456	215	.015	.33	.134	.065	.593
	Equal variances not assumed			2.295	117.333	.024	.33	.143	.045	.613
Q20	Equal variances assumed	.034	.854	-.983	206	.327	-.11	.108	-.319	.107
	Equal variances not assumed			-.965	134.775	.336	-.11	.110	-.324	.111
Q21	Equal variances assumed	.387	.535	.344	209	.731	.04	.116	-.189	.269
	Equal variances not assumed			.331	121.844	.742	.04	.121	-.199	.279
Q22	Equal variances assumed	3.616	.059	1.300	178	.195	.21	.162	-.109	.529
	Equal variances not assumed			1.258	120.369	.211	.21	.167	-.121	.541
Q23	Equal variances assumed	1.299	.256	-1.426	207	.155	-.22	.157	-.532	.085
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.439	141.764	.152	-.22	.155	-.530	.083
Q24	Equal variances assumed	.552	.458	1.745	212	.083	.23	.130	-.029	.481
	Equal variances not			1.621	108.144	.108	.23	.139	-.050	.502

	assumed								
Q25	Equal variances assumed	8.329	.004	2.735	197	.007	.45	.166	.127	.782
	Equal variances not assumed			2.569	110.636	.012	.45	.177	.104	.805